

# A NICE LITTLE KILLING

ROGER DEGENNARO

30 Avenue B, 5C  
New York, New York 10009  
(212) 673-0060

## CHARACTERS.

JIM Mid-thirties. Once a rising star, now in decline.  
TONI Same age. She sports some kind of retro style that has gone by yet again.  
JUNKIE Ragged.  
SHEILA Connecticut woman.

## A LOFT IN TRIBECA

Bare white walls. Kitchen. Door to bathroom. Screened- in futon on the floor, small night dresser. Clothes rack. Box radio.

## SCENE ONE

Jim and Toni enter.

JIM Thanks for coming down on no notice, Toni.

TONI Couldn't leave you out on the street tonight, Jim.

JIM I don't know where I could have lost them.

TONI If you did they wouldn't be lost.

JIM Thanks for that.

I'm worried. What if someone finds them?

TONI What, and tries every door of every building in Tribeca?

JIM Right. How many could there be?

Gets yellow pages.

TONI What are you doing?

JIM Looking for an all-night locksmith?

TONI One that takes out of date credit cards?

JIM You don't think you could?

TONI Me? How much are you into me for already?

JIM We're talking about my safety, here.

TONI You're just paranoid. Besides, if you get murdered in your bed overnight, your work is worth double what it is today. All the canvasses I've got of yours. I could make a nice little killing.

JIM What about your investment in me?

TONI You haven't been producing. Not like before the rehab program. Ever thought of going back to heavy drug use?

JIM I have that piece I'm working on.

TONI I just happen to have a client who's burdened with a vast inheritance. She liked what she saw in my apartment.

JIM Yeah, and what did she think of my work?

TONI Funny.

JIM Where'd you find her, She-scapes?

TONI None of your business. Where's my sculpture? Is that it?

White canvas hides trapezoidal form. Toni steps over to it.

JIM (Following) You can't see it, it's not finished yet.

She pulls on the canvas. Jim grabs her arm to stop her. Toni elbows, knocks him down, wheels around.

TONI Don't ever do that again. Now, let's see the great work.

Whips off canvas to reveal a shopping cart.

TONI What the fuck is this supposed to be? This took you two months?

JIM It was hard to find.

TONI Yeah sure right. It isn't even signed.

She kicks the cart. It rolls toward and into the sprawled form of the man.

JIM You know, you're no role model for your community.

TONI Fuck you creep. Why do I waste my time on you? Why do I support you? You're out there every night swilling cheap liquor on my money.

JIM Being social is part of my community work.

TONI Yeah, as a one-man welcome committee for every piece of trailer park trash that falls out of a bus in this town. With what you spend, you might as well service the national debt while you're at it.

JIM You know I'm not gonna take this lying down.

TONI Listen to me. You've got one day to produce something. I'm bringing this woman over tomorrow night. So get your ass over to the workshop and do something - anything I can show her - or I cut you off cold.

Stalks to the door, opens it.

JIM I'll have you know I can't work under this kind of pressure.

Toni exits, slamming door. Jim kicks the shopping cart over.

## SCENE TWO

Jim is wiring together hub caps, bicycle wheels, whatever else -a tower that crumbles at the wrong touch.

JIM Fuck!

Picks up a crowbar and completes the demolition, while saying:

I - JUST - DON'T - FEEL - INSPIRED!

Throws crowbar. Sound of window breaking. In a panic attack, he runs to throw himself on his futon. Writhes about. Raises his arms and claps his hands twice. Darkness. In it the sound of anguished cries, followed by snoring. Silence.

A sharp click. Shaft of light. A shadow. Lights go on.

JUNKIE There is a God! (Holds up the keys.) Thank you.

Stops. Looks at stark loft, junk on the floor.

JUNKIE Man, this place is big, but there ain't nothing in it. Hell, they ain't got shit here. All they got is this shopping cart and -- what? Damn. They must be some kind of animalists or something. Hey, nice box. (Picks up radio-cassette player.) Get something for it on Second Avenue. Two bags, easy. (Laughs.) Gotta go back to selling on the corner, B and Second. Standing out all night in the rain. Just trying

to make some money. So what if I got a craving? We all have cravings. I guess I just have expensive tastes. (Chuckles.)

Jim stirs, opens eyes. Silent shock.

JUNKIE Let's see what's back there.

He approaches the screen. Jim reaches, slowly opens drawer. Takes out a gun. Sits up, aims at shadow on the screen. Homeless man stumbles over sculpture rubble on the floor, falls into screen and onto artist. They struggle. Sound of shot. Homeless man lifts himself up. The two stare face to face. Homeless man collapses.

Jim tries to move, finds himself pinned under screen and body, struggles to free himself. Rolls onto the floor, gasping for air. Stands. Looks at Homeless Man. Looks at the gun he's holding. Throws it aside. It goes off. He jumps. Runs to the broken window.

JIM What a violent movie I'm watching!

Runs back, frantic. Checks pulse of man.

JIM Oh my God, he's dead. (Drops the arm.) I've killed a homeless person. And he's bleeding all over my futon!

Grabs the canvas, throws it on the floor and rolls the dead man onto it.  
A hand sticks up, holding keys.

