

The Arsonist's Affair

By

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Based on the short story
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FADE IN:

EXT. FLORIST SHOP - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

We see a florist shop in a worn-down, small city community.

BODIE

(V.O)

The sign says we're closed.

DULANY

(V.O)

Is that how you treat an old friend?

INT. FLORIST SHOP - NIGHT

BODIE - 50s, the florist - stands behind the counter. He stares down DULANY - 60s, a respectable modern mobster.

Lit by moonlight, the two men stare each other down like an old Western film. They have a history together.

BODIE

Dulany, I run a perfectly good business now.

DULANY

Selling mums? How poetic.

Dulany is disgusted by the plants and flowers.

DULANY

Nurturing life, instead of destroying it? Don't tell me you like this.

He walks up to the counter - Bodie's face perspires.

DULANY

I have a job for you.

BODIE

Why not get the O'Connor boy? He replaced me just fine.

DULANY

I need this done right. Not like the Hammond House. More like the office on Third and Cooper. You remember that, right?

(CONTINUED)

BODIE

That's not who I am anymore.

DULANY

You and I both know you're not Mr. Flowers. I need you.

Dulany retrieves a folded piece of paper from his pocket.

He SLIDES it across the counter. Bodie looks down at the paper. Then back to Dulany.

Bodie puts his hands on the counter - his left hand blemished with a BURN SCAR.

BODIE

Let me be perfectly clear. The answer is no.

DULANY

It's a pawnshop. The owner's a reckless pimp. A loose cannon who...disrespects his employees.

BODIE

As if you're any better.

DULANY

I sell coke to Wall Street sharks. He beats women. You tell me who the bad guy is.

Dulany has Bodie hooked.

DULANY

It's my daughter Bodie.

BODIE

You mean it's personal? I don't do personal.

DULANY

I forget about the idealism in you. You're an academic arsonist...Last night, she came home with bruises and welts the size of grapefruits...He's gone too far.

Bodie takes a moment to think. He ponders, but Dulany already has him hooked.

(CONTINUED)

DULANY

The second address is the owner's house. After you burn down the shop...

Dulany pulls out a handgun from his jacket and places it on the table.

DULANY

...Wipe every trace of him...He won't be missed.

Dulany walks to the door and stops for his last words to Bodie.

DULANY

You have a certain...calm about things.

He leaves. Bodie is alone in the shop.

CUT TO:

BACKROOM OF FLORIST SHOP

Bodie sits in the shabby, dark, recluse room - On the wall hangs a poster of the film *Some Like It Hot*.

In the background sits a pile of feminine items (women's clothing, wigs, jewelry, make-up) and matches, cigarettes and a Zippo lighter.

Bodie is transfixed by a shoebox that contains a pair of RED HIGH HEELS.

He lifts one shoe out of the box and runs his finger down the HEEL of the shoe - his face perspires.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

From YOUNG BODIE'S POV under the kitchen table, we see the feet and legs of Bodie's FATHER and MOTHER. His parents are arguing.

FATHER

You baby him...You've turned my own son against me. You let him watch Marilyn Monroe movies, he parades around in your goddamn cocktail dress, he doesn't care about sports...Don't tell me that's normal.

(CONTINUED)

MOTHER
He's just delicate.

FATHER
He thinks he's a girl.

MOTHER
Nodody's perfect. He's fine the way
he is.

We hear the Father smack his wife. She falls to the floor.
She looks over at Bodie/us.

FATHER
He needs to be a real man.

EXT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Bodie holds up the piece of paper - showing the address of
his target.

He pulls it down to reveal the pawnshop - nothing special to
look at. He examines the building.

EXT. PARK - DAY

PHIL, a homeless man sits on a park bench alone. He looks
middle-aged, but could be mistaken for older due to his
circumstances.

Bodie, carrying the shoebox and duffel bag, joins Phil on
the bench. Bodie sits, he looks stiff, tense, uncomfortable.

Phil engages the birds in conversation.

PHIL
Always going somewhere. Never know
if they're coming or going.

Phil looks over to Bodie - he forces a smile.

PHIL
Whatchya got there?

BODIE
Shoes.

PHIL
Can I see?

Bodie, reluctant, hands over one of the heels to Phil. He
admires the heel part, touching the bottom point.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Sharp...And pretty. They for your
wife?

