

Lay My Bones Next To Jimmy Hoffa's

I guess that it's time I told the story. I mean, shit, if I don't do it soon nobody's ever gonna hear it, right? That'd be a shame.

So, to start off with: I was the guy who was supposed to shoot Jimmy Hoffa. Yeah, him. And, yeah, me. It's the guys like me who can put two bullets in the back of the head of somebody and go on walking. I'm not one of those psychopaths; I don't whack people for the fun of it, or because they spilled ketchup on me. I'm not sick like that. But if you gotta die, you gotta die, and I'm not going to lose any sleep over killing you. It's just business. And Jimmy was business.

...Why did people want him dead? Because Jimmy, rest his soul, was an asshole sometimes. He knew some powerful people, and he got them all mad and worried, and when that happens once too often they tell people like me to go and make the worries go away. As I said, it was nothing personal. My cousin drove a truck for the Teamsters - that was the name of a labor union; yeah, we had them too - and he liked Jimmy fine. Most people did,

including the ones that wanted him dead. Hell, when I got to know him I liked Jimmy fine, too.

You're wondering why I didn't shoot him? - No, I didn't see 'the destiny on his face.' You guys and your destiny. No, what I saw was that goddam flying saucer that grabbed me and Jimmy before I could whack him. Goddam Greys. I hate 'em. I hate 'em even worse than you guys do, because thanks to them I haven't had a real Earth meal in forty years.

But let me get back to the story. So there's me, and there's Jimmy, and we're both stuck in this white room, see? I'm missing my guns. We're kind of floating, so I figure it's that zero G thing with the astronauts. ...Spacemen. We had people who went into space. No, really. We were civilized, OK?

Well. *Other* human beings were civilized. People like Jimmy and me, well, it was more like a veneer sometimes. Not all the time, though. You had to piss me off. Like, hey, kidnapping me on your spaceship and then coming in with some kind of cattle prod while a machine screams "SLAVE! COLLAR! ON!" in my ears. Goddam thing wouldn't shut up until I stuck my holdout knife in it, three, four times.

The Grey holding the machine shut up right away after one sticking, mind you. Serves him right; dumbest guard ever. Didn't take our shoes, didn't take our belts, didn't bother to check us for any kind of backup weapon. And telling us we were gonna be slaves. Don't forget that! People like that deserve to get stabbed, if you ask me. So maybe it wasn't *just* business, in that one case.

So here we are, then. Stuck in a spaceship room with my knife and a dead alien. Oh, and the cattle prod. I let Jimmy have that one. I figured that him being enthusiastic about waving it around wouldn't be a problem unless I got within swinging range, and besides, maybe he'd get himself killed, right? Hey, remember, I was hired to shoot him. I wasn't dumb enough to kill the only other human around - by what turned out to be a **lot** - but if he obligingly offed himself in the process of making our escape it'd work out for the best. For everybody who wasn't Jimmy, sure. In the meantime, time to find the bridge or the helm or whatever the Hell they called the thing that steered the ship.

Damn, but that particular outfit of Greys was sloppy. And stupid. And **dirty**, which is what floored me. Who the hell pisses on the wall of a spaceship? I found out later that

the Greys were usually a bunch of neat freaks; you'd never know it to look at that spaceship. It even *smelled*, which I'm told is never supposed to happen and if it does you're in trouble. And it was full of all sorts of aliens: mostly you guys - well, not **you**-you, sure; guys from your species - but a few from all over. And none of them looked happy to be in their cages.

I always get asked, *How did Jimmy Hoffa get a slave revolt going when he didn't even speak the language?* That's an easy one: Jimmy did speak the language. He spoke *Hey, I have one of the cattle prods from these slaver assholes and we're both covered in his blood so maybe I'm One Of The Good Guys, right?* You'd be amazed how much you can get across when you use violence and pointing, is what I'm saying. But the truth is, Jimmy was always good about getting people to follow him in particular. As long as they wanted to do it, anyway: and these guys? They **really** wanted to kill every Grey sonuvabitch on that ship.

