

Preacher; The Unseen Bonus Scene. – From Tracking Luxe.

Once upon a time he would have thought it was a good day to die. Not anymore. Not since he got Ruby and Sebastian in his life.

Maybe if he were that same man he would have been less jumpy.

Preacher split off from his boys two blocks away. There was no evidence the shady Russian fuck-stick would have eyes on them approaching for the exchange of Grinder for one of their boys the Renegade Souls had worked over real damn good. Not when Grigori assumed the upper-hand in this complete mess. But there was no evidence showing they didn't have a watch out either.

He was continually vigilant.

Funny to notice how warm it was. The temps were somewhere in the balmy region, the sun burning the top of his skull. The shirt on his back clung wetly to his skin. But then his sweat had nothing to do with the seasonally warm day and everything to do with the four-foot long leather case hooked over one shoulder. Anyone seeing him would assume he was a pool player and not the sharp shooter coming out of retirement. *Motherfuck* This day was never meant to happen. Preacher had been finished with it all. Bile loitered in the base of his throat, a dank prompt of how sick to his stomach he felt.

Two blocks away his best friend, the man who had helped drag Preacher into the world of the living again, was going through tormented hell, there was no other choice Preacher could think of. This shit had to end.

An unscrupulous man like Grigori and his like wouldn't use subtle tactics when it came to payback as he saw it. He wasn't known for tickling, either. And from the amount of transferred blood stained on the front of Grinder's chick shirt, it was a sure thing G was being beaten on the regular. And that stubborn shit wouldn't give up anything to the mobsters, so his beatings were probably worse than normal.

For no other reason would Preacher take a rifle out of the locked closet intent on using it. G was his ride or die bro and he hoped to fuck it wasn't die tonight.

He hoped they weren't too late.

For Grinder he could do this.

He hoped he could do this.

His heavy steps ate up the sidewalk one leather-soled clomp after another, he used that repetitive noise to keep his mind in the here and now, one slip and he'd in be in fucking trouble, that much Preacher knew. In. Out. He breathed and focused on knowing this all would be over very soon.

One bullet and it was done.

That was all, he chanted.

One bullet.

He found the building he needed easy enough having scoped it out earlier soon as the words came out of his mouth to Rider and the rest of the boys in the closed emergency meeting. *I'll take Grigori out of action.* They'd all stared at Preacher slack jawed like they were all hearing him wrong. It was Rider who spoke first, as Prez he got the first and last say on everything concerning the club. *You sure you wanna do that, Preach?* They were aware of his history having witnessed far too many of his PTSD episodes not to know he was fucked in the head over what he'd witnessed while at war. He patched into the club on the understanding he'd dig down in the dirt as filthy and unlawful as his brothers needed him to go and do anything they wanted regardless of the rules, but he wouldn't pick up another gun again.

I'll put a bullet between his eyes. Offered Lawless with a look of sympathy. *I only need to get near him.* Lawless was more of the hands-on man when it came to murder. It wouldn't work, and every guy around that table had known it. Otherwise Rider would have proposed all out carnage to begin with. The last thing the club needed now was a war. This had to be smart. Looking like it came from someone else.

Preacher was the sharp shooter expert. Therefore, all their grim as fuck glances between each other knew it was him or it was no one.

His marksmanship record held no negative numbers.

It was put to the vote.

Running exclusively on gusts of nervous energy coursing through his veins, he'd climbed back on his hog once more and taken the long ride home back to his house where his wife and boy were hopefully still sleeping. He'd woken Ruby when he'd taken the call about Grinder to make sure his lady didn't worry if she rose early and he wasn't there in their bed. He should have known she'd be waiting for him. She'd stepped out into the garage port hearing the gentle roar of his bike turning into their street. In only one of his faded denim shirts half buttoned, her curly hair disarrayed around her perfect face and her feet bare, she looked about as apprehensive as he felt and, in his arms, before he could step off the bike.

