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Who Pays the Hitman

By

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ACT 1.

SCENE ONE.

It's one in the morning in the tatty treatment room of a rundown, underfunded city hospital. JACK HIGGINS, mid to late thirties and clean cut and fit, has a spider bite on his right index finger. He's applied a pressure bandage himself and waits patiently, sitting with his elbow on a table and his finger raised in the empty treatment room. DOCTOR SHARON RUSSELL enters without noticing Jack. She's a no-nonsense, practical woman in her early thirties. She walks to a sink, takes off her blood stained gloves and gown. She drops the gloves in a bin and throws her gown into a laundry basket. It's been a busy night and she takes a moment to herself. Jack watches her. She washes her hands and dries them. She turns from the sink and notices Jack for the first time.

SHARON

And what do we have here?

JACK

A patient one would assume, what with this being a hospital and everything.

SHARON

(Not amused)

Very amusing. It's an emergency ward on a Saturday night - you assume, you're a fool. I don't assume and therefore am not. You assume, so therefore...

Sharon motions with her hands.

JACK

I assume you know something about spider bites.

SHARON

You assume correctly.

JACK

As opposed to foolishly.

SHARON

What kind of spider?

JACK

Little and hairy with eight legs and attitude.

SHARON

It can't be too serious if you took the time to count the creature's limbs and assess its mood.

JACK

The time I've been waiting here, I could have counted its limbs, eyes and individual body hairs. And its attitude was self evident.

SHARON

I didn't realize you'd brought it with you. I assume, probably somewhat foolishly, that you have.

Jack produces a cigarette packet and puts it on the table.

SHARON

Is it in the packet?

JACK

No, more sort of on it. Smack bang on the health warning as it happens. A lot flatter and wider than its original dimensions, but it's been good enough to come along with me.

Jack holds up the packet to show the crushed spider.

SHARON

That looks nasty.

JACK

The spider, the cigarettes, the packet or the warning?

Sharon takes the cigarette packet and examines it.

Jack watches her with interest

SHARON

Can't really tell too much about the spider due to its, how shall we say, somewhat unusual presentation. But the cigarettes, they'll get you every time, and if you're a spider it seems the packet is quite deadly as well.

JACK

Well, I'd like to think the cigarettes will get me after the spider, but the way things are going I could easily succumb to lung cancer well before the bite takes its toll.

Sharon produces a thermometer and inserts it in Jack's mouth before he can say any more.

SHARON

Undo your shirt.

Jack opens the front of his shirt. A locket hangs from his neck.

Sharon puts on her stethoscope and listens to his chest.

SHARON

Heart sounds okay. Lets have a look at the bite.

Sharon unwinds the bandage from his finger and examines it.

Sharon

It's certainly swollen and there does seem to be a mark of some kind.

Jack takes the thermometer from his mouth.

JACK

The evidence would point to it being a spider bite due to the fact the spider was attached to it shortly before its demise. So could you confirm the identity of it and give me something to stop my finger swelling any further as I'm going to need it relatively soon.

Sharon takes the thermometer and checks it.

Sharon

Temperature's a little high.

Sharon takes the cigarette packet with spider attached and slips it into a plastic bag.

Sharon

It's only one finger, I'm sure you can make do without it for a little while.

Jack stiffly flexes his index finger and appraises it.

JACK

It's a very important finger.

Sharon walks to a phone and presses a couple of digits.

SHARON

(into phone)

Serge, could you take a sample down to the lab please... Thanks.

(To Jack)

Shouldn't be too long.

Sharon walks back over to Jack.

SHARON

Do you feel nauseous?

JACK

A little, but hospitals affect me like that. You know, injuries and all that pain and blood.

SHARON

There's been a fair bit of blood so far tonight.

JACK

Well it is Saturday night and people are out enjoying themselves.

SHARON

Then why the hell do they insist on stabbing each other, taking drug overdoses and beating each other half to death?

JACK

All part of the fun I suppose.

SHARON

Personally I think it is just to make my life hell.

JACK

Think of the satisfaction you'll derive from your selfless contribution to society. A modern day Florence Nightingale and Mother Theresa all rolled into one.

SHARON

I can always go home. Where would you be then with your poor little finger?

JACK

About the same as I am now I would imagine. Sitting here with a spider bite on my finger and no cure in sight. I've got an important appointment to keep tonight, Doc. You could say it's a matter of life and death.

SERGE, a gay and extremely camp male nurse enters. He hears the last few words and replies as he minces over to the table where Jack sits.

SERGE

We do have other patients, you know.

A muffled, anguished scream form elsewhere in the casualty ward.

JACK

So I hear.

Sharon holds out the bag to Serge.

SHARON

Here you are, Serge. It's a spider.

Serge takes the bag with two fingers and obvious distaste.

SERGE

Is it dead?

JACK

Yes. It was reading the warning on the packet, when "splat", the Surgeon General was proven right yet again.

SHARON

Could you get an analysis on the species for me. Quick as you can...

JACK

Which I can't see being too quick around here.

SHARON

(derisive)

Our patient has an important appointment - a matter of life and death, apparently.

JACK

More death than life, actually.

Serge, a little confused, minces off and exits.

JACK

Good. I might get to keep my appointment after all.

SHARON

It's gone one o'clock - What kind of appointment do you have at this time of night? a matter of life and death is it? If that spider that bit you is one of the dangerous ones or the bite's infected...

JACK

Do you think I could have some ice and try and get the swelling down a bit.

Jack flexes his injured finger.

Sharon goes to a fridge, opens the freezer compartment, takes some ice cubes and pours them into a bowl. She puts it on the desk.

SHARON

More death than life?

JACK

I hope so.

SHARON

If you have a death wish it's hardly worth me treating you is it.

JACK

I have a death wish, but it's not my own death I'm wishing for.

SHARON

Then who's is it?

Jack pulls a photograph from his pocket and looks at it.

JACK

Some guy.

SHARON

And what's he done to you for you to wish that he was dead?

JACK

Nothing. But he has obviously done something to my employer.

The realization that Jack's a hitman sinks in.

SHARON

My God, you're a hitman.

JACK

A somewhat melodramatic term, and not particularly accurate as I don't actually hit them, because if all goes according to plan, the bullet does.

SHARON

You're a murderer.

JACK

Even more melodramatic.

SHARON

I should call the police.

JACK

The guy is still breathing - unless someone else gets to him first, of course. It's a very competitive business.

SHARON

But you're conspiring to murder him.

JACK

Most certainly.

SHARON

And you admit it.

JACK

Only to you. And you're treating my injured, and most important finger. And as such you are my doctor, and as such we have a doctor-patient relationship. And as such, I'm afraid, if you're to conform to your ethics, anything said between us remains confidential. Ethics, one must have ethics.

SHARON

What would you know about ethics, you're a hired killer for God's sake?

JACK

Every profession has its ethics.

SHARON

And what, may I ask, are the ethics of yours?

JACK

I detect a certain contempt in your voice - Mine, like yours, is a very old profession. Assassins have selectively taken lives for as long as doctors have tried to save them. When you think about it, it's really a symbiotic relationship. I try to kill them and you try and save them. One helps the other. A win-win situation.

SHARON

It seems far from a winning situation for the gentleman you're going to kill, doesn't it.

JACK

That all depends.

SHARON

On what?

Jack holds up his injured trigger finger and flexes it stiffly in a trigger squeezing motion

JACK

This finger here.

SHARON

So by mistreating you I could save a life.

JACK

Quite possibly - but you have your ethics and the Hippocratic oath, and are therefore not allowed to. So by obeying your sacred doctor's code and ethics, you yourself are conspiring to kill a perfectly healthy - well, probably not perfectly healthy, but a reasonably healthy human being.

SHARON

Which of course is against my ethics.

The sound of the siren of an ambulance as it stops outside.

JACK

A dilemma indeed.

The ambulance siren stops.

JACK

Sounds like you have a customer.

SHARON

We call them patients in my profession. What about yours?

JACK

It's a personal thing. A target, a mark, a hit, it doesn't really matter. I'm more interested in result than the terms involved.

Serge enters with a gurney. On the gurney, lying face down, is a priest, FATHER DONNELLY. He's been stabbed in the buttocks. Father Donnelly is about twenty five years old and of Irish background. The priest is both hurt and embarrassed.

SERGE

Stab wound - To the buttocks, no less.

Father Donnelly

It's not too serious, Doctor. I'm sure it's just a flesh wound.

SERGE

Well, I think we should take a little peek, just to be sure.

SHARON

I think I can manage, Serge.

SERGE

Only trying to help. I am a bit of an expert in this area.

JACK

The area of stabbing or buttocks?

SERGE

Both, actually.

SHARON

Yes. This wouldn't be the first backside stabbing you've been involved in, would it Serge.

SERGE

Certainly not. But a priest....

Serge raises his eyebrows and purses his lips as he considers the concept.

SHARON

Thank you, Serge, I think I can manage.

SERGE

(Hopefully)

Are you sure?

SHARON

I'm sure you can find plenty of other things that need attending to in this place.

Serge pouts and minces to the door.

SERGE

(muttered)

Spoilsport.

FATHER DONNELLY

Thank you, Doctor. This is a rather embarrassing position to be in.

JACK

Not to mention uncomfortable.

SHARON

Let me have a look, Father.

Sharon pulls up Father Donnelly's cassock and examines the wound.

SHARON

It's not life threatening you'll be pleased to hear. I can't remember any important organs contained within.

JACK

It's a good job you weren't facing the other way, Father, otherwise a vital organ might have been damaged. There again, you're a priest, so your idea of a vital organ is probably something in a church with a keyboard and pipes that bellow out a most unholy row.

Sharon fetches a syringe, holds it up and prepares it.

SHARON

I'll just give you an injection to...

Jack rises from his chair and strolls over to Father Donnelly's side.

JACK

Preferable to our friend Serge doing it I suppose.

SHARON

To deaden the pain and then I'll clean it and stitch it up.

Jack examine the cassock in the area that would have covered the wound.

JACK

Tell me, Father, how come there is only a little blood on your cassock and no hole where the knife entered?

FATHER DONNELLY

I don't see that it's any of your business. I don't even know who you are.

Jack does a small bow.

JACK

Jack Higgins, at your service.

Sharon walks over to a bench and opens a cupboard filled with medical paraphernalia. She unlocks a cabinet and removes a vial, then locks it again.

