

[caught]
between the bullet and you

by oliver nowak

[CAUGHT] BETWEEN THE BULLET AND YOU

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NOTES:

SCENE

PROJECTION: "I suppose that happens."

We hear the sound of a car hit something solid and then skid to a stop.

Silence.

A radio is tuned to fading AM stations.

PARKER

This is fucking bullshit.
Fuck you, deer.

Lights fade up on a car.

PARKER wipes tears from her face. On the hood, the carcass of a deer. It's head peeks through the cracked windshield. PARKER'S face is speckled with blood. On the floor is a worn shoebox held together by rubber-bands, and a plaque.

PARKER puts the shoe box and plaque back on the passenger seat. A few poker chips escape from the flimsy cardboard. She grabs them and stuffs them back into the box. After a moment she regards the plaque.

The NARRATOR'S voice stretches before reaching full speed. It is evident that the NARRATOR is recorded on tape by the graininess of the recording. Sometimes incongruous words and phrases squeeze themselves throughout the verbal narrative, as if PARKER had rewound the tape and started over.

NARRATOR

...this is the part where I'm supposed to explain myself. The part where I'm supposed to tell you why I did what I did, so that, at least, you'd have some closure. But what kind of closure can I really give you, honey? There's always next year. And anyway...

PARKER pulls a crumpled paper bag from under her seat.

NARRATOR

I won 'Employee of the Year' fair and square.

PARKER drops a small revolver from the paper bag into her hand.

NARRATOR

I suppose that happens. Sorta like the deer that made itself a permanent hood ornament on my car. I suppose that happens, too.

PARKER hefts the revolver in her hand. She then puts it to her temple and then under her chin. She tries putting it in her mouth, but doesn't like the taste.

She puts the revolver down and lights a cigarette, blowing the smoke straight at the deer.

After a few moments she picks up the revolver and pushes it straight into the deer's skull.

NARRATOR

And anyway...I'm your wife goddamnit.

Cue: Music.

Projection: [caught] between the bullet & you

SCENE

The good life; or something like it.

Danny enters with a bouquet of flowers. He drops his keys on a table. He's excited, maybe even happy. Definitely not anxious. He looks for Parker but doesn't find her. He finds a message on the answering machine.

NARRATOR

Yah. It' me. I've uh got some errands to run. You know. So. Anyway. Whatever. Happy fucking 10th Anniversary and all that. Yah. Oh! They're announcing the "Employee of the Year" award tonight. I uh hope you get it. See ya.

The answering machine doesn't beep.
 Instead, we hear the static of the tape
 and some breathing on the other end.
 Finally, Parker speaks again.

NARRATOR

I'm not running errands, Danny.

click. She hangs up. The answering
 machine beeps. A laugh track plays.

Danny drops the bouquet on the floor.
 After a moment he snatches his keys,
 and leaves.

BLACKOUT.

END SCENE

SCENE

NARRATOR

...So I'm tanning somewhere outside Altoona trying not to
 swallow my own blood.

PARKER

This is fucking bullshit.

NARRATOR

At least I think it's my blood. It was all white-noise after
 it happened. Reality: pure and uncut--ya gotta love it.

Lights fade up on farmland.

**We see PARKER, on the ground,
 struggling with a massive head wound.
 She holds a blood-soaked t-shirt to her
 skull. Part of her scalp is in her lap.
 Her husband, DANNY, holds a flare-gun
 in his bloody hand.**

DANNY

So...how do I do this?

NARRATOR

No, there was no cutting to commercial after that.

DANNY

I guess I just point it at the sky and...?

NARRATOR

Jesus Christ.

DANNY

They should see it, right? The flare?--people looking for us will see the flare, don't you think?

NARRATOR

My husband Danny tried to be the hero. Again.

DANNY

I mean...it's a flare.

NARRATOR

And I, of course, had to be the one to watch. To adore. To appreciate his efforts.

PARKER holds out her hand, impatiently.

DANNY

No, I got it.

NARRATOR

But all I really wanted to do was see him go up in flames. Like my face. Like my skin.

DANNY

No, I think...they won't see it. The sun and all...

DANNY aims the flare-gun into the sky.

NARRATOR

Just pull the trigger and watch.

DANNY

I'm savoring the moment.