"Need you, beautiful." Only when he was home could let his voice crack. Burying his face in her cascading curls, fingers that were less than steady clutched at her tiny waist, Preacher felt empty and fucking petrified at the same time.

"I need you," he croaked like a dying man would beg for water.

It was a them and him situation and Preacher would always choose him. The him being Grinder this time, any of his boys, really. Until he had to roll out again to meet his brothers he needed his wife.

The one person who knew all about the turbulence he had going on inside his skull.

His beautiful Ruby was his cornerstone to calm, he could be himself with her without judgement. She loved him flaws and all. Maybe because of his flaws, because until he'd opened up to her, she'd only known him for his manwhoring ways and there was no way she'd love only that man. For his Ruby he'd confessed every emotion and showed her all his broken parts.

Right there in their closed garage he fucked his wife against his tool shelf, holding the top rung for leverage, tools resting on each shelf rattling. Her legs around his waist, her hands buried in his hair, their mouths locked, he'd fucked her like demons were chasing him.

And when it was time, he'd changed his clothes, went down to the basement and unlocked the gun closet, took out the rifle he'd stored there years ago. He cleaned it methodically, his brain shut down, saw to the bullets he needed, he'd kissed Ruby, who looked a second away from throwing up, but she'd acknowledged he needed to do this. No other choice. *Please be careful and come home to me, Asher. I'm going to be right here waiting for you.*

Now he was here ready to get into position.

His body lunged up the staircase affixed to the side of the building, taking each step three at a time. He didn't think past this minute, only this minute. In. Out. He breathed. He was a heavy mass of nervous muscle and bones shouldering the roof door open, he propped it open with a cinderblock he'd placed there already.

He could do this.

The phone in his pocket was set to vibrate and convey the message from Lawless across the street inside the abandoned youth center that the boys were in position and to take the shot.

He could do this.

The ground underneath his knees was hard gravel. He unpacked his rifle quietly while life for everyone else down there carried on as normal as they went about their days drinking the strong caffeine, maybe someone was diddly his secretary, or skimming a few dollars off the top under the boss's nose. And here was Preacher, life or death situation with cold dreaded sweat pouring out of his body.

He was so fucking terrified he could barely pull in enough air to calm his nervous system. Flickering images of his dead brother kept creeping into his brain and he kept on pushing him out. *Not the fucking time, Shaneo, either help me or fuck off back to playing bridge with Elvis.*

There was a part of Preacher that prayed to a god he had no belief in that the message from Lawless never came. That by some means, they got Grinder out of there without having to climb into bed and do a deal with a fucking shady reptile.

He wasn't that lucky.

With the shot lined up preciously through his viewfinder, he saw the scene in the building across the street. He watched his boys, along with Preacher's brother in law and a few of Jamie's men prowl inside, a wrecking ball of menace.

Minutes ticked by.

His finger hovered over the trigger. His commanding officer would say never to put your finger on the trigger unless you were so fucking sure you'd pull it and to never take death lightly.

Preacher pulled in air. Keeping his eye on the unfolding scene.

He thought he might puke when Grinder was brought into sight. The surge of anger was pure and real. They'd made a fucking mess out of his buddy.

Bodies shuffled by the window.

Russians in Preacher's way of taking a shot.

"Move, you fuck." He muttered. Sweat making him shiver.

He could do this.

And on a wave of nausea overtaking his system one hard gulp of bile at a time, a clarity of truth hit Preacher square in his chest.

He couldn't do it.

The vibration was felt in his pocket.

Lawless telling him it was a go.

He'd watched Rider through the viewfinder subtly moving out of the way giving Preacher the clearest fucking shot on Grigori's forehead. It was right there.

Do it. Do it you, motherfucking coward! His brain screamed.

For Grinder. For your goddamn brother. Do it. Do it. Do it!

And he couldn't get his finger to move that quarter inch and depress the trigger. It just wouldn't move.

Couldn't do it.

Couldn't do it.