JIM My keys!

Bends, tries to take them. They are held tight. Grabs hand with both  
hand, tries to pry open fist.

JIM Give me my keys you goddam junkie slime! Let ... go!

Hand gives.

JIM Ha!

Smiles, laughs, looking at keys.

JIM Why am I laughing? I just killed a man. What have I become? I've got to get  
help. (Runs to phone, dials aloud.) Nine: They'll see the whole thing. Self-  
defense. One:

He broke into my apartment. Tried to kill me. One! (Hangs up.) But he didn't  
break in.

(Mimics discussion with police officer.)

- So you say you don't know the guy? How'd he get in?
  - Detective, sir, honest, I dropped them on the street.
  - Sure, and I suppose you want me to believe he tried every door on every building in Tribeca and just happened to find the right one.
  - Right, that's how it happened.
  - Just one thing. How'd he happen to be in your bed at the time you shot him?
  - But officer, look at him. He's grotesque - human refuse.
- Maybe you like it that way. Maybe he got a little rough on you. I've seen weirder scenes. Now, come on down to the station. We need a full statement. Hey, Bill, come over here and read this man his rights.

Puts down the phone. Picks up yellow pages.

JIM Baby strollers, bedroom furniture, body work - auto. No body disposal. You'd think they'd have a listing at least. Not like it isn't a service that goes on in this city.

I'm fucked.

Stares at body. Pause. Stalks toward it. Wraps the body in the tarpaulin. Slings the body over his shoulder at the waist. Deposits the body in the shopping cart. Wheels it toward the door.



JIM Come on friend, you and I going for a little stroll around the block. Exits.

### SCENE THREE.

Door buzzes. Jim looks through portal, opens door. Toni and client enter.

TONI Sheila, this is the man himself.

SHEILA I'm fascinated by your work. The pieces I saw just took me over on a very deep emotional level.

TONI Sheila here is just quivering to catch a glimpse of the new assemblage before the press and public even have a chance.

JIM Quivering? Your sure it's the art?

SHEILA I can't believe I'm really here. Is this where it all happens?

JIM Lately, yes.

TONI No. Actually he has a studio in an old garage.

SHEILA Oh.

TONI Perhaps we'll see that another time. Can we get started, dear?

JIM Why waste the moment?

Runs over to the screen, now relocated. Whisks it away to reveal the lifeless form of the homeless man, bronzed. Gasps escape the other two.

SHEILA I'm stunned. I'm overcome.

JIM Not as much as I am.

Sheila, in high heels, runs to the work. Toni stalks cautiously behind her.

TONI I had no idea. I . . . I get it. You were messing with my head. You had this back at the studio all along.

SHEILA I can't believe it. He's so, so life-like. Just like anyone you might step over on the street. The forgotten man - lost, friendless, homeless - cast out by society. You've absolutely frozen him in time.

JIM No, just sealed him in metal.

SHEILA What's the composition?

JIM Oh, found bodies - I mean objects: rags, shoes, clothes and, uh, other organic material.

TONI I'm sure Sheila's interested in how you got the concept.

SHEILA Yes. The concept.

JIM You might say it was an inspiration that crept up on me in the night.

SHEILA I understand. Vision just comes to you, doesn't it? It's like sometimes I wake up at three in the morning, and I can remember my past lives.

JIM I'm just trying to make it through this one!

TONI Sheila, darling. I'd love to hear all about your incarnations. Perhaps we could act one or two out, later. For now, I have to ask you to run along and wait for me in my car. I have to take care of a few details before we discuss this over drinks and checkbook.

SHEILA Don't be too long. Thank you for sharing this vision with me. I know you're about take the art world and shake it. Just shake it.

Toni escorts her. Sheila exits.

TONI I'm shocked.

JIM (Edgy.) Shocked?

TONI Why shouldn't I be. This is a breakthrough for you. We're talking figures with many zeros here, maybe even two commas if you do a series. What about it. I'll line up a show tomorrow.

JIM I don't know. I had conceived of this as a unique work. It kind of took it all out of me, you know.

TONI Nonsense. We'll have you knocking them off like you're on an assembly line.

JIM Oh God, no!

TONI Listen, you do what I say and we could make a killing. A nice little killing.

JIM And I think I know just where to start.

TONI Great. You're getting that old cut-throat ambition back. By the way, how'd you get such detail here. It looks like you knocked some poor guy over the head and poured metal all over him.

JIM How'd you guess? That's just what I did.

TONI You kill me.

JIM I'm thinking about it.

TONI Lighten up. Your work's getting to you. Look, I'm out of here. Here's some cash until the deal is done. Go out and have a good time on me. See you later.

JIM Yeah, see you around.

Toni exits.

Jim paces over to the sculpture.

JIM Friend, whoever you were. I no it doesn't mean much to you, but thanks. I may have shot you stone cold dead, and I'm sorry for it, but I hope I've made it up in some small way by giving you a kind of immortality. Decades from now, people will pay more

for you than either of us has seen in our lives. Your face will appear on posters, in magazines. You, the most forgotten man, will be famous. Dead as you are, you will live forever.

END