

# Click. Boom.

By Justin Porter

I sat there, a agony plays litany within my frame. There is a tiny magma of saliva and blood running from my lips. My left eye is killing me and it's very sensitive to the single low-watt bulb which hangs from the ceiling, dust floats within it like so much aerial plankton. My left eye would be sensitive to the same light but it's swollen shut. The rest is an endless list that I am trying hard to un-acknowledge out of existence. I've read somewhere about mind over matter... Those gentle souls never learned that the matter of a leather clad hand and being tied to a chair trumps mind every time.

Then I hear the voice:

"Father, Oh Father?" there is a mockery in the tone and some underlying respect, maybe. Apparently I can take quite a beating.

I struggle and the words tumble and rip from my lips and what's left of my teeth. "Yes, my son?" They are still God's creatures and nothing comes of acting any otherwise.

"When you get to the other side? Put in a word for me?" The voice is punctuated by a hammer click.

Click.

"That is between you and the almighty my son, but if I might say one thing?"

"Say on priest, then you can catch your train."

"Fuck you sideways my son."

Boom.

Teresa came to me hysterical one day and it was at least a half-hour before I could get her spastic ramblings down to their normal broken English ramblings. At least those were decipherable. Her arms flapped and swung, one smacked into a pew with a hollow knuckle sound and she reacted not at all. Blood welled and smeared the white collar of my shirt as she clutched at me as though drowning. Finally, seated she spoke.

"Mi, Nina....mi pobricita." My child, my poor little girl. Each word falling ice. Brittle. Cold. Sharp.

Jenni is missing. Teresa hasn't seen her little girl since the last night. She has called all the friends. She has called the police. She has called family. She has called her hermano. A man supposed to be "down," to be connected. Nada. When she came to find solace within her faith she found me.

My search covered the neighborhood. People will still talk to a priest or at least leave most of us unmolested. Now, Now. None of the obvious jokes please. Those are a case in point. Eventually I found her. Well, I found the people who had done as they did with little Jenni. Carried off this mortal coil with black plastic for a shroud and the dumpster for her coffin. One last defilement on this earth. I did not bother to look within the dumpster. I could have gone to the cops right then but, a shepherd tends his flock and kills the wolves, when they take a toll too steep for him to bear. I'll sort this one out for Teresa and Jenni. The police can sift the ashes later if they like. I go back to the house after I see them dump her body. Her tiny form.

God, knows....shhhh, don't tell anyone Lord.

You'll cost me the element of surprise.

As you test her families' piety, my strength and my enemy's commitment to the devil.

The house is dark and pretty normal looking. You can't feel its stain. There's no trace of evil. It doesn't smell like anything. It's got no taste, except in association. Gunmetal, smoke, steel, chemical, felt in a needle prick, the click of glass against teeth, or fist against vulnerable flesh that won't fight back. Of soft yield and ripped edges. Of a box of new black garbage bags. There is the evil. Evil is in the knowing. I know.

Mine is not a story of how faith will ultimately save us all. I have found no redemption. I have learned that beyond this, there is no reason for it. You can all keep your reincarnation, and your afterlife for good or for ill. I will keep the right now. I keep it right next to my King James and my Johnnie Walker. What happened to the righteous man, and his rage that channeled the almighty? What happened to smiting? I'm born about a thousand years too late for smiting. Instead of a sword and shield, I've got a shank. I'm here because somebody has to slay the fucking dragons... or maybe it's my own brand of safety and I'm just tilting at housing projects.

The back of the house, dormant but there is movement within. The back door is a little open and I can see a form through screen and cracked glass. I reach down into my sock for the letter opener that came from my desk. It's actually more like a shank. One of the boys that sometimes comes to the church gave it to me. He left to pursue betterment and left me a scrap of evil. I'll bend it to divine law.

I walk up the steps and try hard to make no sound. I don't succeed but perhaps my steps are muffled by divinity. I slip the door and the sight of a filthy kitchen greets me, upon the table sits a single DV cassette, and some wire. The wire is crusted to the table and sits adjacent to a pair of pliers. They are also crusted over, more so.

Stained linoleum, fluids spilled, and dried are peripheral. There is only the man in front of me, and the space between his hair and the collar of his shirt. Then there is a marriage of shirt and collar and flesh and steel and the silence is shattered. He screams in rage and turns swinging blindly and I am swept under.

The next half-hour is nothing but strobe flashes and punctuations of impact. I feel the ropes and the chair supporting me. I smell the basement around me and the mold and dust and something else. I have nothing to name it, save my imagination, and I don't dare go to it. I can't see them but they are talking to me...they are saying:

"Father, Oh Father?"

*Justin Porter lives and works in New York City. He's a writer and a martial artist. He's been published in the New York Times. Click. Boom. is his first work of published fiction and he's grateful for the shot. He also hates it when people ask him if he's always this cheerful. Yeah. He is.*