

MURDALAND ISSUE #2 PREVIEW PDF

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Vivian and Bobby Ray

Harry Hunsicker

Bobby Ray pointed the muzzle of his Glock at the clerk in the liquor store. He smiled the smile that used to make the crack dealers and pimps on South Lamar go shaky and ease 'cross the street.

The clerk gulped, raised his arms.

Bobby Ray patted the cash register with his free hand and glanced toward the corner of the room where a video camera leered over the shelves of discount-brand vodka and screw-top wine.

"Please, mister." The clerk's face was gray, beaded with sweat.

Bobby Ray slapped the register, the blow so hard it made the pennies in the take-one-if-you-need-one saucer rattle.

"D-d-don't shoot me." The man's mouth fell open, tongue hanging loose on his bottom lip like he couldn't get enough oxygen.

"Don't be stupid then." Bobby Ray felt a trickle of sweat slide down the small of his back. The two patrol units assigned to this sector were getting lunch a few blocks over. Vivian was in the car outside, motor idling. Everything was cool. For the moment.

The clerk lowered his hands and opened the register, hyperventilating so hard his cheeks puffed up like he was blowing on a trumpet. He stuffed a wad of cash into a paper sack and pushed it across the worn formica countertop.

"And a can of Skoal." Bobby Ray smiled and winked at the man.

"Huh?" The clerk frowned and raised his hands again.

"Skoal." Bobby Ray used the pistol to point at the metal rack of chewing tobacco. "Gimme. A can. Of Skoal."

The man grabbed a container of snuff and tossed it on top of the paper bag.

"Thanks."

The clerk smiled nervously and let his breath out.

Bobby Ray shot him in the forehead, the bullet leaving a ragged .40-caliber hole just above his left eye. Blood from the exit wound sprayed the pint bottles behind the register with a red mist that reminded Bobby Ray of when he'd found his mother. He ran to the back room where he knew the video recorder was. He slipped on a pair of latex gloves, grabbed the tape and left.

Vivian was in the Mustang with the top down, puffing on a Capri menthol. Bobby Ray hopped in the passenger seat and said, "Go." Vivian gunned the engine and headed south on Ervay Street, away from the concrete and glass canyons that formed the Dallas skyline. The one-bedroom apartment they'd just moved into was a dozen blocks away, next to a pawnshop and a Mexican biker bar. The rent was not much more than what Bobby Ray had been paying for electricity at his house in the suburbs, the one where his ex-wife still lived.

"Everything cool?" Vivian tossed her cigarette.

“Yeah.” He pulled the wad of currency out from the sack and rifled through it. “Maybe a grand or a little more.” He held up a stack of twenties for her to see.

“We’re getting close.” Vivian smiled.

“Yep, guess so.” Bobby Ray nodded slowly and put a pinch of chewing tobacco in his mouth. He watched the rundown houses and dilapidated storefronts peel by as the nicotine wormed its way into his blood.

“It’s what I want, baby.” Vivian spoke quietly as she stopped for a red light. She slid one hand across the console and rubbed her fingers slowly up and down Bobby Ray’s thigh. “You promised me, remember?”

Neither of them said anything else as they waited at the deserted intersection for the signal to turn. Bobby Ray had made a lot of promises to a lot of people, keeping them was another thing. But he’d do whatever Vivian wanted. They’d known each other for a long time, since they were kids in Waco, in the trailer park by the river.

They’d been back together for almost six months now, ever since he’d found her dancing in that topless bar near Love Field. She’d been messed up pretty badly, strung out on coke and pills, courtesy of a Russian pimp nicknamed Ivan the Terrible. Bobby Ray hadn’t liked the situation very much. The commie’s new nickname was Ivan the Wheelchair Guy.

The light changed. Vivian moved her hand and drove a few more blocks until she turned right into the gravel parking lot of the Wayside Apartments. She slipped the car into a partially hidden spot near the end of the building, farthest from the street, under the shade of a hackberry tree.

The heat and humidity of early autumn in Texas engulfed Bobby Ray, the gray tee shirt he wore sticky against his chest, the metal of the pistol in his waistband hot against the flesh above his hip.

He clutched the bag of cash in one hand as Vivian opened the driver’s door and swung her good leg out, reaching for the crutches tucked behind the seat. She pushed the door shut and hobbled toward their apartment. The leaves overhead softened the afternoon sunlight on her face, making her appear soft and vulnerable.