BODIE
No wife.

PHIL
Girlfriend?

Bodie shakes his head in disapproval.

BODIE
Just me.

Bodie places the lid back on the box.

PHIL
Shoes is shoes.

The man continues to admire the park's beauty. Bodie looks down at the man's feet: NO SHOES.

He pulls out his wallet and hands the man some cash.

BODIE
(gesturing to Phil's feet)
Buy something you like.

Phil is moved by Bodie's generosity. He reaches out for a handshake. Bodie meets him halfway with his UNBLEMISHED hand.

PHIL
Thanks stranger. The name's Phil.

BODIE
Bodie. The name's Bodie.

PHIL
You're a good man Bodie. Take care
of yourself.

Phil leaves and continues his way through the park. Bodie begins to feel more at ease - he admires the park life, his face shows warmth.

A RED BALL bounces over to Bodie's feet. An elementary school aged boy chases after it. Bodie, feeling especially helpful, retrieves the ball and hands it over to the boy with his scarred hand.

The boy is startled by Bodie's blemish, the warmth is stripped from his face.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

What happened to your hand?

The BOY'S MOTHER fetches her son.

BOY'S MOTHER

That's rude. Leave the man alone.

BOY

But-

BOY'S MOTHER

He had an accident. C'mon let's go play.

Bodie looks at the mother's feet - WHITE SNEAKERS.

She pulls her son away from Bodie.

The boy turns back.

BOY

(shouting)

Sorry about your accident mister.

Bodie is back to his state of unease, growing restless. He checks his watch - then looks down at his scarred hand.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

CLOSE on Bodie's Father as he lights a cigarette with a ZIPPO LIGHTER.

PULL OUT to reveal Bodie and his father by the kitchen stove. He's being taught how to cook.

Bodie stands on a chair to reach his father's level. A pot rests on the adjacent counter.

BODIE'S FATHER

If you want to be like your mother,
you're gonna learn to cook her
macaroni casserole.

He points to the stove's knobs.

BODIE'S FATHER

Go on, turn the stove on. Turn the
knob.

Bodie is reluctant, but he eventually turns the burner on.

(CONTINUED)

BODIE'S FATHER

Once it gets going, you'll wanna make sure it's throwing heat. Just put your hand over the burner like this.

The back of his hand hovers safely over the burner.

BODIE'S FATHER

Just like that. Go on.

Bodie is hesitant.

BODIE'S FATHER

It ain't gonna hurt ya. Trust your father.

Bodie mimics the same gesture with his hand.

The camera turns away from the stove as if it's too horrified to see what happens next.

We stare down an empty hallway as we hear Bodie's Father slam his son's hand onto the burner. A painful SIZZLE of flesh and a child's piercing SCREAM echoes throughout the house.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Now sunset, Bodie leaves the park for the pawnshop.

EXT. PAWNSHOP - NIGHT

Bodie, shoebox under his arms and carrying the duffel bag, crosses the street towards the shop.

He RUNS his fingers across the building's exterior.

To his surprise, the door is ajar. He slips inside.

INT. PAWNSHOP - NIGHT

We see the PAWNSHOP OWNER, 30s, passed out on the floor in a backroom - a liquor bottle and handgun nearby.

REVEAL Bodie entering through the front door. Oblivious to the fact that he's not alone.

Bodie walks to the center of the shop. CLOSE on Bodie's face, coated with perspiration. He carefully examines the nostalgic items inside.

(CONTINUED)

He searches for an old electrical appliance. He finds an antique lamp, then an outlet near the counter. Now the fun starts.

Bodie unzips the duffel bag to reveal its contents - all feminine items, dresses, jewelry, make-up, scarves, Dulany's gun.

He pulls out the gun from the bag and stares at it. He puts it back.

He takes out a radio from his bag and plays sophisticated, classical music.

In a series of jumpcuts, we see Bodie dress into full drag along to the music.

-Putting on a cocktail dress.

-Slipping into stockings.

-Applying lipstick.

-He wraps a RED SILK SCARF on his left hand covering the burn scar.

-Adorning himself with jewelry.

-Last, the red heels.

Now dressed in full drag, Bodie looks more comfortable than we've ever seen him before.