So we did. Turns out that we also killed anybody - and I mean **anybody** - who might have known where Earth was, but you try telling somebody to only kill somebody else a *little*, using nothing but hand gestures. Pointing, most people get. Hand gestures? Not so much. It ended up

taking Jimmy and me six months of hard studying to really speak your language, and by then we were in the middle of the Great Revolution and by then it didn't matter anymore. Goddamn Greys never knew how to lose properly.

“What about the Great Revolution?” What do you want me to say about it? Jimmy and me, we didn't really start it. You guys were gonna rise up with or without us. All we did was come in cruising to your home planet and blow the shit out of that Grey space station, just like the Japs did at Pearl Harbor. ...They were a country that attacked one of our military bases without warning, way back when. We didn't like it any more than the Greys did. Didn't go stupid over it like the Greys did, though.

But once the station went down... look, you **know** what you guys did. You started killing every Grey you could find, and by the end every other species out there was joining you. And there we were, too. Once Jimmy spoke the language well enough, he's out there making deals, getting everybody nice and riled up, keeping the juices flowing. And me always there, scowling over his back. It wasn't a bad time, especially once we found some booze and some people who looked enough like girls, you know?

We didn't run everything, but who needs *that* headache? Politics will kill you. Just ask Jimmy.

But you want to hear about Jimmy's death. OK. I never told what happened, but I think some of your bosses figured it out anyway.

Well, you know how Jimmy and me were on the big Alliance of Everybody But The Greys - it sounds better in your language than mine - ship at the tag-end of the Revolution when some crazy asshole decided that ramming a starship's a better way to die than being captured and then spaced. And I will admit; I probably would have figured the same thing. So, still, this asshole rammed the ship. We weren't blown up, but damned if we weren't wrecked. And so was Jimmy. He still had all his parts, but a lot of them were flat. I was just an eardrum short and a couple of ribs cracked, so I could move around OK if I had to, but I'm not loving life, all right?

But here was the problem: you guys at the time didn't really know much about how we humans were put together. I mean, you could set our bones, yank our teeth, treat a sunburn, and of course we never got sick from your diseases, but Jimmy was just in shit-poor shape. And he was *old* at this point. Jimmy had been getting up there in

years when we got snatched, and had been running around for - a decade? More? - since then. We had been real careful about not getting hurt, but it was a war. Things get broke.

Jimmy got broke. We had talked about what we should do, if that happened. Still. The only other kind of my kind of human around, right? So Jimmy sees my face, and starts laughing. The bastard lying there like a pancake starts laughing at the look on my face because I don't want to do what I'd said I do. And then he tells me *What? You gonna welch on that contract now, you fucking goon?* Yeah, because fuck you, Jimmy for throwing that back in my face. Make me regret coming clean on that, huh? ...But he was right. Jimmy wasn't gonna live long like the way he was, and even if we could get one of your docs he wouldn't make it anyway. So I got some of the painkillers that we knew worked, and just dumped them in him until his heart stopped.

God damn it, that's ironic. I finally fucking get around to killing Jimmy Hoffa, and I'm doing it with tears streaming down my face. Guess it wasn't business then, either. Rest in peace, you bastard.

And that's the story. It's been a few more decades, I think, since then. Revolution's over, your bosses are back to screwing everything up in the normal way, and nobody's seen a Grey in forever. And here I am, on the proverbial deathbed. Dying of old age, and who would have thought it?

Not that bad a life, but I miss my home planet. I miss real food and real trees and I damn well miss real beer, and I say you guys owe me, so I'm going to make a last request. I know you've been looking for Earth, and I figure eventually you'll find it. So when that happens, I want you to take our bodies back home. I want a big memorial, too. Hell, they were building a new stadium for the Giants - that's a sports team - when I was gone. Park me on the fifty-yard line, where my ghost can see all the games. I always was a football fan.

And when you do, lay my bones next to Jimmy Hoffa's. I'll want somebody to bitch about the score with.

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