SHARON

I shouldn't imagine the good Father would be in need of any service you can offer, mister Higgins.

Sharon fetches a kidney bowl and swab.

JACK

Probably not.

SHARON

If you're going to watch, make yourself useful and hold that. Being so observant, you probably noticed we're understaffed.

Sharon hands Jack the bowl and gets to work on the wound.

JACK

How does a person, excluding Serge and his friends, get stabbed in the ass. Let me guess - a rampaging midget with a grudge against the church? An amputee mugger perhaps? No, a wheelchair bound, short sighted butcher who mistook your rump for sirloin.

FATHER DONNELLY

Very funny, mister Higgins. Tell me, have you ever been stabbed?

JACK

Six or so times, actually, but never, ever in the ass.

FATHER DONNELLY

(aghast)

Six times!

JACK

And been shot seven.

FATHER DONNELLY

What line of business are you in, mister Higgins?

JACK

I'm in the extermination business. A pest controller.

FATHER DONNELLY

I see.

SHARON

I'm not sure I do. I'll stitch you up now, Father.

Sharon fetches suture thread and a needle.

SHARON

Are you saying that you only exterminate vermin?

Sharon starts work on Father Donnelly's wound.

JACK

Father, will you hear a confession?

FATHER DONNELLY

(surprised/confused)

You wish to make a confession - Now?

JACK

Yes.

FATHER DONNELLY

It's a little unusual. I mean...

JACK

Lying face down and having your ass stitched together. This is the modern world, Father, you've got to move with the times. You must adapt or die. And adapting to the times is something the church has been very good at over the years.

FATHER DONNELLY

You needn't preach. It's my duty to hear a confession if you're a baptized Catholic.

JACK

Indeed I am.

Jack walks away and wheels a screen over to separate himself and Father Donnelly. He takes a chair from a table and sits down on the other side of the screen from Father Donnelly.

JACK

Now, how does it go? Forgive me Father for I have sinned.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes my son.

SHARON

I can't believe I'm hearing this.

JACK

We are now bound by the sanctity of the confessional, is that correct?

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes we are.

JACK

Excellent. I now have a priest bound by the sanctity of the confessional and a doctor bound by her Hippocratic oath. Neither of you can speak of what I tell you outside of this room. Is that correct?

FATHER DONNELLY

Would we want to?

SHARON

Quite possibly, Father. Quite possibly.

FATHER DONNELLY

What would you like to confess, my son?

JACK

A murder.

FATHER DONNELLY

A murder? You've killed someone?

SHARON

He has and he's about to do it again.

FATHER DONNELLY

You're a serial killer?

JACK

I've never really thought about it like that, but yes, I suppose I am.

SHARON

He's an assassin, a hit man, and he is going to kill again very shortly.

JACK

Depending on the condition of this little digit here, of course.

Jack holds up his injured trigger finger.

FATHER DONNELLY

Why?

JACK

You preach for a living, I kill people. But I'm selective in whom I kill. I don't kill innocent people.

SHARON

An executioner. How noble.

JACK

I told you, it's an old and noble profession. Just like medicine and prostitution.

SHARON

Prostitution?

JACK

Yes. And where would we be without prostitutes, eh Father?

Father Donnelly moves, causing Sharon to inflict some pain.

FATHER DONNELLY

Ow.

Jack gets up and moves the screen away.

SHARON

Keep still, Father, I'm on the last suture.

JACK

A little uncomfortable, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

What do you mean?

JACK

What do you think of prostitutes?

FATHER DONNELLY

They have fallen.

JACK

And luckily they always seem to land on their backs. But they are still human beings, are they not?

FATHER DONNELLY

Of course. We're all God's children.

Sharon finishes the last suture.

SHARON

All done, Father. I'll put a dressing on it.

FATHER DONNELLY

Thank the Lord.

Sharon applies the dressing and pulls down the cassock.

SHARON

Do you want to sit up?

Father Donnelly turns over and sits up. He winces as he puts weight on his wound. Sharon lifts the end of the Gurney and Father Donnelly sits back against it.

SHARON

How's that?

FATHER DONNELLY

A touch sore.

JACK

Do you associate with prostitutes, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

I took a vow of chastity.

JACK

Do you not sometimes long for the company of a woman? To be intimate with her, to touch her soft, warm flesh? To smell the aroma that is woman?

Jack walks over and sniffs the priest's robe near his neck and Father Donnelly tries to pull away.

JACK

A cheap perfume, but perfume none the less, and not something often worn by priests. Now, let's put two and two together. You've been stabbed in the backside by a knife that didn't pass through your cassock, which would indicate that you didn't have it on at the time, and you smell of cheap perfume, so I have to deduce that you were in the close company of a woman when you were stabbed. Very close company.

FATHER DONNELLY

It is you who's confessing, not I.

SHARON

I'm a doctor in emergency, Father. I see a dozen stab wounds a week. You don't need to say anything.

JACK

Don't see many in the ass, I bet.

SHARON

No, I'll grant you that.

FATHER DONNELLY

I have nothing to say on the matter.

JACK

What about the girl?

Father Donnelly becomes defensive. He blusters.

FATHER DONNELLY

What girl?

JACK

The one you were with when you got stabbed.

Father Donnelly becomes uneasy. He feels guilt.

SHARON

Father, was the girl hurt in the attack?

Father Donnelly goes on the offensive.

FATHER DONNELLY

You are bound by your doctor-patient relationship. But this man, a hired killer, he's not bound by any such code.

JACK

Something far higher, Father. I'm very careful of what I say and where and to whom I say it, otherwise my professional reputation, not to mention my body, would be shot to pieces.

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm not convinced, mister Higgins.

JACK

I have an affinity with prostitutes. They are an old profession and so is the mercenary.

Sharon takes off her gloves and bins them.

SHARON

And?

JACK

We both have our uses. The church has used mercenaries often over the centuries to do its dirty work - Although with mixed results I must admit. And it would seem they also use the services of the other profession on occasion, as well.

SHARON

We will say nothing, Father, you have our word on it. The girl may be a prostitute, but she's no less a person than you or me. Was she hurt?

FATHER DONNELLY

Well...

JACK

(confronting Father Donnelly)

Jesus Christ, the girl, was she hurt?

Father Donnelly is unsure, hesitant.

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm not sure.

Jack continues to pressure Father Donnelly.

JACK

What do you mean, you're not sure? She was underneath you.

SHARON

Why did someone stab you, Father?

Father Donnelly is wracked by guilt and confusion. He reluctantly confesses.

FATHER DONNELLY

I was with dear Maggie, one of my parishioners. You're right, she is a prostitute, but a prostitute with a heart.

SHARON

I see them all the time, beaten by their pimps, overdosing on any kind of drug they can find to take their mind off what they do. It might be the oldest profession, but it's still a dangerous one.

JACK

Just like mine.

FATHER DONNELLY

And ruled by crooks and gangsters. I'm told that when it was the Italians they understood the needs of a priest. They were believers themselves, but also men. They knew that a priest being with one of their girls now and then did not affect that priest's belief in God, nor their profitability. But now, the poor girls are run, owned even, by gangsters with no heart and no compassion.

SHARON

I see it in their eyes when they come in here.

Sharon crosses her arms, almost hugging herself.

FATHER DONNELLY

It was one of those people, no, an animal, that stabbed me.

JACK

So Maggie gave you the odd freebie.

Father Donnelly is agitated as he moves around on the gurney.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, no - It wasn't like that.

JACK

And then what happened?

Father Donnelly becomes even more uncomfortable and agitated as he relives the situation. He is amazed and confused by why someone would do what they did to him.

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm sure he was enjoying what he was doing - stabbing a priest who was in the compromising and helpless position that I was in.

JACK

It wasn't about the money He's just an evil, sadistic bastard by the sound of things.

SHARON

And you can't exactly tell the police the whole story, can you.

FATHER DONNELLY

That's why I came here. You have a reputation within the community for discretion.

SHARON

If I called in the police every time I treated a stab wound or a beating, no one would come here. It would send the prostitutes and drug users to struck off doctors in filthy basement rooms to be butchered and contract god knows what.

JACK

I'm glad you told me that. I've been getting myself fixed up by some very dubious characters in basements whenever I get stabbed or shot. Now I can come here instead.

SHARON

Don't take it as an invitation, you're still a hired killer.

JACK

I thought we were over that.

Sharon crosses her arms defiantly.

SHARON

Well we're not.

Sharon checks the pager that beeps in her pocket.

SHARON

I have to go, I'm needed. Don't go anywhere Father you're going to need a tetanus shot.

JACK

Looks like you're going to get another prick in the ass tonight.

Father Donnelly doesn't find it amusing.

JACK

Getting back to the girl.

FATHER DONNELLY

After he stabbed me I was very frightened, and in considerable pain. I grabbed my cassock to cover my nakedness. All the time he was laughing at me and jabbing at me with the knife.

JACK

Do you know his name?

FATHER DONNELLY

No. But he had an accent.

JACK

What kind of accent?

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm not sure. I was confused and frightened. I'd just been stabbed and the man that did it was standing a few feet away with a bloody knife in his hand. He could have been going to finish the job for all I knew.

JACK

I've been in a similar situation, but the result was somewhat different.

FATHER DONNELLY

What did you do?

JACK

My stab wound was a little higher up than yours, but in the back just the same. And yes, it is quite painful, but for me I suppose pain's just a part of the job. I feigned a stumble and looked scared, and in he came for the kill.

FATHER DONNELLY

Then what did you do?

JACK

What I'd trained to do a thousand times in the SAS, and in less than five seconds he was dead by his own knife. And in under half an hour I was in a grimy basement with a struck off vet stitching me up with fishing line - Again.

FATHER DONNELLY

That's terrible.

JACK

What is? Him stabbing me in the back, me killing him, or the ex-vet using fishing line?

FATHER DONNELLY

All of them, I suppose.

JACK

So in all ways my result was much different to yours.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, most certainly.

JACK

As, no doubt, was our training. Yours probably focused on forgiveness, whereas mine certainly didn't. Tell me what happened next?

FATHER DONNELLY

He snarled something and pointed to the door. I looked at Maggie and she just said "go, Father, get out." I got to the door and I stopped. I didn't want to leave her there with that animal. She shouted, "Just go, Father, I'll be alright."

JACK

Do you think she will be?

FATHER DONNELLY

I pray she will.

JACK

In this case, that might not be enough.