PARKER laughs.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Don't start.

DANNY pulls the trigger. Nothing happens. PARKER laughs.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

NARRATOR

(laughs.)

Perfect.

DANNY

Piece of shit.

DANNY checks the flare-gun and tries again. This time it goes off.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Ha-HA! I still got the magic, baby!

NARRATOR

Nope. Can't even cut to commercial. Not even for this.

DANNY

I'm going back to the wreck. See if I can't find the rest of your face.

PARKER

This is fucking bullshit.

NARRATOR

So I have to bear witness.

DANNY

Parker...

NARRATOR

And be Love's Bitch all over again.

DANNY shakes his head and starts to walk away, but stops.

DANNY

I love you.

NARRATOR

Two things concern me at this point:

DANNY

Nothing's gonna happen to you.

NARRATOR

Number one: when is he gonna find out?

DANNY

I'll make sure of it.

NARRATOR

Two: is Maybelline gonna be able to fix all this?

DANNY

I'm serious.

NARRATOR

I mean, Jesus, I'm a fucking mess.

DANNY

I tried. What can I say.

DANNY kisses PARKER on the forehead and then walks towards the wreck.

NARRATOR

Anyway. So yeah, my plan didn't go exactly as. But at least I was getting a killer tan. And I was only a thousand miles from Florida. And from there, I would have had it made. Part of me wonders whether I should have followed up on that job out there in Sacramento...

Projection: An interviewer in a small, dilapidated, office. Complete with fake wood paneling. PARKER responds from her position on the ground.

INTERVIEWER

Can you work overtime?

PARKER

I'll work whatever hours you want me to work.

INTERVIEWER

Your husband won't have a problem with that?

PARKER

No.

INTERVIEWER

I mean...this is a great resume.

PARKER

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER

All the top accounting firms--

PARKER

--Except one. Sorry. Didn't mean to--

INTERVIEWER

That's okay! So which? Which accounting firm isn't--?

PARKER

CIA.

INTERVIEWER

Right.

PARKER

Too compartmentalized. No control over the numbers.

INTERVIEWER

No. I suppose not.

NARRATOR

He said he'd call me. That there were a few other applicants, and yes, one of them apparently did work for the CIA. Must be those budget cuts. Because this was a one-horse outfit in a leased office in the industrial district of Sarasota. And as long as they didn't do a criminal background check, I was fine. They were just starting out, and I wanted in on the ground-floor, clean. Working the cash-register at MegaMart wasn't cutting it anymore.

DANNY walks back from the wreck.

DANNY

Here.

DANNY drops a cell-phone in PARKER'S lap.

DANNY (CONT'D)

And the violin case.

DANNY drops a violin case next to her. There is a bullet hole in the side, and it appears to be bloody.

*****NOTE*** PUT VIOLIN CASE IN BEDROOM (W/ BLOODSTAINS)**

NARRATOR

It's been six weeks and they still haven't called me back. Fuckers.

DANNY

Maybe we should call someone?

DANNY takes the phone.

DANNY (CONT'D)

State patrol, I guess.

DANNY tries to make sense of the cell-phones' interface as he dials.

NARRATOR

The longer I'm out here, the better it'll be. In the long run.

DANNY

Oh yeah.

DANNY drops an ear in PARKER'S LAP. The sound of wind seems to attenuate and amplify for a moment. Then it's complete silence.

NARRATOR

Maybe I'll bear witness to spontaneous combustion.

The cell-phone rings.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Right. Whatever.

DANNY

Hello? No, this Danny, Parker's husband? Yeah.

PARKER laughs.

NARRATOR

I guess that piece of meat he threw in my lap is supposed to be part of my left ear.

DANNY

Wellllll..she's uh...we're uh...

NARRATOR

I can't really feel what's left.

DANNY

...kind of indisposed right now...its funny that you should call...(laughs)...no, not that kind of indisposed...

NARRATOR

It's all white-noise over there.

DANNY

I mean...okay hold on...

NARRATOR

And the blood is congealing.

DANNY

Parker? Parker.

NARRATOR

And that fucking flare is still up there.

DANNY

Some guy from Sarasota wants to talk to you. I figured it was important.

DANNY holds out the phone.

NARRATOR

Bad news all around.

PARKER snatches the phone and puts it to her left ear.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. I forgot.

