

Jason Wye

The Jerome Robbins Memorial Award: Short Story

Trigger

Jonathan walked up the street with his eyes looking down at his plain black sneakers. His backpack hung from his right shoulder even though the weight of it was uncomfortable. He should have used both of his arms, but Jonathan liked it better on just one arm. He climbed the steep stairs to his fourth-floor apartment. The stairwell was painted an ugly shade of yellow that made Jonathan grimace whenever he saw it. Finally, Jonathan arrived at his red door with the number 401 on it. He put his key in the lock and it didn't turn. Sometimes it stuck. He tried jiggling the key in the lock, the door didn't budge. Jonathan threw his shoulder into the door, BANG!

BANG! The 12-year-old boy was thrown further back into his driveway. "Jonathan are you an idiot!?" yelled the boy's father as he stepped out of the yellow car and placed his phone back in his pocket. "My shoulder" Jonathan groaned, "Your shoulder? You're lucky to be alive!" screamed his father. Jonathan looked up at his father standing over him, his green eyes wide with rage and fear. "It hurts" moaned Jonathan, "Of course it hurts," his father replied, "That's what happens when you're stupid. Now let's go inside"

Jonathan shook his head and looked at the bald man staring at him. "What did you say?" Jonathan asked. "Do you need help getting inside?" repeated the bald man. Jonathan stared at the man's eyes. They were pure brown and the pupils were dilated. "Yeah, I'd appreciate that, the door sticks." The man reached past Jonathan and turned the doorknob. The door swung in

with a slight squeak and a thud when it hit the doorstopper. The bald man gave Jonathan a nod; Jonathan nodded back as the man walked away.

Jonathan trudged into his apartment, let his bag slip off his shoulder, and sunk down into the couch. As he scanned his ceiling Jonathan noticed how, about two thirds across the room, the ceiling stopped having that rough bumpy look and was smooth until the wall. It didn't gradually change, it had a clear line between the ceiling being smooth and being rough. Jonathan took a deep breath and held it for a few seconds. He blew the air out heavy, as if he was trying to blow out a burning building.

...Jon took off his helmet and let his hair be free in the wind. He was on a smooth highway now; the bumpy dirt road having ended a mile back. There was a town coming up, Jon didn't need gas but decided to pull off anyway. As he rode his motorcycle in he saw two neo-Nazis coming out of a store. Jon knew they were from their shaven heads and swastika tattoos. They flagged him down and called out to him "Hey Newcomer!" Jon stopped his bike about ten feet away from them. They started to walk towards him, the one on the left a couple paces ahead of his friend. "What's your name man?" called the one on the left.

"Name's Jon," he replied.

"Well Jon, my friend and I are the unofficial town leaders and it is a town requirement that any and all persons in our town make clear their affiliations." The man looked to his left and shared a smile with his buddy.

"I don't have any affiliations" Jon said.

“We can fix that,” said the one on the right and pulled from his pocket a yellow piece of lined paper.

As he handed it to Jon he said, “This is a simple declaration of support for the True American League and a statement expressing our feelings toward undesirables. Sign at the bottom.” Jon looked at the bottom where there was a ridiculously asymmetrical Star of David and a crudely drawn crescent moon. Jon folded it up and handed it back to the skinhead and repeated “I don’t have any affiliations.” The two men moved closer to Jon, he could see their eyes staring at him intensely. The bright green glowering at him like shining emeralds blinding him. The one on the right leaned in and said, “Sign at the bottom.” They locked eyes, the blue of Jon’s contrasting the green looking down at him. Jon felt his muscles tense and his fists clench. Jon jabbed at him, connecting with his right cheek. He ducked under the hook coming from his left and brought his knee up into the abdomen of his attacker. He grabbed the one on the left, now gasping for breath, and threw him into the man holding his bleeding face. Once they were on the ground, Jon began to stomp on their hands and he felt the bones crumble beneath his feet. He punished them severely, repeatedly punching them until they were no longer breathing...

Jonathan looked up from his plate, he noticed that he’d been eating too fast. He spat out some of his food and leaned back in his chair. He focused on his breathing, trying to catch his breath. Fresh air, he thought, that would do him some good.

Jonathan walked up the street away from his apartment; there was construction on the opposite sidewalk and construction trucks were blocking part of the street. It wasn’t a very busy

street, so it didn't affect the traffic. One of the workers took out a jackhammer and started to bring it over. As he was walking past a pothole his grip slipped and BANG!