FATHER DONNELLY

I stepped out into the corridor and closed the door. I pulled my cassock on. I could feel the blood running down my leg. I wasn't sure what to do. I could hear muffled voices coming from the room.

JACK

Could you hear what they were saying?

FATHER DONNELLY

I tried to listen, but then a man, a big man, came toward me along the corridor. He saw me and came at me. I ran - I could hear him laughing at me.

JACK

Well let's just hope Maggie's okay. She works for him, and she's no good to him dead. He'd have to be a real bastard to kill a girl for giving a freebie to a priest, for God's sake.

FATHER DONNELLY

You didn't see him. What would you have done?

JACK

I'd have killed him, I expect.

FATHER DONNELLY

Have you no remorse when you've committed these acts.

JACK

No.

FATHER DONNELLY

Then what do you feel, when you shoot someone?

JACK

The recoil.

FATHER DONNELLY

Don't you ever feel compassion?

JACK

In my world compassion is weakness, and weakness is death.

FATHER DONNELLY

If that is your world, it is truly a sad one.

JACK

But if it wasn't for people like me, you could well be living in a sad world, too. You could be living under the rule of a foreign government and religion banned. Where would all your values be then, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

They, along with my faith, would remain with me.

JACK

And I believe they would. You could be a tower of strength to those suffering around you who, of course, wouldn't have to be suffering at all if people like me are allowed to do our job in the first place.

FATHER DONNELLY

But that world was when you were in the employ of the government, protecting the people of your country.

JACK

And what's to say I'm not still in the employ of the government, but more as a contractor nowadays as we are not officially at war, although we know who our enemies are.

FATHER DONNELLY

Are you trying to justify your position?

JACK

No. I'm a killer, that's my job, end of story.

FATHER DONNELLY

But you commit mortal sin.

JACK

We all commit mortal sin.

FATHER DONNELLY

All of us? I have never done anything that could be called a mortal sin.

JACK

It is not necessarily by doing something. It can just as easily be by not doing it.

FATHER DONNELLY

How?

JACK

Well, take Rwanda. Are you familiar with the country?

FATHER DONNELLY

I know it's in Africa somewhere.

JACK

It is and that's about as much as people want to know about it. I've spent some time in that part of the world. There was a civil war there. A tribe, the Tutsis, were the victims of genocide. Eight hundred thousand men women and children were butchered. And what did the powers of the world do - Nothing.

FATHER DONNELLY

Why?

JACK

Who knows. You could be cynical and say the country had nothing of value to the rest of the world.

FATHER DONNELLY

Such as oil.

JACK

Such as oil.

Sharon re-enters. Her gown is blood soaked. She is distraught.

FATHER DONNELLY

Doctor, are you alright?

Jack goes to her. She is crying as Jack holds her.

JACK

It's okay.

After a few moments, Sharon realizes she is being held and comforted by a killer. She pushes him away.

SHARON

No!

She hurriedly takes off her blood soaked gown and stuffs it into a linen basket. She turns to a sink and scrubs her hands vigorously as though washing away what has just happened.

The other two watch and say nothing.

She dries her hands as she regains her composure. Now she is ready. She leans against the bench top near the sink.

FATHER DONNELLY

What happened?

SHARON

There was nothing I could do. He died in front of me. He tried to rob a security guard of a pub's takings and got shot. A stupid waste of a young life.

FATHER DONNELLY

You're right, a sad waste.

SHARON

(Fixes Jack with an accusing stare)

And what about you? I don't see a any sadness in those cold eyes. But, then again, you're a killer aren't you. I suppose you just think he got what he deserved.

JACK

To a degree. I would have felt a lot sadder if it had been the security guard that died. He was probably just trying to put food on the table for his family

SHARON

It wasn't a man that shot him, it was a woman.

JACK

She was scared, I think she has the right to defend herself.

SHARON

She shot him in the chest.

JACK

Where should she have shot him?

SHARON

In the leg, or the arm, or something.

JACK

That only happens in the movies. She's one scared lady who thinks she's going to be killed and the chest is the biggest target.

SHARON

He only had a replica pistol.

JACK

She couldn't know that.

SHARON

It was just a toy gun.

JACK

What the hell do you want me to say?

FATHER DONNELLY

It doesn't really matter does it? A child is dead.

JACK

A child? How old was he?

SHARON

Nineteen.

JACK

Hardly a child, Father, and certainly old enough to know the difference between right and wrong. And old enough to die for his country, as many have.

SHARON

You're a cold man.

JACK

Maybe. But the guy lying in the morgue instigated the whole sad situation. The poor bastards lying in their thousands in ditches by the side of the road in Rwanda instigated nothing. They were killed for being born.

Sharon is temporarily confused as she missed the conversation on Rwanda.

SHARON

What?

FATHER DONNELLY

It must be horrible seeing someone die. As a priest I see the grief it causes to their loved ones. I may well be the one that has to console these people after I commit his body to the earth.

JACK

How long have you worked in casualty, Doc? Come to that, how long have you been a doctor?

SHARON

I've been here nearly a year. I qualified two years ago.

JACK

Did you volunteer for casualty?

Sharon is resolute and defiant.

SHARON

Yes.

JACK

Why?

SHARON

I felt it was my duty as a doctor.

JACK

Very noble. Do you always fall apart every time someone dies?

SHARON

It affects me, yes.

JACK

Try cosmetic surgery. You'll spend a lot less time crying and make a damn sight more money.

Sharon is angered by this comment and goes after Jack to confront him.

SHARON

Do you really think I took up this profession for the money?

JACK

You wouldn't be the first if you did.

SHARON

There is a reason I do what I do and where I've chosen to do it.

FATHER DONNELLY

And what is the reason?

SHARON

It's personal.

JACK

Hey, we're being open and honest here.

SHARON

I said, it's personal. But I'm certainly not doing it for the money.

Jack looks around at the rundown and tatty room.

JACK

No, I shouldn't think you are in this place.

FATHER DONNELLY

I certainly didn't take up mine for the money.

Jack becomes unsteady on his feet. Sharon becomes his doctor again.

SHARON
You'd better sit down.

JACK
I think you're right.

She helps Jack to a chair. He sits down.

SHARON
I'm going to give you an antibiotic.

Sharon goes to cupboard and unlocks it.

SHARON
And tell me, mister Higgins, is your work well paid?

JACK
Everything's relative.

Sharon gets out a syringe and a vial.

SHARON
What's the life of a person worth?

Sharon gets a bowl and a swab. She takes it over and puts it on the table next to Jack. She fills the syringe.

JACK
I've been places that a life is worth the price of a piece of bread or, more precisely, the price of a land mine or a bullet. And if they couldn't afford that they'd use a machete. You've just seen a young man die for the price of a drug fix. What difference does the price make?

Jack rolls up his sleeve.

FATHER DONNELLY
What price do you charge, mister Higgins, to kill a person?

JACK
You got someone you want to get rid of, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY
No, of course not.

Sharon moves close to Jack and holds the syringe up between them.

SHARON

(To Jack)

Don't be shy, you can tell us. Remember, we're bound to silence by our oaths. Your secret will be safe with us.

Sharon swabs Jack's arm.

JACK

Who said it's a secret. Don't you know, it pays to advertise.

FATHER DONNELLY

Very droll.

Sharon sticks the needle in.

JACK

Well, if you must know, every job is different. I've killed people for two bucks, I've killed people for a government pay packet and I've killed people for half a million dollars.

FATHER DONNELLY

May I ask who you killed for two dollars?

JACK

It was a private matter.

SHARON

Don't tell me the big, tough hitman is going to be coy.

Jack appraises Sharon.

JACK

You really want to know?

Sharon is withdrawing the needle - their faces are close.

SHARON

Yes.

There is a pause whilst Jack considers this. He makes a decision to go on, takes a breath, and starts.

JACK

He was a gangster. He had a few warehouses and a protection racket around here. He was a nasty piece of work, the whole neighborhood was scared of him. I don't know if the cops were scared of him too, or if he had something on one of them, or maybe they just liked his girls, but he pretty much did as he liked. And he liked to hurt people.

FATHER DONNELLY

Father Paul told me that kind of thing used to happen around here.

JACK

Well a few people disappeared and everyone knew he was responsible. Now these weren't other gangsters, or rivals, these were ordinary people. People with small businesses that wouldn't or couldn't pay for protection.

SHARON

Go on.

JACK

Well, on this particular occasion he picked on a corner store near where I live. It was on the boundary of his turf and the owners were Chinese immigrants. They were already paying an Asian gang and there wasn't enough money left to pay the this guy as well.

SHARON

What happened?

JACK

He said they wouldn't have to pay.

FATHER DONNELLY

Well, it goes to show that....

One look from Jack stops Father Donnelly mid sentence.

JACK

He took their fourteen year old daughter instead.

SHARON

My god.

JACK

There wasn't much left when he'd finished with her.

Jack thinks this conversation is over.

FATHER DONNELLY

What kind of world do we live in?

JACK

Well he doesn't live in it any more, that's for sure.

Jack starts rolling down his sleeve.

SHARON

What did you do?

JACK

You don't want to know?

SHARON

But I do.

JACK

Please yourself - Well, I thought it was important to set an example, because when he was out of the way, I knew some other piece of garbage would fill the void. It was a messy business.

SHARON

I'm a doctor.

Jack looks to Father Donnelly.

FATHER DONNELLY

The Lord makes me strong.

JACK

The sadistic bastard was so into pain that he had a torture chamber in the basement of one of his warehouses. It's where he took the girl. It was soundproofed for obvious reasons. And that's where he ended up, but this time it was him that was bound and naked - and very, very scared. It had devices in there I'd never seen before, and I've seen some weird and nasty stuff in my time. But one I recognized. It could deliver a powerful electrical current to a very sensitive part of the body.

FATHER DONNELLY

One can't imagine what that girl went through

JACK

Well, now it was his turn. He squealed like a pig. And that's what he was, just a big, guttless, sadistic pig. I connected him up to his own machine, turned it on and left him there to die, screaming like the fourteen year old girl probably did. I left a note explaining what would happen if someone else decided to try their hand.

FATHER DONNELLY

You must have taken a considerable risk in doing that.

JACK

From a professional point of view it was stupid.

Sharon walks away to dispose of the syringe and swab.

SHARON

But not from a moral point of view.

JACK

Careful Doctor, you can't be condoning murder. It wasn't even self defense.