Preacher squeezed his eyes tight in hopes it would help to regain his composure, to stop the shaking rattling through his bones. It only brought the same terror

from the wars and watching his brother blown to fucking smithereens right in front of him.

Couldn't do it.

And it was in that failing second the world came to rest on his wide shoulders. Everything got disturbingly quiet. Preacher heard the breeze brushing by his ears as his fucking heart pulsed his pain. He let his arm fall, his rifle hit the ground with a weighty clunk.

His mouth opened on a silent scream, neck cord muscles stretched, head thrown back, he didn't know he pounded a fist into the solid brick of the building until he drew back his hand and saw blood dripping from his knuckles.

Collapsing, his once very capable body folded in on itself with quiet shudders, nausea churning his gut into a frenzy, resting both fists to the ground the hate Preacher felt for himself was turbulent.

It could have been a week later for all the notice Preacher took of his surroundings. So, fucking alone on the rooftop.

It was only when he heard noise breaking through his skull that he finally shifted his body to look down to ground level, seeing Jamie and his VP manhandling Grinder into a truck.

Shit. Fuck. Shit.

They got him. They got him without you, useless fucker.

He'd let everyone down. His brothers, and worse, his best friend who wouldn't have hesitated to go to war for Preacher if it were needed.

Diminished and empty, he slid down the wall, planting his ass on the ground, arms loose between his knees, head hung low, he ignored the vibrated buzz in his pocket.

How could he have failed his friend? If Grinder died it would be another death on his shoulders, wouldn't it?

He needed to rally. *Get the fuck up off the floor, you fuck.* He had to get down there to see for himself how G was.

Acrimonious bile in his throat, Preacher grabbed out his phone. He hit numbers without really seeing the screen.

His heart banging so hard he was sure he was having a heart attack.

He couldn't deal with failing. Not when it mattered the most. He was not that man. He wasn't.

But you did.

The call connected not even a ring later as if his wife was already holding her phone waiting, and he heard his angel's voice say his name. It was the key to unlocking himself. She was always his key, wasn't she? "Rubes," his voice splintered clean in half. A tortured sob trapped in his fucking throat. His knees already gave way keeping him planted on the gravel and the dirt where he belonged, he was shaking from head to toe. The apparition of his dead brother drifting into the blurriness of his eyes. He didn't know they were tears until they plopped down onto the back of his hands. "Ruby," was all he could managed to get out of his mouth.

"Oh, baby. *Baby*. I'm here. Is it bad?"

"I couldn't—couldn't do it, Rube. It just wouldn't. Couldn't fucking do it, not even for G."

Between his ears he could hear sounds of bombs dropping. That slow whistle of air underneath before it hit land and disseminated everything in sight. The distinct click of a landmine right before it blew the hell up. If he inhaled too hard for much needed air into his starved lungs he'd smell the sand and dust of the war-torn countries he'd served in. If he concentrated, in the background noise he'd hear Shane laughing that laugh of his he missed so fucking much.

Please. Please. He begged a god he didn't believe in not to put the death of his brother in his head. *Not now, please, God.*

One hand braced in front of him, he dry heaved until he thought he might give birth to his own lungs and tried to hold the phone to his ear. If he could hear Ruby

talking everything would be okay, he reasoned. Just keep listening to his baby and the shaking would stop.

Living with guilt became Preacher's normal over the years. It was why he turned to booze and women so often in order to forget.

He'd let Grinder down. So how did he live with that guilt now?

With his new family life, he'd become somewhat bulletproof, he'd thought. Invincible in his own happiness. Nothing could touch Preacher on account of him being so goddamn settled in his own skin now.

And with three minutes up on a lonely rooftop, his hated rifle in his hands, the universe gave him a clear sign of just how not unassailable he was.

And that, he thought, as he rose from the ground, taking long measured breaths to regulate his heartbeat, his Ruby calming him in his ear, was an absolute fucking kick in the teeth.

He'd failed big time and he'd have to live with this new, sore guilt all over again.