BANG! Jonathan jolted forward in his seat but was stopped by the seatbelt.

"Goddammit" muttered his father as he stepped out of the car. The busy street was noisy because of the work being done on the house up the street. It was even noisier now. Jonathan saw his father and the driver of the other car yelling at each other about who had the right of way. "Jonathan come get out of the car," his mother said to him. They stood behind Jonathan's father, mirroring the wife of the other driver and her daughter. She had brown hair and was staring at the sunset behind Jonathan. He smiled at her. She saw and smiled back. Jonathan felt a strong smack on the back of his head and then heard his mother say, "Jonathan! Take control of yourself!" she scolded. "Disgusting" she said, "Look at how her father drives, she clearly comes from bad stock. You can't be flirting with girls like that!" Jonathan's father and the girl's father seemed to have agreed that they both clearly had the misfortune of meeting the world's worst driver and were going to let the police decide this. Jonathan's father came stomping past him, "Excuse me" he barked.

"Excuse me" the woman said, letting go of Jonathan's jacket. "You almost just ran me over," she lightheartedly accused. "I'm sorry" he replied, straightening his jacket. The woman had long brown hair and a pretty smile. "Well be more careful" she said, "Ok, will do" said Jonathan. She walked away from him and he continued walking until he got to a park bench where he sat down.

...Jonny strolled down the block, staring up a crane that was lifting some metal pipes off the ground. It was early, just after sunrise, and there weren't very many people out. There was just one woman walking towards Jonny, but she was on the other side of the street, where the pipes were hanging about 15 feet off the ground. Exactly when the brown-haired woman was under the pipes, the crane malfunctioned, and the pipes began to fall. Jonny raced across the street and leapt forward, grabbing the woman and pulling her to safety. "My hero" she fawned, Jonny started to say something clever but was cut off by the woman's passionate kiss...

The TV was playing some show about a crime family, something had just gone wrong because one of the people had gotten high when she was supposed to be taking care of something. Jonathan didn't really care about the show, it was fun, but he wasn't serious about watching it. He didn't wait for the next episode to come out, but he watched it when it did. The girl who had gotten high was about to be executed, Jonathan watched blankly. She was crying, begging the guy with the gun not to shoot her. BANG!

BANG! The door to the bathroom smashed in and Jonathan's principal walked in where Jonathan and his friend were. They tried to hide the joint, but they were too slow, their motor skills were impaired. The principal began to yell, he brought them to his office and yelled some more. His face turned red from all the screaming and Jonathan's friend began to cry. His friend started to beg, first that the principal not call their parents, then that they not be expelled. None of it made a difference. Their parents were called, and they were both expelled. When he got home, Jonathan went to his room and changed his clothes.

The TV show changed. It was no longer a crime show but was now a cop show. The police officers were busting into a bank to stop a robbery. Jonathan liked cops better; they were officers of the law and enforced justice, they were cool.

... "Johnson, hold up." Officer Johnson turned around and waited as his partner, Davis, ran up to him. "What is it Davis?"

"Got a call" Davis said, "We have a warrant for that basement on 46th. It's go time."

Johnson nodded, turned around, and headed to the garage. They pulled up on 45th fifteen minutes later, "We walk from here" Johnson said.

"You're the boss" replied his partner. They lined up outside the front door to the basement with a couple of other officers. There were more officers at the back door and covering a particularly large window on one of the sides. Davis kicked in the door and Johnson went in. Johnson called out "Police! Put your hands up!" There were four people in the room sitting around a table with a pile of cocaine bricks on it. They all listened to him, then they got on their knees so Davis could handcuff them. One of them started to say something; Johnson yelled "Be quiet! Do what I say!" ...

"You heard me, do what I say! Give me your wallet!" Jonathan stared blankly at the man pointing the gun at him. "Give me your money now!" yelled the man in front of him. Jonathan stuttered "W-w-wait a s-second."

"No, you either give me your money or I take your life," countered the mugger. Jonathan put his hand in his pocket and tried to pull out his wallet, his hand was trembling and

he couldn't think. He grabbed and yanked but couldn't get his wallet out. He saw the mugger getting impatient and his finger hover over the trigger. Finally, he pulled with all his strength and his hand shot out quickly and his arm flew up. BANG!