SHARON

But he himself was a cruel and sadistic murderer - multi murderer.

JACK

But I became the judge, the jury - and the executioner.

FATHER DONNELLY

What about the people you kill in your professional capacity?

JACK

In my professional capacity I am neither judge or jury, just the executioner.

FATHER DONNELLY

So you gave the community a freebie.

The sound of an approaching ambulance siren.

SHARON

It wasn't a freebie. You said you did it for two dollars.

JACK

I'm a professional. If I'd have done it for nothing I'd be just another murderer. So I'm afraid I can't do freebies, not like your dear Maggie.

FATHER DONNELLY

The man you removed from the community sounds very much like the man I encountered tonight.

SHARON

Let's hope not.

The siren stops as the ambulance arrives outside..
Sharon's pager sounds and she checks it.

SHARON

What have we now?

Sharon slides the pager back in her pocket and exits.

FATHER DONNELLY

A busy night for the good doctor.

Jack turns and takes in the tatty interior of the room.

JACK

Why would any doctor volunteer for this?

FATHER DONNELLY

It's a vocation. You hear the call and you answer.

JACK

Rather like yourself.

FATHER DONNELLY

Indeed. Have you ever felt the calling?

JACK

A bit late for that, Father. In fact, I'd have to say I'm an atheist, wouldn't you?

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm not sure. You punished a man...

JACK

Killed, Father, killed.

FATHER DONNELLY

Is that not punishment? You punished a man who had perpetrated an evil and murderous act. Probably many darkly evil acts. Had he been tried before a judge in a court of law his punishment in many places would have been death. And in that court an oath may have been sworn upon the bible, so that would be justice sanctioned by the church.

JACK

Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord.

FATHER DONNELLY

Indeed.

JACK

Are you trying to say that I carried out your Lord's work?

FATHER DONNELLY

It's possible.

JACK

I never really saw myself as being on a righteous crusade.

FATHER DONNELLY

But what made you do it? Could it of not been your calling?

JACK

It felt like anger to me.

FATHER DONNELLY

The calling comes in many forms.

JACK

As I said earlier. It wouldn't be the first time a mercenary had carried out the church's work.

Sharon returns carrying a clipboard, a wry smile on her face.

JACK

Nothing too traumatic this time?

Sharon takes off her rubber gloves and bins them.

SHARON

No. Not for me. Quite possibly for the patient. He's being stabilized, x-rayed and prepped for surgery.

FATHER DONNELLY

What happened?

SHARON

He stole a car

JACK

And hopefully he was involved in a crash.

SHARON

He was indeed.

FATHER DONNELLY

Was he badly hurt?

SHARON

Not by the crash, but by the extremely large rottweiler he didn't notice sleeping on the back seat. Which, of course, was also the reason for the crash.

FATHER DONNELLY

Thou shalt not steal.

JACK

The lord giveth and the lord taketh away.

SHARON

And in this case he tooketh away a couple of fingers and the major part of one ear.

FATHER DONNELLY

(Suppressing a smile)

Sometimes it's hard to be sympathetic.

SHARON

(To Jack - contemptuous)

I expect you'd like to lock him back in the car with the dog for another few minutes.

JACK

I'd tie a pork chop around his neck and weld the doors shut if I had my way.

SHARON

You're a very callous man, mister Higgins.

JACK

I find it helps in my line of work.

FATHER DONNELLY

But it does sound a little draconian.

JACK

Not at all like the church.

FATHER DONNELLY

Not nowadays, no.

JACK

The church seems to be an institution that lives on its history. Well, the good bits anyway. "We'll keep the good bits but the odd inquisition, and a few other nasty bits we'll let slide."

SHARON

History has always been written by the winners. I'm sure some of the losers could have written more accurate accounts had they been allowed to.

FATHER DONNELLY

Absolutely. But I'm afraid that if you put the books next to each other in a bookstore, one would be a best seller and one would not, and I don't think I have to say which one it would be.

SHARON

The world does love a winner. And let's face it, some written accounts of historical events have no proof, just someone with a quill and a bit of imagination. We're our own worst enemy at times.

FATHER DONNELLY

Indeed.

JACK

Well, there's certainly been a car thief and a mugger that were their own worst enemies tonight.

SHARON

Sadly, I have to agree. Although we don't know what drove them to do the things they did.

JACK

Of course, it could just be greed or a desire for something they didn't have, or don't want to work for.

SHARON

Even I have to laugh at some of the ones that we get in here sometimes.

JACK

I thought the car thief was quite amusing.

FATHER DONNELLY

I don't suppose there are many humorous moments in your business, mister Higgins.

SHARON

Yes, mister Higgins. Do you find any humour in your work?

JACK

There is the occasional moment of irony. They're usually quite short, as you can imagine.

SHARON

Such as?

JACK

Well, once I was employed by a government agency to take out a Colombian drug lord. I watched him for a while and he always varied his movements - the usual anti-assassination stuff. But he was having an affair with a fiery lover he kept in a penthouse. It was his weakness and I took up position on a rooftop across the street to take advantage of it. Even across the street I could hear them arguing and then the blows and the screaming. Anyway, he very kindly stepped out onto the balcony to smoke a cigarette.

SHARON

How considerate.

JACK

That's what I thought. An easy shot. I'm just taking a bead on his chest and suddenly he disappeared out of the scope.

SHARON

What happened?

JACK

His lover had pushed him off the balcony.

FATHER DONNELLY

Ah, the fiery Latin temperament brought him undone.

SHARON

Sounds like he had it coming - one way or another.

JACK

So did she. One anguished scream and she threw herself off the balcony after him.

SHARON

My God, that's too much passion.

JACK

No. That's too much of his own product. They must have hoovered a mountain of the stuff up their noses. I had a hell of a job getting paid as well because technically I didn't fulfill my contract.

SHARON

Is that what you were thinking when you looked down at them? Did you feel cheated, looking down at their mangled bodies?

JACK

Yes. The best part of a month of hot, sweaty, dangerous days, shadowing the moron, and by the time I pick my spot, take aim and I'm ready to squeeze the trigger, the idiot's plunging head first toward the ground at better than a hundred and twenty miles an hour. I did contemplate firing one into his skull so that I had technically fulfilled my contract.

FATHER DONNELLY

Why didn't you? It certainly wouldn't have made any difference to him, would it.

JACK

Purely technical reasons. There were people around the body. He'd landed amongst some very startled alfresco diners enjoying a few drinks before dinner. It was very messy and I imagine a few of the diners never made it to the main course.

SHARON

Oh, we must avoid collateral damage, must we.

JACK

Absolutely. I'm a professional. Anyway, I couldn't see a piece of skull big enough to put a bullet hole in.

SHARON

And he would have been number what on your list of victims?

JACK

I think the word victim isn't entirely accurate.

FATHER DONNELLY

Surely, if you kill someone he becomes a victim.

JACK

More a completed contract.

SHARON

Is that really your world?

JACK

Yes.

SHARON

Don't you have any emotions?

JACK

I'm not devoid of all emotion. I remember being the only one that cried when we all watched Dumbo as kids.

FATHER DONNELLY

Dumbo?

SHARON

A film about an elephant with abnormally large ears.

FATHER DONNELLY

You said when you all watched it. Are you from a large family?

JACK

A very small family. A family of one, in fact.

FATHER DONNELLY

An only child.

JACK

Yes, just me. No brothers or sisters, or mother or father or aunts or uncles. Just me.

SHARON

You're an orphan.

JACK

I imagine one of my natural parents could still be alive.

FATHER DONNELLY

You've made no effort to find them?

JACK

I'm pretty good at finding people, as you can imagine. But in my case my mother did a damn good job of leaving no trail.

SHARON

How did she manage that?

JACK

I take it that you're from Saint Peters, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, yes I am.

JACK

Your predecessor ran the church for close to fifty years, didn't he.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes. Father Paul passed away only recently.

JACK

I know, I was at the funeral.

FATHER DONNELLY

(surprised)

What was Father Paul to you?

JACK)

He baptized me thirty odd years ago, not long after he was summoned to his front door by someone knocking on it at one o'clock in the morning. What he found on the doorstep was a cardboard box and in it, wrapped in a towel, was me. Newly born and screaming my tiny lungs out.

SHARON

So you were abandoned at birth.

JACK

Yes.

FATHER DONNELLY

How sad. I wonder what could drive a mother to abandon her newborn child.

JACK

Well, whatever it was, it was enough to make her do it.

SHARON

And you have no idea who she was or what caused her to do it?

JACK

By the time I was old enough to start looking, the trail was cold. Very cold.

SHARON

It's a shame. I believe a person should know who their biological parents are.

FATHER DONNELLY

And you have no idea.

JACK

Oh, I did investigate. Even up to a few years ago, whenever I was in the neighborhood for long enough to resume the search, I did.

SHARON

You made no headway?

JACK

There have been the odd clues. But a lot of the people of the time have either died or left the area.

FATHER DONNELLY

Do you not have a hunch born out of instinct?

JACK

Yes, Father, I do.

FATHER DONNELLY

And may we ask what that hunch is?

JACK

I don't see why not, although you might not like what you hear.

SHARON

Why?

JACK

It's up to you, Father.

FATHER DONNELLY

I fail to see why I wouldn't like what I hear. Please, continue.

JACK

Father Paul arranged for me to go to an orphanage. It's gone now, but it was close to the church and supported by it. He always kept in touch and always summoned me to the church to give me a present on my birthday.

SHARON

Perhaps having found you he felt like a surrogate father.

JACK

Perhaps that was the reason and perhaps not. Anyway, he kept the box he found me in. He gave it to me when I left the orphanage and joined the army. But I asked him to hold onto it for me as I didn't know what lay ahead. It's still in the storeroom in the cellar of the church, is it not?

FATHER DONNELLY

So that's what he meant.

SHARON

What did he say?

FATHER DONNELLY

He took me down to the cellar not long after I arrived. He showed me where various bits and pieces I would need were stored. And then he showed me a cardboard box with a towel in it that's stored on the top shelf. He told me I was to never throw it out because one day someone would come for it, and that when they came I would know who they were.

SHARON

How bizarre.

FATHER DONNELLY

Father Paul became a tad eccentric as his days wore on.

JACK

I don't think it was that.

FATHER DONNELLY

What was it then?

JACK

Look at me Father. Look closely. What do you see?

Father Donnelly looks closely at Jack. Something is there, but he can't quite find it.

