



Merry-Go-Round

By Jacob
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It's a sunny Miami day, not a cloud is in sight. Along the rumbling Florida coast line blows a brisk tropical breeze swaying the palm trees from side to side. Along this coastline sits an array of houses. Each house a replica of the house beside it.

Inside one of these beach houses lies a world weary old man. He lies in his bed battling a cold while *Rifleman* plays on the large flatscreen TV mounted on the wall in front of him.

The only visible clothing on him is his wife beater. His hair is disheveled, he looks pale and unwell, and rightfully so.

On his nightstand rest an all gold Rolex. Next to it lies his gold chain with the cross attached to it. Standing behind them is a framed picture of him with his deceased wife and only child, his son Vincent who still lives in New York City. The three of them are smiling, while standing in the middle of a green field. The picture had been taken at a cookout some 15 years ago.

Suddenly there's a knock at the door. The old man lurches awake. Then he hears it again.

Knock Knock

The old man shuffles in his bed to sit up. "The door's open, what do you want?" Growls the old man.

A middle aged woman walks in wearing nurse scrubs with her hair pulled back in a bun.

"You have a visitor." She replies sweetly.

The old man get's excited, thinking his son has come down for a surprise visit. "Is it Vinny?"

"No, it's an old friend." The nurse happily informs him.

"Old friend? I don't have any..."

Just then a young man walks in, he's in his mid 30's, wearing silk dress pants with Italian dress shoes and a silk short sleeve button up unbuttoned down to his stomach showing off the chain around his neck. He's got his hair slicked back with gel and meticulously combed.

The young man walks in and stops in the doorway, standing there with hands in his pockets.

"I wouldn't be happy to see me either." The young man says with a sly grin on his face.

Not believing what he's seeing the old man grabs his glasses off the night stand.

The old man looks intently at the figure standing in his room. Staring at him in disbelief. "Get outta here. Is that you Junior?"

Junior's grin breaks into a wide, ear to ear smile. "Don't look so surprised. If I didn't know better I'd be insulted."

Junior walks over to the old man who sits up and happily greets a friendly face.

The nurse quickly tells the two friends "I'll give you two some privacy. If you need anything give me a shout." Then slips out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Meanwhile the old man turns off the TV while Junior leans against the wall next to the bed.

"You look like shit." Junior comments.

The old man looks at Junior disapprovingly, "I see you still got that smart mouth. That's gonna get you in trouble one of these days."

Junior shrugs off the old man's warning. "You worry too much old man."

The old man turns to cover a dry cough.

"Seriously though, you alright?" Junior asks with slight concern in his voice.

The old man waves off Junior's concern. "When you get a cold at my age, it tends to look like the end of the world." The old man dryly coughs again before continuing. "How's Vinny doing? I always worry about all that power going to his head."

"He's doing good. He's a lot like you, you know? Good at keeping the right people happy."

"Yea, he's a good kid." The old man replies happily. "So what're you doing down here? You on vacation?"

"Something like that. It's nice to get away from the city every now and then, but what I'm mainly here for is answers." Junior intently informs the old man.

"You're family, anything you need."

Junior straightens up before revealing his concerns. "You see, the event I need to know about took place 30 years ago, so your memory might be a little foggy."

The old man sighs. "No worries, my memory's not what it once was, but I still remember that day like it was yesterday. Who told you?"

Junior grins and answers the question. "Your old buddy Lefty."

The old man shakes his head. "Go figure, Lefty always did have lose lips."

"Why'd you do it? Why'd you act like our friend, why help us out?" Junior asks bitterly

The old man frowns at Junior before giving his answer. "After everything I'd been through with your dad it was the best way I could think to honor his memory. Besides, you guys have always been family to me. I wasn't gonna leave my family with nothing. No, you guys had lost enough." The old man finishes, shaking his head as if refusing to leave his friend's family helpless all over again.

Junior chuckles. "Well you sure know how to make a guy feel like family."

The old man growls back "Aye!.." before being interrupting by a painful, phlegm loaded coughing fit. He uncomfortably shifts in his bed before continuing. ".. You can't imagine how difficult that was for me. But you know as well as anybody, we have a code."

Junior scoffs at the old man. "What's the code got anything to do with this?"

The old man perks up, realizing what's happened. "You don't know? Your dad was serving a 30 year bid and got released 25 years too soon. Now, I understand why he did it. The day he got sentenced he found out your mom was pregnant with you. But that doesn't change the situation. He turned his back on us. He knew what we'd do. He took good men away from their families, stole years away from their lives. He owed them a debt, he owed them the years he stole and there is only 1 way to pay such a debt."

Junior chuckles, the anger he's been concealing finally bubbling to the surface. "You are a piece of work, you know that? I mean if I were you I wouldn't have been able to look me in the eyes. But you murdered your best friend, then turned around and took the man's place."

The old man sighs, "I did what had to be done. If I didn't do it somebody else would've and who knows what would've happened then. By doing it myself, I made sure that it was quick and painless."

Junior is no longer able to contain his rage. He walks around to the foot of the bed and with fire in his eyes he replies "Oh painless, you must mean other than the knife in his back... Well, you see the sad part is now you owe me a debt."

Junior has stopped walking at this point. He's standing at the foot of the bed staring at the old man. He takes a pair of leather gloves he had been concealing, 1 glove in each pocket. He puts them on, pulls out a pistol he'd been concealing under his shirt, and continues. "And the thing is, there is only 1 way to pay such a debt."

The old man gives a sigh, almost sounding relieved. "You know, I've hurt a lot of people in my lifetime. I've made a lot of bad decisions but I've made peace with my demons. I just hope you get the chance to do the same."

"Good for you." Junior points the gun at the old man and pulls the trigger.

BANG

Emotionless Junior just stands there and chambers the next bullet.

A rushed pitter patter of footsteps rushing through the house can be heard drawing nearer. *Pitter patter pitter patter*. The footsteps grow closer and closer until the nurse comes bursting through the door to see what's happened. "What's the pro..."

Junior immediately points the gun at her. "Don't you fucking make me chase you down."

The nurse is frozen with fear. She nods her head to acknowledge that she understands him.

Junior smiles coldly "Good. Come over here. Stand right here and face the old bastard."

Junior steps to the side and points at the spot where he was standing. The nurse walks over and takes Juniors place.

She looks to Junior and desperately pleads, "Please, I promise I won't tell anybody. Nobody's gonna know what happened."

Junior chuckles. "Thanks but I'm not worried about you talking. Are you right handed or left handed?"

"Right handed." The nurse meekly answers.

Junior simply hold the barrel against the right side of her head and the nurse closes her eyes and starts praying.

BANG

The instant Junior pulls the trigger the nurses body begins falling. She hits the ground with a lifeless thud.

Junior squats down over the nurses body. He unfurls her right hand and places the gun in it before enclosing her hand around the handle with her finger on the trigger. He calmly stands up and begins taking off his gloves as he saunters out of the house.