Bobby Ray never got tired of looking at Vivian. She was so pretty, eyes blue like the spring sky after a good hard rain. The thin cotton dress she wore accentuated her hips and long torso, the cleavage deep enough to show the tops of her tanned breasts. He stared at the space where her left leg should have been and imagined it there, looking as lovely and shapely as the right one.

“You coming or not?” She stopped at the entrance to their apartment, fumbling with the key and the crutches.

Bobby Ray got out of the Mustang, stuck a finger in his mouth and flicked the wad of tobacco across the parking lot. He followed her inside where the window AC unit wheezed, trying to keep the heat at bay. He dropped the bag of money on the coffee table they’d pulled from the dumpster down the street.

Vivian made her way into the tiny kitchen. Bobby Ray heard rustling followed by the refrigerator opening and shutting. She hobbled back to the living room, dangling a plastic grocery sack in one hand, its contents clinking against her aluminum crutch.

“You got time for a beer and maybe a little loving before you go to work?” She grinned and awkwardly pulled a Bud Light out of the sack, holding it in Bobby Ray’s direction.

“Sure.” He grabbed the bottle and opened it. She did likewise with the other beer and they drank a silent toast to the growing pile of money hidden under the mattress.

He placed the bottle on the coffee table and said, “Maybe this time we could do it... you know, regular.”

Vivian sighed and drained her beer. She looked at Bobby Ray with the half-smile, half-grimace that reminded him of when they were kids and her mama came to visit with her new husband.

“Bobby Ray,” she said. “You’re gonna have to get used to it.”

“I know.” He pulled the Glock out of his waistband and placed it on the coffee table next to the Sam Browne holster and bag of cash.

Vivian leaned her crutches against the wall and stared at a greasy spot by the window. “I suppose one more time will be okay.” She crossed her arms, elbows cupped tightly in each hand like she used to do when her mama’s new husband looked at her.

Bobby Ray pulled off his tee shirt.

Vivian grabbed the hem of her dress and tugged it up and over her hips and shoulders before dropping it to the floor. She balanced on one leg, wearing a black bra and matching high-cut panties. Her left thigh was encased in flesh-colored elastic bandages from knee to crotch.

She slowly unwound the bandages, letting them fall in a pile on the dirty carpet. When the last one touched the floor, she extended her knee and eased down the lower half of her left leg from where it had been bound behind her thigh. Her left foot touched the carpet next to the bandages, a few inches from her right one.

Bobby Ray smiled and kicked off his cowboy boots.

She limped a few steps toward the bedroom and winced. “Damn, that hurts.”

“You could always leave it down, you know.” Bobby Ray kept his voice low and hesitant.

“No, baby, I can’t.” She wiped her eyes with the back of one hand.

Bobby Ray scooped her up in his arms and carried her to the bedroom. When they were finished, Bobby Ray took a shower in the cramped bathroom, letting the water drum against his face for a long time. When the water ran cold, he stepped out, dried himself and brushed his teeth twice to get rid of the beer on his breath. He walked into the bedroom, a threadbare towel around his waist.

“We got three thousand and twenty-seven dollars,” Vivian said. She was on the bed, naked, with her left leg bound again, calf to thigh. Light from the ancient Magnavox that they’d bought from the pawn shop next door flickered across the room, the sound down low. Oprah was on, talking to some fat chick with orange hair.

Bobby Ray tried not to look at Vivian as he dressed in his starched blue work uniform. “Five hundred more is all we need.” Vivian reached for her cigarettes on the night stand. He didn’t reply. “You want me to be happy, dontcha?” She blew a plume of smoke into the still air of the bedroom. Bobby Ray nodded slowly and went into the living room. He grabbed the Glock and the belt and holster and put them on, along with his Dallas Police Department badge and name tag. “Damn it, Bobby Ray.” Vivian was in the doorway on her crutches, still naked, tears in her eyes. “After all we’ve been through, you can’t let me down. You promised.”

That’s all of the story we can give you online.

To read Harry Hunsicker’s ‘Vivian and Bobby Ray’ in full alongside an additional 176 pages of dark original fiction order the second issue of ‘Murdaland’ online at www.murdalandmagazine.com.