PARKER puts the phone up to her right ear and clears her throat.

PARKER starts to nod her head, listening.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Before Danny and I got married, my family had put together a betting pool to see how long we'd last. My parents had that jaded divorcee humor back then. Before the boredom set in, before The Routine. My step-brother never bet. He said, and I quote,

BROTHER

I never bet on another man's cock.

NARRATOR

Tonight is our 10th Anniversary. We won the pot. It was deposited in our account this morning. It was withdrawn this afternoon.

PARKER is still nodding her head. DANNY has figured out how to reload the flare-gun.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

After five years, I saw just how perfect Danny was for me. He was still sexy. Still knew how to fuck me. And he genuinely loved me. Adored me, even.

PARKER holds the phone back out to DANNY.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That's when I realized he was absolutely the bane of my existence. My pariah of domestic bliss.

DANNY

So, who was it?

NARRATOR

And I dropped acid on our five year anniversary. Without telling him. And proceeded to rob the kum-n-go, while he pumped gas. He had no clue.

PARKER laughs. Danny takes the cell-phone.

DANNY

Shit, the batteries died. Well? Who was that? I can't hear you, babe. Speak up.

NARRATOR

Somehow, in all of the excitement I forgot to communicate to Danny that I think I bit off part of my tongue. It's all white-noise in there.

PARKER shakes her head. It's unclear whether its a nod, or a shake.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

I'm sure he'd be on all fours looking for it, wouldn't he?

DANNY

Look. I reloaded the flare-gun.

NARRATOR

Two things concern me at this point:

DANNY

I suppose we could---

DANNY shoots off another flare.

NARRATOR

One: when is he gonna find out.

DANNY holds on to PARKER as if they were looking at a beautiful sunset.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And two: will he still love me afterwards.

PARKER holds out her dismembered ear. DANNY takes the earring out of it and puts it in his ear. HE kisses her.

DANNY

You're pretty fucked up, you know that?

NARRATOR

This is fucking bullshit.

DANNY

Do you know why you're fucked up and I'm not?

NARRATOR

Danny, shut the fuck up. It hurts.

DANNY
I'm serious.

NARRATOR
I tried. What can I say.

DANNY
Nothing. Exactly my point.

NARRATOR
Well. Congrats.

DANNY
We don't have any ice, huh? It needs ice.

PARKER
I FUCKING KNOW IT NEEDS ICE, DANIEL.

DANNY
Right.

NARRATOR
They'll never be able to sew it back on.

DANNY
Or milk.

NARRATOR
I'll never be able to wear headphones again. Listen to the Ramones.

DANNY
They say milk helps.
With amputations.
Weird chemical valence reaction or...something.

NARRATOR
Or strapless dresses.

DANNY
That flare...

NARRATOR
I suppose that happens.

DANNY
Is that flare...?

PARKER
Purse?

DANNY
Your purse?

PARKER nods her head.

DANNY

What's wrong with your tongue?

**DANNY squeezes PARKER'S jaw open.
PARKER drools blood.**

DANNY (CONT'D)

Jesus.

DANNY stands up.

NARRATOR

Danny on all fours, eta 30 seconds.

DANNY

Your purse?????

**DANNY walks back to the wreckage,
shaking his head incredulously.**

NARRATOR

Somehow in all of the excitement, I forgot to tell him I almost choked on my own tongue. The piece I bit off--it's in my pocket, I think. I've got ten bucks says he lasts an hour. Which is fine by me. I'm getting the killer tan with that flare in the sky. Maybe I'll even bleed to death before he gets back. (laughs.)

**DANNY returns, holding something small
and fleshy in his hand.**

DANNY

Sweetheart. Sweetheart?

NARRATOR

Shit.

DANNY

SWEETHEART??????

DANNY shakes PARKER.

PARKER grumbles painfully.

DANNY

I thought you were dead.
I found it.

**DANNY proudly holds up a piece of
flesh.**

PARKER

Mm.

DANNY

It's dirty though.

DANNY tries to brush some of the dirt off.

NARRATOR

Looks like gristle to me. But maybe it is part of my tongue. It was all white-noise. Things could have happened. Jesus. I'm a fucking mess.

DANNY is inspecting it in the fading flare-light, fascinated.