JACK

My face, Father. Is it not familiar? Look at my eyes, my mouth.

The realization hits Father Donnelly. - Jack Higgins is the illegitimate son of Father Paul

FATHER DONNELLY

No, it can't be. But your eyes....

JACK

And why can't it? Were you yourself not in the company of a woman tonight. What makes you think Father Paul was any less lonely than you. Perhaps he too was weak of resolve on occasion.

SHARON

Are you saying....?

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes. There is a certain resemblance, it is undeniable.

JACK

You will find that his father was called Jack. Father Paul, having found me, was asked to offer a name for the abandoned child.

FATHER DONNELLY

But you can't prove it.

JACK

I think I can.

SHARON

How, now that Father Paul has passed away.

JACK

(To Father Donnelly)

He had an open casket at his funeral, did he not?

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes he did. He left behind a lot of very devoted parishioners.

SHARON

It appears that's not all he left behind.

JACK

I was one of the many that approached his coffin prior to the burial. But I was probably the only one that snipped off a lock of his hair.

SHARON

You've had a DNA test done on it?

JACK

No, not yet.

Jack takes a locket from around his neck and opens it.

JACK

I still have the lock of hair. I carry it with me. If I die, the proof will no longer be required.

FATHER DONNELLY

I can't believe it. Father Paul was so strong. He was an inspiration.

JACK

Well there's nothing to stop you being an inspiration now, is there Father.

FATHER DONNELLY

I feel I will never have his strength, his resolve.

JACK

He was flesh and blood, just like you and me.

SHARON

Are you sure you should be seeing yourself in the same light as the clergy, what with your penchant for knocking people off and everything?

JACK

Yes, I could be stretching it a little there.

SHARON

Where did the Higgins part come from?

JACK

Well that's where it does become a little bizarre, considering tonight's events.

SHARON

It's already more than a little bizarre.

JACK

There was a, how shall we say, house of ill repute, close to the church and Mary Higgins was a worker there. She was a regular at the church services held by Father Paul. It's how they met.

FATHER DONNELLY

Just Like....

SHARON

Maggie.

FATHER DONNELLY

No, this is preposterous.

JACK

Is it, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

The whole story is preposterous.

SHARON

Is there really a likeness in mister Higgins' face, Father? A likeness to Father Paul?

FATHER DONNELLY

As I said, there is a certain resemblance. But that is not enough to draw any kind of conclusion.

JACK

Why would I lie?

FATHER DONNELLY

I don't know.

JACK

What have I got to gain? An inheritance?

FATHER DONNELLY

We of the cloth...

JACK

Yes, yes, I know the vow. Worldly possessions and all that.

Jack falters a little

JACK

You must excuse me, the spider bite the good doctor is said to be treating seems to be making me feel a little nauseous. Please feel free to talk about me when I'm gone...

Jack walks to the door and turns back to them.

JACK

But not to anyone else of course. We must remember our oaths, must we not.

Jack exits.

SHARON

So what could he have to gain by that bizarre story?

FATHER DONNELLY

I have no idea.

SHARON

Do you think it's true?

FATHER DONNELLY

There is a definite likeness and he knew about the box.

SHARON

Would it really matter if it were true?

FATHER DONNELLY

A liaison between a highly regarded member of the clergy and a prostitute is not something the hierarchy of the church would like to see out in the open. It would not inspire confidence in the priesthood.

SHARON

Does it really matter if they're sex workers? I hear the way you talk about your Maggie, your dear Maggie. There's more to your relationship than a purely physical one, isn't there?

Father Donnelly's anguish surfaces.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, yes there is.

SHARON

You're worried about her aren't you?

FATHER DONNELLY

Of course I am. But what can I do? I feel so helpless.

SHARON

I can call the police for you.

FATHER DONNELLY

And then what? If he hasn't already beaten her, he will after the police visit him. All I can do is pray.

The muted sound of a siren on an approaching ambulance.

SHARON

He sounds like a very nasty piece of work, and praying just might not be enough.

FATHER DONNELLY

Some of the stories I have heard chill the bones. I have asked, begged Maggie, to leave but the poor girl is so scared.

SHARON

Too scared to run, like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

The sound of the ambulance siren stops, indicating that an ambulance has arrived.

Jack re-enters.

JACK

Another ambulance has just pulled up. I'd say you'd be getting a call any second. Oh, and can you see what's happening about my bite? I've just thrown up my dinner, and that's not something I normally do.

Sharon walks across and feels Jack's forehead.

SHARON

You are starting to run a temperature. I'm hoping the antibiotic might do the trick if it's not one of the really nasty ones. But, if it was deadly I'm sure we'd know by now.

JACK

Yes' I'd be dead.

Jack looks at his stiffening finger as he tries to bend it.

SHARON

Exactly.

Sharon's pager sounds. She pulls out the pager and reads the message.

SHARON

The lab has identified the spider.

JACK

Good.

SHARON

The question is, should I administer an antidote knowing what you intend to use that finger for?

JACK

I'll tell you what. Give it to me and I'll administer it myself. I have given the odd injection before.

FATHER DONNELLY

And what would cause you to give an injection?

JACK

Various reasons. A drunk doctor removing a bullet from my thigh was one time. He passed out during the procedure so I had to do it myself.

SHARON

He should of been struck off.

JACK

He was, well before he operated on me - not long after he left medical school, actually. I think he had a problem with blood. So, as he fainted at the sight of it, his career as a doctor was always going to be somewhat limited, even with the help of some bottled courage.

SHARON

You're still alive.

JACK

And I have the scar to prove it.

Sharon's pager sounds again.

JACK

Things are hotting up.

Sharon reads the message.

SHARON

So it seems.

Sharon picks up her stethoscope in preparation.

The muted sound of a commotion comes from outside, with shouting and yelling.

Jack goes to the door and peeks out.

JACK

Sounds like things really are hotting up.

Sharon walks across and opens the door through which Jack peeks and looks out.

We hear the hostile, angry voice of IGOR PETROV. A gangster and a very unpleasant person.

PETROV (O.S.)

(shouting with a Russian accent)

You will save her or you will join her.

SERGE (O.S.)

Please calm down.

Sharon exits and leaves Jack watching through the glass panel.

FATHER DONNELLY

What's going on?

JACK

Some big guy shouting and hollering. There's someone on a gurney. I can't see much of them, they're covered in blood.

FATHER DONNELLY

(Quizzical)

That voice....

Father Donnelly walks stiffly over to the door and looks out of the window in the adjoining door. He is horrified.

FATHER DONNELLY

Dear Lord, it's him.

JACK

Who?

FATHER DONNELLY

The man that stabbed me.

ACT 2

SCENE ONE.

Jack and Father Donnelly are looking through the glass panel in the door and watching the proceedings outside..

SHARON (O.S.)

Please wait here.

Jack and Father Donnelly jump back from the door as the gurney with MAGGIE, covered in blood, comes bowling through propelled by Serge and Sharon.

SHARON

Get me plasma. We have to stabilize her. Quickly, Serge.

Serge hurries off and exits. As the door closes behind him we hear a muffled exchange.

PETROV (O.S.)
Will she live?

SERGE (O.S.)
I don't know. Please wait here.

Father Donnelly limps over.

FATHER DONNELLY
Dear Lord, it's Maggie. What has he done to her? The man's an animal.

Jack walks over and looks at Maggie.

JACK
Will she make it?

Sharon shines a light into Maggie's eyes.

SHARON
I don't know. Her pupils aren't responding.

Jack holds up her bloody, mutilated hand.

JACK
He's cut her fingers off.

Father Donnelly runs to the sink and throws up.

Jack puts her hand down gently.

SHARON
Mister Higgins.

She places a large swab in Jack's hand and guides it to a spot on Maggie's blood soaked body.

SHARON
Keep pressure on the wound.

Jack complies.

Sharon is probing Maggie's abdomen.

SHARON
I'm worried about what's happening inside. All this bruising.

JACK
You need help here.

SHARON

Like who? There's just me and some interns.

Sharon wraps a blood pressure bandage around Maggie's arm and takes a reading.

SHARON

Her blood pressure is dropping fast.

JACK

Internal bleeding?

SHARON

Yes.

Father Donnelly makes his way back to the gurney but he is weak and his legs unsteady. He looks down at Maggie and strokes her face gently. He looks at her wounds, staggers and grabs the plasma stand for support.

SHARON

Sit down, Father.

(To Jack)

I've got that.

She takes over where Jack has been keeping pressure on a wound. She motions with her head to Jack that he should look after Father Donnelly.

Jack nods. He gently takes Father Donnelly by the arm.

JACK

Come on, Father, there's nothing you can do here.

Jack helps the priest to the table and seats him with his back to what is going on. He goes to the sink and gets him a glass of water. Father Donnelly ignores it and starts to quietly pray.

Sharon prepares a syringe.

Serge enters with the plasma, puts it on the stands and connects it up.

SHARON

I'll stabilize her as much as I can and then we'll need x-rays. Tell x-ray we'll be down as soon as we can, Serge.

SERGE

They have the car crash victim and...

SHARON

I don't care about him, he asked for it. Tell them five minutes.

Serge nods and makes to leave.

SHARON

And see if you can find someone to give me...

Sharon looks at Serge and his look tells her she is asking the impossible.

SHARON

Forget it.

JACK

Anything I can do?

SHARON

There's nothing much anyone can do. Until she's stabilized and x-rayed I don't know what I'm dealing with. I'm sure she has internal bleeding but we can't do anything until she's stable. I can't even move her to another hospital in this condition, she just wouldn't make it.

JACK

How long will it take to stabilize her?

Sharon glances to Father Donnelly's back as he sits with his head bowed and quietly praying. She shakes her head slowly. Maggie is dying.

Petrov enters. An angry, evil man. He marches over and looks at Maggie. He is not emotional. He speaks with a Russian accent.

PETROV

You will save her.

SHARON

If I can I will. She's in a bad way.

PETROV

She deserved it.

SHARON

Nobody deserves this. Why are you so concerned that she lives? You seem to have done your best to kill her.

PETROV

I don't want the police involved. If she dies homicide will be involved.

SHARON

Why did you do this?

PETROV

As an example. An example to the other girls.

SHARON

Would you wait outside please.

PETROV

I will wait here. She is my property.

Jack is unafraid, cool and calculating.

JACK

The doctor asked you to wait outside.

