

"The Mercy List" excerpt: "Marty's Point of View"

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(Set up: Tanner has somewhat recklessly agreed to go to an arts fair with Marty, a known serial killer. Tanner wants to know if his sister (a drug addict) was one of Marty's victims, but of course cannot come out and ask this directly.)

INT. TANNER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Tanner puts on a nice shirt.

TANNER

(quietly, to himself)

"Hey, I'm getting a ride with a known serial killer. Be back later."

"Okay, have a good time, dumb ass!"

Tucks his shirt in.

TANNER (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with me?

EXT. ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR -- DAY

Tanner and Marty stand at a booth looking at paintings.

MARTY

Now this is good. This I like. You?

Tanner shrugs.

TANNER

A bit too 'outsider art' for me.

MARTY

You're still a pup. It takes decades to appreciate some types of art.

They move on to the next booth. Weird wooden carvings.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I believe this is walnut. So, any more pups? Brothers? Sisters?

TANNER

No. Just me.

MARTY

Yes, you do seem like an only child. Smart. Loner. Introspective. I'm an only child too. So I suppose it makes sense that we are alike.

Marty takes a closer look at a sculpture.

MARTY (CONT'D)

This is an interesting piece.

Tanner gives it a cursory glance.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Hm. We don't seem to agree on art though. But I suspect that we do appreciate some of the same things.

TANNER

Such as?

MARTY

I bet you can appreciate history. The bigger picture. Some groups of society always dominate another. The stronger, smarter ones rule.

Marty moves on to another piece, examines it carefully.

MARTY (CONT'D)

It may not be politically correct, but cultural and political imperialism is the way of the world.

Tanner nods, pretends to agree.

MARTY (CONT'D)

You appreciate my work I take it?

TANNER

In home health care?

Marty is not amused.

MARTY

My REAL work. Being morally superior to everyone else gets to be a burden. I'm doing God's work, but I get called evil. Isn't "evil" a silly word? Sounds cartoonish.

TANNER

Has anyone else recognized you?

Marty's hesitant to admit.

MARTY

No. But I'm sure it was the hair and name change that threw them off.

TANNER

Yeah, of course.

MARTY

I worked downtown, was a high level manager at Avery & Fitch. I saw these people every day, they'd hang around our area. I'm not talking about the homeless ones who always ask for money. I'm talking about the ones who were mentally disturbed. No shoes. Filthy clothes, sleeping on dirty cardboard in doorways.

They meander to the next booth.

MARTY (CONT'D)

They didn't even have the presence of mind to ask for food or money. I'd have to hand them a sandwich and say "please eat!" Give them water. Their feet so dirty and blistered. Infected. They wouldn't even ask for help. No one cared, not even them.

He shrugs it off.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I realized that what I was doing wasn't really helping. It was just... prolonging their misery. If that was your life, and you had no chance of getting better, wouldn't you want to just go to sleep and not wake up?

TANNER

But if they wanted to die, they could do it themselves.

MARTY

But they can't. They don't. They don't have the presence of mind to do that. They are like children, they need a guiding hand. They can't even make decisions like whether or not they need to eat, you think they can make a decision like 'shall I live or die'?

TANNER

But maybe they weren't suffering. Could they even really grasp their situation? Maybe they were...okay in their own minds.

MARTY

Okay?! Infected feet? Sunburned so bad their skin was like leather?

(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)

The women probably raped every other night in the alley, unable to fend anyone off? Unable to ask for help? What kind of life is that? I should look the other way?

TANNER

Maybe get them psychiatric help? There's gotta be some state program--

MARTY

Nonsense. They'd get lost in the system. Pushed aside. You know that.

TANNER

Yeah. Probably.

MARTY

What I did was humane. One night I was getting into my car. I saw some young man that I'd seen every day for months. He was just sitting next to my car. I knew he'd probably sit there all night. That was his entire existence. Even though I'd given him food, water, even brought him socks and shoes on occasion, he was never going to enjoy life.

They stop at a snack booth.

MARTY (CONT'D)

(to vendor)

Two hot dogs, please.

He pays, and they sit at a picnic table with their dogs.

MARTY (CONT'D)

That nurse, she was one of our clients. Hopeless drug addict.

The words "drug addict" get Tanner's attention. With a mouth full of hot dog, Tanner interjects.

TANNER

You mean you killed drug addicts too? Was she the only dru--

MARTY

Well, she was pathetic! Had four kids to support and was addicted to heroin. What a waste. I easily persuaded her to get me some drugs so I could put these poor souls out of their misery.

Tanner tries not to look horrified.

TANNER

So...why'd you kill her if she was supplying you with the drugs you needed to...do your work? Did you generally consider addicts in need of your help?

MARTY

She started getting nosy. You know how women get.

Tanner is speechless. Picks at his hot dog.

MARTY (CONT'D)

So this young man, I took him home. He wasn't used to being treated so kindly. It took a while for him to relax, to realize I wasn't going to harm him. I helped him take a nice hot bath. Gave him comfortable, clean clothes. We had a wonderful meal. That night I made beef brisket with Burgundy orange sauce. It was excellent. You should let me cook for you some time.

Marty inspects his hot dog.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I can't believe I'm eating a hot dog. Anyway, he was a drinker, no surprise. So I opened a bottle of excellent wine, and we drank it. I put him into a clean, warm bed. And when he was drifting off to sleep, I gave him the injection. And in a few minutes, he was gone. Peaceful. Happy. Well-fed and in a comfortable bed. His pain and confusion gone.

The horror-struck look on Tanner's face prompts Marty to change his tack.