He pulls out supplies from duffel bag: BOX OF CIGARETTES, MATCHES, YELLOW-LINED PAPER, RUBBER BANDS, HIS FATHER'S ZIPPO LIGHTER, SCREWDRIVER.

Bodie constructs a time-delay incendiary device: a cigarette wrapped in paper, three more matches (also wrapped in paper), held together with rubber bands.

He grabs the lamp and brings it over to the counter near an outlet.

He takes the screwdriver and begins to loosen the panel. He stops. A box grabs his attention.

A photograph of Marilyn Monroe in *Seven Year Itch* rests on top. He picks up the photo and discovers a pair of heels - similar to the pair Monroe is wearing in the picture. He is enchanted by heels.

Off screen, we hear a glass bottle knocked over and a cough from the backroom. Bodie snaps out of his trance.

(CONTINUED)

With caution, he walks to the source of the noise. He enters the backroom to discover the intoxicated pawnshop owner.

At a distance, he mistakes Bodie for the woman he was previously trying to rape. He notices woman's clothing on the floor.

The owner stumbles closer and closer to Bodie, who is in disbelief.

OWNER

Leaving so soon? We didn't finish yet...Bring that ass over here...Or do you need a smacking...I didn't mean to frighten you.

The owner is now nearly face to face with Bodie. He squints and comes to the shocking realization that Bodie is in fact not the woman from before.

Bodie, disgusted, grabs the empty liquor bottle and smacks the owner across the face. He's knocked out cold.

CUT TO BLACK

FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR--

The owner's body being dragged across the floor. He flickers in and out of consciousness. We see just enough to know that Bodie is dragging the owner.

Moments later, the owner comes back slowly. He awakens in the main area of the pawnshop - arms and legs bound to a chair.

He sees Bodie straddling his body as he applies red lipstick and make-up to his face. The owner regains strength and resists.

BODIE

Hold still. It never comes out right if you fidget.

PAWNSHOP OWNER

Get off me ya freak.

He continues to wrestle Bodie's body and the restraints. Bodie gets off the owner, he steps back. The owner, for the first time, gets a good look at Bodie. He laughs.

PAWNSHOP OWNER

How's that saying go? Never send a woman to do a man's job. And he

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAWNSHOP OWNER (cont'd)
sends a man, who thinks he's a woman...This must be a joke. I bet your father's real proud. If my son ever turns out like you...I'd kill the little fucker...What's the matter? You talk? You probably talk like a bitch too.

BODIE
Let me finish your lipstick.

PAWNSHOP OWNER
You can shove your lipstick up your-

Bodie in a fit of rage, raises his leg and SLAMS his heel down, piercing the owner's foot. He screams in anguished pain.

PAWNSHOP OWNER
You may not sound like a bitch, but you act like one. You ever take a dick up the ass? I'm looking to expand business.

Bodie backhands the owner's face. He straddles the owner again. Bodie looks insane. He strangles the owner.

BODIE
The next heel will go through your throat.

The owner forces a rebuttal.

PAWNSHOP OWNER
Be a real man.

Bodie gets off the owner. He connects the owner's words with his father. He sees his father in the chair, sitting, tied up.

Off-screen, He fetches the gun from his duffel bag. He walks back over to the owner. He KICKS the chair down. He takes aim point blank. The owner looks scared for the first time.

Bodie hesitates pulling the trigger. After a few tense moments, he lowers the gun.

BODIE
No. That's too easy.

(CONTINUED)

Off-screen, Bodie retrieves the time-delay incendiary device and his father's Zippo. He comes back into frame and STRIKES a FLAME.

He stares into the flame in one hand and the device in the other. He's about to light it.

BODIE

You'll suffer...Like she did. Like
all those women did.

EXT./INT. PAWNSHOP - NIGHT

The following two sequences are intercut with each other.

From the outside street. CLOSE on Bodie's feet now wearing the Monroe heels. We TILT UP to reveal Bodie still dressed in full drag. He walks away from the pawnshop. And...

...inside the pawnshop. We slowly REVEAL the owner now wearing the red heels. We hear sounds of a young fire.

Bodie stops, now a significant distance from the pawnshop. Nearly dawn, we see a blurry red, orange glow in the background where the pawnshop would be.

Bodie continues walking.