PETROV

(contemptuously)

Who are you?

JACK

I'm a specialist.

PETROV

Then do as I say and save her.

JACK

That's not what I specialize in.

PETROV

Then what kind of specialist are you?

JACK

It doesn't concern you. Now get out.

PETROV

Who do you think you are talking to? Do you know who I am?

JACK

I know who you are and I know what you are, and neither are very pleasant.

PETROV

(Threatening)

I am Igor Petrov, and you, my friend, are asking for trouble.

JACK

It wouldn't be the first time. And I'm not your friend. Far from it. Very far from it.

PETROV

I make a bad enemy.

JACK

And I shouldn't think you make a particularly good friend, either.

SHARON

I think we should call the police.

PETROV

And what will they do? You have no evidence that I did this. You have no witnesses. If you think I will confess and beg forgiveness you are bigger fools than I thought.

Father Donnelly rises and turns toward the group.

FATHER DONNELLY

But there is a witness.

Petrov sees Father Donnelly for the first time. He is surprised and annoyed.

PETROV

You!

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, me.

PETROV

If you value your position in the church, you will say nothing?

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm beginning to wonder if I do.

JACK

It's alright, Father, I'll handle this - my way.

SHARON

Your way?

JACK

Yes, my way.

PETROV

And what is your way, mister specialist?

JACK

You seem to consider yourself above the law, Petrov.

PETROV

The law in this country is nothing. I own policemen. They do my bidding. The homicide detectives, they are a little more difficult, that is why she must not die.

JACK

The police only enforce one kind of justice. There are two kinds of justice.

FATHER DONNELLY

There is the Lord's justice.

JACK

Alright, three kinds of justice.

PETROV

Where I come from, justice is dispensed only by the strong, the powerful.

Sharon takes another blood pressure reading.

SHARON

Blood pressure is still dropping - Have you ever thought of returning to wherever it is you come from, mister Petrov?

PETROV

Why, when I have everything I need here? Power, money - Save the girl, that is all you have to do Doctor. It is, after all, your job. You are bound by your, your Hippocratic oath, are you not?

SHARON

I've had just about enough of being bound by oaths tonight. Would you mind leaving so that I can get on with my job. It is, after all, my Hippocratic duty.

JACK

Come along, mister Petrov, let's leave the good doctor to do her work.

Jack unbalances Petrov with a sudden friendly gesture accompanied by a smile.

JACK

Hey, I'll even buy you a coffee, how about that?

PETROV

You are a fool, but I will drink your coffee.

JACK

Excellent. Perhaps we can get off on the right foot this time. You and I do have something in common, you know.

PETROV

Do we? I doubt it.

JACK

You'd be surprised. Very surprised.

PETROV

I don't like surprises.

Jack opens the door for Petrov. When Petrov has exited, Jack looks back at the other two.

JACK

How unfortunate.

Jack follows Petrov through the door.

JACK (O.S.)

I'm very good at surprises.

Sharon checks Maggie.

SHARON

She's as stable she's going to get. Will you give me a hand, Father, I need to take her to x-ray.

FATHER DONNELLY

Of course. Please tell me. Do you think she'll live?

SHARON

No, Father, unfortunately I don't.

FATHER DONNELLY

But you will try.

SHARON

Of course I will. I took an oath, remember.

FATHER DONNELLY

Look at the poor girl. The man is an animal, he deserves...

SHARON

He deserves what, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

Nothing. He deserves nothing.

SHARON

Were you going to say he deserves to die?

FATHER DONNELLY

I cannot say that, it's against everything I've believed in my entire life. It would make my whole existence hollow.

SHARON

I see something like this, and sometimes, deep down, I wish the person responsible was dead. I know it's wrong, I'm a doctor, and like you it would destroy everything I have worked so hard for.

FATHER DONNELLY

It's what makes us stronger in the end.

Sharon checks Maggie's pulse.

SHARON

Her pulse is irregular - Sometimes, just sometimes, I don't want to be strong. I want to see what I believe is justice. Real justice.

FATHER DONNELLY

The kind dispensed by mister Higgins? - Perhaps justice will be done in the end. The very end and dispensed by the Lord himself.

SHARON

It's a nice thought Father. But just sometimes I'd like to see it sooner rather than later.

Sharon feels Maggie's abdomen. She puts her stethoscope to her chest.

FATHER DONNELLY

And just sometimes Doctor, so would I. But the Lord does work in mysterious ways.

SHARON

I wonder what Maggie thinks of the Lord and his mysterious ways. A test of her faith, perhaps.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, it is a test. A test for all of us.

SHARON

Well it's a test that will almost certainly kill her.

FATHER DONNELLY

I pray that it doesn't.

Sharon's pager goes off and she checks it.

SHARON

X-ray are ready for us.

Sharon quickly puts her hand on Maggie's chest.

SHARON

Her breathing is irregular. Quickly.

At Sharon's urging they exit with the gurney.

A few moments pass before Jack and Petrov enter carrying coffees.

JACK

Looks like we have the place to ourselves.

PETROV

So it would appear. So, what is it that we have in common, mister...?

JACK

Higgins, Jack Higgins.

PETROV

Mister Higgins. You said you were a medical specialist.

JACK

No, I said I was a specialist.

PETROV

In what field?

JACK

I'm an extermination specialist. You know, cockroaches, rats, that kind of thing. I get rid of all kinds of verminous creatures.

PETROV

So what do we have in common?

JACK

We are both killers - I'm sure I've seen you before. I have a good memory for faces. It comes in handy in my line of work.

PETROV

(growing angry/threatening)

Are you saying that I look like a pest, like vermin? Is that what you are saying, mister Higgins?

Petrov is getting angry, but Jack is not intimidated

JACK

No, more like a parasite than a pest. A leech perhaps. Either way you should probably be exterminated.

Petrov's anger is rising closer to the surface.

PETROV

You are in dangerous territory, my friend.

Jack shows no fear.

JACK

Dangerous territory and I are old friends. Anyway, it's a hospital, hardly dangerous territory. And I've told you before, I'm not your friend.

PETROV

I could kill you here and now.

JACK

That would be stupid, even for you. In a public hospital casualty ward on a Saturday night. There's people next door and security cameras everywhere, plus one of your girls clinging to life by her fingernails.

PETROV

She no longer has fingernails.

JACK

Or fingers. You're a nasty piece of work Petrov, but you lack imagination. Pulling out her fingernails, cutting off fingers, that went out with the inquisition.

PETROV

We all of us have our dark side.

JACK

Indeed we do. Indeed we do. Anyway, you said yourself that you don't want the homicide cops involved. And they would be if you killed me here.

PETROV

That is true. But I'm sure an opportunity will arise.

JACK

You're right, patience is the key. Planning and waiting, they're what make a good killer.

PETROV

A good killer?

JACK

Well, an effective one.

PETROV

Do you lie in wait for your cockroaches and rats, mister Exterminator?

JACK

Not always, no. If a cockroach runs across the floor in front of me, I step on it.

Sharon and Father Donnelly enter. They are sombre with underlying anger.

They see Petrov and hesitate.

SHARON

You're an evil bastard.

PETROV

(dismissive/confident)

As I say, we all have our dark side.

Father Donnelly becomes more distraught.

FATHER DONNELLY

You are an animal, Petrov.

PETROV

(taunting)

All these names.

FATHER DONNELLY

I loved that woman, she...

PETROV

Loved her. She is a whore.

JACK

You said, loved?

SHARON

She's dead. We never made it to x-ray.

PETROV

Then you failed in your work.

SHARON

Nobody could have saved her. You were very thorough. She had massive internal injuries. She didn't have a chance. I'm surprised she even made it to the hospital. She went into renal failure and then cardiac arrest. She never regained consciousness.

PETROV

In hindsight it would probably have been better if she hadn't made it to the hospital.

JACK

Yes. You could have dumped the body and nobody would have been any the wiser. A bad choice. You've incriminated yourself by coming here. Very unprofessional.

PETROV

I came as a concerned employer.

FATHER DONNELLY

You forget, I was there Petrov.

PETROV

Call the police then Father. It's your word against mine. And I think that as you, a man of the cloth, were in a brothel enjoying the pleasures of the flesh, will not make you a very credible witness.

SHARON

I have to call the police.

PETROV

And tell them what?

SHARON

That a girl has been tortured to death and that I believe you're responsible.

PETROV

All circumstantial of course. And I, of course, will furnish a different story.

JACK

Such as?

PETROV

I walked in and found her being tortured by none other than the good Father here. As I tried valiantly to save her from him a fight ensued, in which the Father received a flesh wound....

FATHER DONNELLY

What kind of mind do you have to even think of these things?

PETROV

He left the scene as I tried in vain to save my employee from the horrendous injuries inflicted by the priest, who is obviously some kind of religious zealot. I even brought her here. Yes, I think that will do nicely.

JACK

I think it would be in your best interest to leave this room now, Petrov.

PETROV

Yes, you are right. I need to make some phone calls and they are very private calls. I'm sure you have much to discuss. I will remain close by, should you need me.

SHARON

What the hell would we need you for?

JACK

You never know.

Petrov goes to the door. He sneers an evil, arrogant smile and leaves.

SHARON

What the hell do I do?

JACK

He's a wily one.

FATHER DONNELLY

He's evil incarnate. I didn't know such creatures existed. Poor Maggie.

Father Donnelly sits with his head bowed.

JACK

Oh, they're out there alright.

SHARON

You have to help me here.

JACK

You've got to remember, he's ruthless, and no doubt rich. If it goes to court it will get messy. We'd all be called and I really can't afford that. I don't need people digging around in my past - or present, come to that.

FATHER DONNELLY

My life in the church will be over. But, I will gladly sacrifice that to bring that evil being to justice.

JACK

And you, Doc?

Sharon hesitates.

SHARON

No, I can't do it.

FATHER DONNELLY

Why, for heaven's sake? You've seen what he's done.

SHARON

I can't Father, I'm sorry.

JACK

Why not? You're a doctor and you volunteered to work here, any jury....

SHARON

(To Jack)

You asked me earlier how long I had been practicing and why I volunteered for this job.

JACK

Yes. You said you've been practicing for what, a couple of years.

SHARON

Doesn't that seem a relatively short time for someone my age.

JACK

A late calling?

SHARON

You could say that. You see, I've got more in common with Maggie than just being a woman - I was a prostitute just like her.

FATHER DONNELLY

Dear God!