PARKER

Pocket.

DANNY

What?

PARKER

Pocket, goddamnit.

DANNY puts the viscera in PARKER'S shirt pocket, along with the remainder of her ear.

NARRATOR

I just didn't have the heart to tell him. The look on his face. Fuck, I'm missing Family Feud. And we can't cut to commercial.

DANNY starts wiping the blood off PARKER'S face.

NARRATOR

I suppose that happens.

DANNY

What? What, honey?

Hey girl. You're as beautiful as ever. As soon as I wipe off some of this makeup, we'll see just how beautiful you are. Girl, I still got the magic. I can feel it. We got those flares up in the air. We got a...cell-phone that don't work but... Everything's gonna be alright. I'm not gonna let you...

PARKER laughs.

DANNY (CONT'D)

How's the other side of your...you know.

PARKER grumbles painfully.

DANNY

Yeah.

Fuck.

NARRATOR

I love you,
Daniel.

PARKER

Missing Family
Feud.

DANNY

I'm sorry, baby. Somebody's gotta come by. We've got two fucking flares up in there. And a goddamn car wreck. I mean...what does it fucking take????

PARKER

CB.

DANNY

Parker, I've sifted through what's left. The CB is toast. Your car is toast. The deer on the hood: toast. It's a fucking crash-site, honey.

NARRATOR

I suppose that happens.

DANNY

And I'm afraid to move you anywhere. So we're just gonna sit and wait. But I still got the magic! You're gonna be fine.

PARKER

This is fucking bullshit.

DANNY

Wanna know how I know?

NARRATOR

Uh-huh. Sure. Whatever.

DANNY

Parker?

When I was looking through the wreckage...

NARRATOR

I wonder if it's still there.

DANNY

...trying to find what was left of your...trying to find more flares...

NARRATOR

I suppose it could be.

DANNY

..checking to see if...

DANNY shakes his head.

NARRATOR

It was all white-noise after it happened.

DANNY

Goddamn. That deer. Jesus Christ.

NARRATOR

And why wouldn't he find it?

DANNY

But I found this.

DANNY holds up a poker chip.

NARRATOR

Shit.

SILENCE.

DANNY

It's a sign, Parker. I still got the magic. We're gonna be okay. We're gonna be okay.

PARKER

Purse?

DANNY

(coughs.)

Never did find your purse, honey.

DANNY flips the chip in the air and catches it.

NARRATOR

I had a compact in there. I want to see the damage for myself. All this marketing going on around the side of my face is making me curious. I just wanna jump on the band-wagon. The testimonials are convincing. I wanna see it. See it first-hand.

DANNY

This chip is weird. Look. Look at the design.

NARRATOR

See memories leak out of a crack in my skull.

DANNY

This isn't a standard poker chip.

NARRATOR

See tendons lacerated. Cartilage raped.

DANNY

It's heavier than usual, too.

NARRATOR

See what all the fuss is about anyway.

DANNY

I suppose that happens.

NARRATOR

Buy in on the biological dream.

DANNY

With signs, I mean.

NARRATOR

Unfortunately there's no customer service department for this kind of purchase.

DANNY

This chip can't be from a casino.

NARRATOR

Mutilation like this...

DANNY

At least not locally.

NARRATOR

It's an opportunity I can't resist.

DANNY

No, this is foreign.

PARKER grunts.

DANNY

What?
Those headlights?

NARRATOR

Damn.

DANNY

Holy...HAH!!!!!! SEE???? I still got the magic, babe!!!
WOOHOO!!! I still got it!

NARRATOR

Danny, of course, is the hero. Again.

DANNY runs around trying to signal the headlights.

DANNY

HEY!!!! OVER HERE!!! Where's that flare-gun? Where's that flare-gun????

NARRATOR

And I, of course, have to be present to bear witness. To Appreciate. To Adore.

DANNY shoots off another flare.

DANNY

It's coming! They're coming, baby!!! Do you have everything??

DANNY checks her shirt-pocket.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just sit tight!

NARRATOR

Two things concern me at this point:

DANNY

Over here!!!!!!!

NARRATOR

Number one: when is he gonna find out?

DANNY

I mean, is this not lucky, or what??

NARRATOR

Number two: how long am I gonna have to suffer?

END SCENE