

Learn the Hard Way

A hired gun's moment of compassion sets into motion a war  
against his former boss.

BLACKNESS.

Too dark to make out anything. From outside the sound of a muffled ENGINE. It sputters and dies.

A beat before footsteps POUND against pavement, getting closer. Unintelligible VOICES, then...

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

A body falls out of the rear compartment of the single engine Cessna, landing with a THUD on the blacktop.

CORY and KEVIN CONNOVA (20's), a pair of greasy, pock-marked speed-freaks, peer down.

CORY

Yo Jacks, you dead?

Kevin nudges the figure at their feet with his boot. He stirs.

KEVIN

Nah, he's just sleepin'.

JACKS HOBSON (30s) opens his bloodshot eyes. His face is a mess of swollen bruises and cuts. Blood trickles out of his mouth as he chuckles at the men standing over him.

CORY

What's so funny?

JACKS

I was just thinking you two are the ugliest flight attendants I've ever seen.

Kevin's boot catches Jacks in the chest. He groans.

JACKS

All the meth's got you strung too tight Kevin. You can never take a damn joke.

The Connovas pull Jacks to his feet. Cory shoves a pistol into his kidney, pointing him toward the nearest hangar.

CORY

Move.

INT. HANGAR

CHARLIE LUDLOW (50s), impeccably dressed in a five-thousand dollar suit cut perfectly to his broad frame, sits at a

single fold-up table. An empty seat sits across from him. The hangar is devoid of anything else.

Cory, Kevin, and Jacks enter from the open bay door. The brothers PLOP Jacks down onto the empty seat.

JACKS  
Hello, Charlie.

Charlie's beer-can sized fist flattens Jacks' nose and sends him flying over the back of his chair.

The older man is on top of Jacks in an instant, raining down blows.

Charlie stops, stepping off Jacks and straightening his jacket. He picks at a small drop of blood on his tie.

CHARLIE  
Pick him up.

Charlie picks up his overturned chair and sits back down. The Connovas place Jacks back in his seat.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry about that, Jackson. I lost myself for a moment.

JACKS  
Can't say I blame you. Guess I had it coming. For what it's worth-

Charlie slams his hands down on the table.

CHARLIE  
You don't tell me what it's worth! I tell you! I tell you! Was it worth the life of my own son?

JACKS  
You know how he was at the end. Too much blow, too much crystal. It fucked Tommy up.

CHARLIE  
You don't say his fucking name! Do you hear me? He loved you like a brother. He brought you in, vouched for you.

JACKS  
I guess it won't change your mind if I told you that girl I pulled

(MORE)

JACKS (CONT'D)

him off of was fourteen years old?

CHARLIE

Did you grow a conscience, Jacks?  
You've been killing for me for  
eight years. I've seen you end  
guys layin' in the gutter, crying  
for their mothers.

JACKS

There's gotta be a line somewhere.  
There's gotta be honor, somewhere,  
in this. Every ticket I've punched  
had it coming, someday. But what  
Tommy was gonna do to that girl...I  
couldn't live with it.

Charlie stands. This conversation is over. He nods to the Cannova brothers.

CHARLIE

You boys did good on this one. You  
finish this and I'll have some work  
for you when you get back to the  
city.

CORY

Thanks, Mr. Ludlow. Whatever you  
need.

CHARLIE

There's a clean car out back. Do  
him then drive out to the desert.

Charlie examines his hand. His knuckles are flecked red.

CHARLIE

I've gotta wash this prick's blood  
off my hands then get back. The  
plane will be back for you in a few  
hours.

EXT. AIRFIELD

The three men step from the rear door of the hangar. A sedan is parked next to the chain link fence. Cory and Kevin lead Jacks toward it. Cory pops the trunk.

KEVIN

Lay down and make it easy.

Jacks laughs.

KEVIN  
Goddammit, what's so funny now?

JACKS  
I shit you not, that's exactly what  
I said to your girl last night.

Cory chuckles.

KEVIN  
Shut up.

JACKS  
Come on, Kev. Don't act surprised,  
the way to that girl's pants is  
twenty dollars and a key-bump.

Kevin whacks Jacks on the side of the head with his pistol.

KEVIN  
I said shut up.

JACKS  
I'm just saying that girl has been  
on her knees more than a fucking  
priest. We should call her Houdini  
cause of all the tricks she's done.

Cory starts to laugh, nearly doubling over. Kevin turns to  
his brother.

KEVIN  
DAMMIT! Both of you SHUT UP!

Jacks sees his chance. He spins, his arm shooting out like  
a piston, his hand pointed like a blade. He hits Kevin  
square in his throat.

Kevin tries to protest, but it comes out as a wet gurgle.  
Jacks strips the gun from his hand and has it pointed at  
Cory before the other man can draw.

CORY  
Now just wait a minute-

Jacks plants a bullet between the man's eyes. Kevin  
collapses at Jacks' feet, beginning to choke to death.

Jacks places the barrel against Kevin's forehead.

INT. WASH ROOM - MOMENTS BEFORE

Charlie scrubs the blood from his hand, then rinses the bar

of soap. He wipes the sink clean and flushes the paper towel.

He hears the muffled sound of a gunshot from outside.

CHARLIE  
(to himself)  
So long Jackson.

Charlie straightens his tie in the mirror. He opens the bathroom door. A hand shoots out, grabbing his collar and wrenching him into-

HANGAR

Charlie skids across the hangar's floor. Jacks looms over him.

CHARLIE  
Shit. I forgot how good you are.

JACKS  
I learned from the best.

Charlie stands, letting his jacket drop to the floor.

CHARLIE  
Damn right you did.

Charlie launches himself toward Jacks, jabbing. Jacks parries and follows up with a devastating head-butt, shattering Charlie's nose.

Enraged, Charlie grazes Jacks with a haymaker, sending him backwards. Charlie steps toward him, his italian shoes swinging toward the younger man. Jacks catches it and trips Charlie, sending him sprawling to the ground.

He places his boot on Ludlow's throat.

CHARLIE  
You killed my son, asshole. What did you expect me to do?

JACKS  
Nothing less. We're killers Charlie. It's all we know.

Jacks stomps.

CUT TO BLACK.