JACK

Do you want to tell us about it?

SHARON

No. But I suppose I have to, because we're in this together, like it or not - A bit like you, I never met one of my parents. My father was long gone even before I was born. My mother was very ill for a long time. I had to look after her. She died when I was seventeen. I got into drugs, one thing led to another, and that was it, one junkie whore.

Father Donnelly shakes his head sadly. Sharon absently rubs the inside of her forearm.

FATHER DONNELLY

And now you are being put through this - It's all my fault. If only I was stronger. I'm sorry, so sorry. With all my faith, all my belief, when I needed strength, I had none.

JACK

Petrov's a sadist and sooner or later one of the girls would have died. Some probably already have, here or somewhere else.

SHARON

He's right. Girls like me, like them, no one misses.

JACK

How did you beat it? The drugs?

SHARON

(To Father Donnelly)

You talk of what a good a man Father Paul was. Well I owe everything to a nun, Sister Agnita. If it wasn't for her I'd probably be dead too. She ran a shelter, a refuge for drug users, and she cared about me when no one else did.

JACK

That's why you work here, isn't it? You're repaying a debt.

SHARON

Yes, I am.

Jack is troubled.

FATHER DONNELLY

What's wrong?

JACK

It gives us a big problem.

SHARON

Yes.

FATHER DONNELLY

What's that?

SHARON

If it went to court and Petrov's lawyers dug up my past, how do you think my testimony will look. The ex-prostitute trying to get her revenge on a sadistic pimp.

JACK

Your evidence would do more harm than good.

SHARON

It seems that Petrov has us where he wants us. He's going to walk away from this scot free and we can't do a damn thing about it.

FATHER DONNELLY

He will be brought to account eventually.

JACK

I'm sure we'll all be brought to account eventually. The question is, what is this bastard going to do between then and now? How many more defenseless girls will he torture to death?

FATHER DONNELLY

What can we do? I don't want Maggie's death to go unpunished, either. I want to see Petrov brought to account.

JACK

An eye for an eye, Father?

SHARON
Damn right.

FATHER DONNELLY
There must be a way.

JACK
There is a way.

SHARON
And what's that?

JACK
We do it ourselves.

FATHER DONNELLY
You can't mean....

JACK
It's up to you.

SHARON
Are you saying that we kill Petrov?

JACK
Why not. You've both just been saying what an evil bastard he is. An eye for an eye and all that. You act now or he walks free.

FATHER DONNELLY
I could not be a party to murder.

JACK
Why the hell not. You're a member of the church aren't you. Your mob have been putting the sword to people one way or another for centuries. Crusades, inquisitions, burning so-called heretics at the stake. The list is long Father when it comes to the church dishing out its own so called justice.

Jack walks over to a cabinet, withdraws a scalpel, removes the wrapper and examines the instrument.

JACK
Now's your chance for a bit of hands-on experience. You've already felt one end of a knife tonight, now it's time to grip the other end.

Jack hands Father Donnelly the scalpel, handle first. Father Donnelly stares at it.

JACK

You want him dead or don't you? He tortured the woman you love to death.

SHARON

This is ridiculous.

JACK

Is it? Is it really? You both agree that he's a sadistic, murdering bastard that deserves to die. So kill him - Even I think he's an evil bastard and deserves to die and I'm a professional killer.

SHARON

Then why don't you kill him?

JACK

Because I'm a professional killer.

FATHER DONNELLY

Exactly.

JACK

A professional, Father. Killing is what I'm paid to do. It's my job, therefore I need an employer. Somebody has to pay me to do it.

SHARON

Can't you make an exception?

JACK

I told you before, then I'd simply be a murderer.

SHARON

As opposed to a professional killer.

JACK

Yes.

FATHER DONNELLY

Is that not splitting hairs?

JACK

It might be to you, Father.

SHARON

But you did one before....

JACK

If you remember, I didn't do it for free, I did it for two dollars.

SHARON

So what's the big deal?

JACK

The two dollars. I was employed to do it. An instrument of death wielded by my employer. Hey. I don't like the guy. He's a piece of garbage but - I'm a pro and I have my ethics. Now, if you two want to chip in a buck apiece....

FATHER DONNELLY

That would make us conspirators.

JACK

Coconspirators, in fact.

SHARON

And equally guilty of murder in the eyes of the law.

JACK

And the eyes of the Lord, I would imagine.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes.

JACK

You'd be as guilty as if it were you running a blade through his black heart or putting a bullet into his sadistic brain. It will be you that are his judge and jury.

FATHER DONNELLY

And you his executioner.

JACK

I assure you I have more experience in my part in this than you do in yours. It's your call. I'm going to check our friend is still around, because if he's gone, the whole thing will become a little more difficult.

SHARON

You mean you're going to do it here, in the hospital!

JACK

Damn right. He won't be expecting it here. I just told him he'd be stupid to try and kill me here.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yet you intend to kill him here.

JACK

Absolutely.

SHARON

Did you have that in mind when you said it to him?

JACK

Of course. One must always plan ahead, especially in the business in which we are all now engaged.

SHARON

We're not all engaged in it yet.

JACK

No, not yet. If you pay, he pays.

Jack exits.

FATHER DONNELLY

How can one human being do what he did to another. To torture and kill an innocent human being. A beautiful human being.

SHARON

Man's inhumanity to man.

FATHER DONNELLY

It's incredible that we design ways of inflicting pain. Are we truly God's children?

SHARON

Jesus died on the cross.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes, he did.

SHARON

Well that was an early lesson we didn't heed, wasn't it. But what of our present dilemma, Father?

FATHER DONNELLY

I feel great rage within. But can I condone murder? Can I sentence another to death, even though he murdered the woman I love?

SHARON

You really did love her, didn't you.

FATHER DONNELLY

Yes. She begged me to leave the church so we could be together. But, like you, Doctor, I have a vocation. A reason for being. She said if we were to be together it had to be somewhere far away. I thought it was just the romance of eloping with her lover, but now I realize that fear was the reason we had to move far away.

SHARON

You said before that you were beginning to doubt your faith.

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm so confused. When does right become wrong and wrong become right?

SHARON

What's it to be Father? Do we sacrifice everything we believe in, or do we let a sadistic killer walk away free to murder again?

FATHER DONNELLY

Do we follow our beliefs as a priest and a doctor, or do we follow our hearts and commit our souls to the devil and take the consequences?

SHARON

Maggie, your Maggie, has been savagely murdered by a sadistic killer who will not be punished by our legal system. Do we stand aside or do we...

Sharon moves aside as though letting an invisible person pass.

FATHER DONNELLY

Take up the cudgel?

Father Donnelly forms a fist and raises it like a club. His anger briefly showing before he weakly drops his raised arm.

FATHER DONNELLY

Perhaps mister Higgins was right when he said he wanted nothing of being the judge and jury. It seems the physical act itself, monstrous though it is, is far less difficult that giving the order to do it.

SHARON

There must be another way.

FATHER DONNELLY

Divine intervention?

SHARON

Can we really afford to wait for that. We're damned if we do and damned if we don't. If we let the killer of an innocent girl walk free, are we as guilty as if we take it upon ourselves to punish him because no one else can or will?

Jack enters .

FATHER DONNELLY

Perhaps it's all in the interpretation.

JACK

Well you'd best interpret it one way or the other, he's on his way back.

Jack indicates the locked cupboard.

JACK

Are there drugs in there?

SHARON

Some.

JACK

Can I have the key?

Sharon makes a decision, and gives Jack the key.

Jack goes over to the cupboard containing vials of drugs and opens it. He examines a few. He holds up a vial and reads the label, then another.

SHARON

What are you doing?

JACK

Just looking.

Jack goes to another cupboard and looks at a number of syringes and casually examines them.

JACK

Anything bigger?

SHARON

In the drawer.

Jack opens a drawer and takes out a medium sized syringe and checks it. Then he locates a larger one and smiles approvingly.

JACK

That's more like it.

Sharon and Father Donnelly return to talking and become too engrossed to notice what Jack is doing. Jack quickly pockets the vials, takes the wrapping off the syringes and pockets them too.

SHARON

He's right, Father, this is not going to go away. Whatever we decide, it'll haunt us forever, both of us.

FATHER DONNELLY

I know.

JACK

Well Doc, you've got enough drugs in the cupboard here to do it yourself, you don't even need me - and you'll save yourself a buck at the same time.

FATHER DONNELLY

How can you be so flippant about the life of another human being?

JACK

I though we'd all decided that he was no more than an animal. In my book he gave up all rights to that title when he did what he did to Maggie, if not before.

Petrov enters, full of confidence and arrogance.

PETROV

So, have we made a decision? Are we going to forget all about this - inconvenience and get on with our lives?

JACK

Some of us are.

PETROV

I'm afraid that is not good enough.

JACK

It appears it's as good as it's going to get.

PETROV

So which ones are going to forget this little problem and get on...

SHARON

(Angrily)

Little problem!

PETROV

In the real world these things happen every day. It was one person, a whore.

FATHER DONNELLY

She was a good person. A lovely person.

PETROV

Just because you have been...

FATHER DONNELLY

It was more than that.

JACK

You don't have to explain, Father. Not to this creature. Your explanation is going to have to be made to a higher order somewhere down the line.

FATHER DONNELLY

You're right, mister Higgins. A much higher order.

PETROV

(Anger building)

So I'm some kind of creature, am I?

JACK

Some kind of one, yes.

SHARON

One that crawls. A cockroach.

As Petrov speaks he becomes more menacing.

PETROV

Do not think I am offended by the analogy, Doctor. I, like the cockroach, am not a particularly handsome creature. But, like the cockroach, I am a survivor. And I do not see a person in this room that threatens that survival.

JACK

Perhaps you haven't looked closely enough.

PETROV

A doctor, a priest and a pest exterminator.

JACK

Think about it Petrov. You're a cockroach and I'm a pest exterminator.

PETROV

So you think you could kill Igor Petrov, mister pest controller? Many have tried and many have died.

JACK

This one hasn't.

PETROV

You live in this fine country. You are soft. You are all soft. You will all forget what happened tonight. All of you.

As the others focus on each other, Jack surreptitiously fills the syringes and pockets them again.

SHARON

And what if we don't?

PETROV

Then you will join the whore in the morgue. But in your case, Doctor, I might have a little fun first.

FATHER DONNELLY

You are an obscenity, Petrov.

PETROV

It was you who were being obscene earlier this evening, was it not. You are a hypocrite, and a man of the cloth as well. Shame on you Father.

FATHER DONNELLY

It was not obscene.

PETROV

Call it what you will.

FATHER DONNELLY

I call it by a name that you will never recognize.

PETROV

And what is that?

FATHER DONNELLY

Love.

PETROV

(Laughs derisively)

Love! She was a whore. A whore. A prostitute selling her body for money. What could she know of love.

FATHER DONNELLY

It is only now, now when it's too late, do I realize what I had. I was blinded by my own faith. Blinded to love by the very faith that tells us to love.

SHARON

(Contemptuous/brave)

As the Father said, it is something you wouldn't understand. Something you'll never understand.

PETROV

Quite possibly, but I have learned to live with that. It is my burden, as unfortunately, are you.

JACK

So Petrov, what do you intend to do? Are you going to kill us all here and now?

PETROV

Perhaps.

SHARON

What is to stop me walking out of here and calling the police?

PETROV

Amongst other things, this pistol.

Petrov produces a silenced pistol.

JACK

I do believe we have a Mexican standoff. We know you killed the girl and you have us here with a gun in your hand.

PETROV

And, importantly, a silenced gun.

FATHER DONNELLY

You'll never get away with it, Petrov.

PETROV

Fortune favours the brave, Father.

JACK

I've known brave men Petrov, and you are definitely not in their league.

PETROV

What am I then?

SHARON

A callous, murdering piece of garbage that kills defenceless women. Brave - you make me sick.

PETROV

Strong words Doctor. I gave you an option and you declined to take it. It is you that are forcing me into this situation.

Father Donnelly confronts Petrov. Real hatred surfacing.

FATHER DONNELLY

What about Maggie? You killed that poor girl. You tortured her to death for your own sadistic pleasure. It is you Petrov who are responsible.

Petrov smirks as he speaks with a dismissive air. He is enjoying himself as he baits the priest.

PETROV

Oh yes, the girl. I'd almost forgotten.

Jack walks over to the table.

JACK

Well, it seems we have a difficult situation on our hands.

PETROV

I don't see it as being difficult at all. I kill you all and walk out of here. I see no difficult situation.

JACK

Not for you, no. But for the Doctor and the good Father there is a dilemma. They're both people with morals and principals. Ethical people who don't condone murder.

This confuses Petrov. It is he that is about to kill these people so why should he care what they think?

PETROV

Am I supposed to care?

JACK

No, certainly not. In fact I'm surprised that you know the word care and even more surprised that you understand the words morals and principals. This is not about you, Petrov, well not directly anyway.

SHARON

What do you mean?

Jack addresses Sharon and Father Donnelly, ignoring Petrov.

JACK

There is only one way out of this, and it costs a dollar each.

PETROV

I do not understand?

JACK

I didn't expect you to.

SHARON

Will you give us some time?

JACK

That's up to mister Petrov here.

(To Petrov)

Will you allow them a few moments? You are, after all, going to kill us. It's right that they compose themselves before they meet their fate.

PETROV

And you, mister Higgins, do you not want a few moments to compose yourself before you meet your fate?

JACK

No, not really.

Petrov eyes Jack with some concern. He is used to people begging for their lives. Petrov turns to Father Donnelly and Sharon.

PETROV

You may have your moment. Perhaps I am not such a cold sadistic killer after all. Enjoy your last moment, take two moments even. I am a generous man, I can afford to be.

Father Donnelly and Sharon walk away and huddle together. They whisper to each other.

PETROV

You interest me, mister Higgins.

JACK

Do I?

PETROV
Yes.

JACK
In what way?

PETROV
You are about to die yet you show no fear.

JACK
Perhaps I won't die. Perhaps the good Father over there can produce a miracle. He does have a friend in a very high place after all.

PETROV
Do you believe in God, mister Higgins?

JACK
No I don't. Perhaps I'll know shortly if that's a mistake or not.

Petrov walks to the door and peers out through the glass panel.

Sharon and Father Donnelly return to the table.

JACK
Is the coast clear? We don't want anyone gate-crashing your party do we.

PETROV
Yes. Conveniently it is very quiet.

Petrov walks back to the table. He watches the whole scene unfold with interest.

Father Donnelly watches Sharon. She takes a breath, reaches into her pocket and withdraws a dollar. She puts it on the table and turns away, hugging herself.

JACK
Father?

Father Donnelly takes a dollar from the pocket of his cassock and puts it on the table.

FATHER DONNELLY
Forgive me, Lord.

Father Donnelly joins Sharon. Jack picks up the two coins and addresses Sharon and Father Donnelly.

JACK

We have a contract.

PETROV

(Confused)

What contract?

Jack opens his hand and shows Petrov the coins. He tosses the two dollar coins into the air.

Petrov, distracted, watches the coins as they rise.

In a flash, Jack plunges the syringe he has secreted in his hand into Petrov's heart whilst grabbing his gun hand at the same time.

Petrov, his face a picture of surprise, stares stupidly at Jack. Jack disarms him, holding the pistol by the barrel. Petrov slides down Jack to the floor, where he lies mildly convulsing, before falling still. All watch him.

SHARON

My god, you've done it. You've killed him.

Sharon and Father Donnelly approach the fallen Petrov and stare down at him. Jack picks up the dollar coins.

JACK

Isn't that what you paid me for?

Jack takes a towel and wipes the barrel of the gun to remove his fingerprints and puts the gun back in its holster.

FATHER DONNELLY

May God have mercy on his soul.

JACK

Doesn't that detract from our efforts, Father. I was hoping he'd be condemned to eternal damnation and here you are asking for mercy.

SHARON

Well I hope he rots in hell.

JACK

Good girl.

FATHER DONNELLY

I'm sure he probably will.

JACK

Good, all's well that ends well.

SHARON

What are we going to do with his body?

JACK

It's a hospital. People are popping off all the time. He's just another one that didn't make it.

SHARON

What did you inject him with?

JACK

A massive dose of morphine. A drug overdose. I'm sure he's not the first to die here of a drug overdose.

SHARON

Very clever. For all intents and purposes a heroin overdose.

JACK

And as such won't merit another look. He walked in off the street and died. How sad.

SHARON

Let's get him on the gurney.

They lift Petrov onto a gurney.

SHARON

I'll write out the death certificate.

Sharon opens the drawer of a filing cabinet and pulls out a death certificate.

As they walk back to the table, behind them on the gurney, Petrov moves.

Jack takes the other large syringe he filled earlier from his pocket and puts it on the table.

FATHER DONNELLY

What's that?

JACK

I filled two syringes. One with morphine and the other with adrenaline. Adrenaline, being natural, wouldn't raise a second glance either.

Sharon sits down and gets out a pen. She starts to fill in the form.

SHARON

And a large dose injected into the heart is also lethal and undetectable.

JACK

Exactly.

SHARON

Time of death?

Father Donnelly notices Petrov moving.

FATHER DONNELLY

I don't think that time has arrived yet. The death certificate seems to be a little premature.

Jack and Sharon turn to see Petrov moving. He groggily moves and moans. He's way out of it, but not dead and he sits up snarling.

SHARON

Some kind of hit man you are.

Jack picks up the second syringe. Sharon gets up from her seat. Jack is casually professional.

JACK

Don't worry, these things happen. Always have a back up.

Sharon and Jack walk over toward Petrov.

SHARON

(sarcastically)

What's that, another hit man rule, like the bit about preparation.

Something like that.

JACK

Give me that.

SHARON

Sharon snatches the syringe from Jack.

With a snarl, Sharon plunges the syringe into Petrov's chest and depresses the plunger.

Die, you bastard.

SHARON

Sharon withdraws the syringe.

Petrov lies still.

Well I think we can safely say he's dead now.

JACK

Jack and Sharon walk over to the table. Sharon sits and again starts to write.

Right, let's start again

SHARON

Jack takes a dollar coin from his pocket and puts it down on the paper on which Sharon writes. She looks up inquiringly.

What's that?

SHARON

A refund.

JACK

Jack and Father Donnelly watch over her shoulder as she writes. Behind them, Petrov slowly rises from the gurney. He is still not dead, but only just alive. He slowly slides to his feet from the gurney. He stares at the trio with hate filled eyes as he draws his pistol. He slowly stands and raises the pistol and points it at them.

Time of death?

SHARON

Father Donnelly again looks around at the clock,
which is when he sees Petrov lurching toward them.

FATHER DONNELLY

Look out!

Father Donnelly launches himself at Petrov and grabs
the pistol. In the ensuing struggle, as he pushes Petrov
back toward the gurney, the pistol discharges and
Petrov is finally dead.

Father Donnelly steps back from Petrov's body, the
pistol still in his hand. He is in shock as he stares at
the pistol.

Jack takes the pistol from him. He feels for a pulse in
Petrov's neck.

JACK

Keep writing, he's definitely dead this time.

SHARON

Time of death - again?

Jack helps Father Donnelly to a chair at the table.

JACK

Three sixteen am.

FATHER DONNELLY

Dear Lord, what have I done?

JACK

Earned yourself a refund, Father, that's what you've done.

Jack slaps the second dollar coin down on the table.

FATHER DONNELLY

Forgive me, Lord.

SHARON

Cause of death?

JACK

Suicide. People do strange things when they're on drugs. Especially that much drugs.

Jack wipes the pistol in a towel again and puts it in Petrov's hand.

Sharon finishes writing.

SHARON

I suppose I'd better call the police.

JACK

Good idea. You walked in and found a spaced out gangster dead. It may even have been a professional hit. Who knows, or cares. The police won't, they've just got rid of a gangster.

FATHER DONNELLY

What about you?

JACK

I'm leaving. My finger seems to be getting better and I have a large sum of money to pick up.

SHARON

What for?

JACK

For the killing of Igor Petrov.

Jack takes a photo from his pocket and puts it on the table. Sharon picks it up and looks at it. .

SHARON

It's him. He was the one you were going to kill tonight. He was your contract.

Sharon passes the picture to Father Donnelly and he looks at it. He puts it face down on the table.

Jack walks to the door. He smiles as he looks back at Sharon and Father Donnelly.

JACK

Indeed he was. And I sure I can rely on your silence on the matter. Thank you for your help. I'll be in touch with your share of the fee, and it is a substantial amount. Somebody wanted him dead almost as much as you. Good night my fellow assassins.

Jack exits

THE END