

Home D

Michael Botur

Your wheels churn Stucky's lawn up. You don't get much traction on his grass. You splash some mud on the windows of Stucky's little housing unit, like a granny flat, it's painted one of them sad shades like you'd see in a psych ward, mint-green, and the garden's nothin' but flax with Stucky's chicken bones dumped in it, and you can tell all the houses here are just the same couple of Lego bricks facing different ways so dumb arses think they're different designs. That little boy of yours, he's good with Lego, nah, what's it called, that Duplo shit, the big ones. You played with him one time after you made a booty call on his mama but you ain't been back since. Magine if peeps found out you put hoes before bros? Nah, s'all good: just keep drivin' place to place, callin' on the clique, keepin' up appearances and you'll never have to go home. Only way outta Thug Life's if you got a kid and you can't afford to pay child support and you've gotta stay home with it.

Why should Stucky get a whole place to himself? You're lucky you need to stash a little something under his place. It's Moro bars, but he don't need to know that. If you weren't such a nice dude, you'd drive right through the front fuckin' door, but you're a generous cunt so you give him a chance to make it up to you.

'OPEN UUUUPPP!'

You first met the bro like ten years ago in Cabbage Maths, been rollin' with him on-off ever since. Knew him as Home-D when yous was gonna be MCs, when you had the crew that used jump the fence and meet up and practice amongst the leaves and empty Ripples packets on the

bottom of the swimming pool. Blunt 4orce, that was yours, had all these Grammys in front of your eyes even though you couldn't hardly think of any words that rhymed except maggot/faggot. Hard for you to get 'em down on paper anyways, one look at a refill pad and you wanna throw it across the room. Too hard basket. Blunt 4orce broke up and you tried to go solo and years after you got sent up for doin' that homer on that matua's place, and you'd got Jacinthia pregnant, Stucky tried to go to night school, get some big fancy diploma. You got parole, rolled copper wire and brass taps from construction sites, hustled tinnies to li'l wiggers in the changing rooms at St Kent's. You went YOLO, Stucky went solo.

Far, you need to get Stucky to write that shit down. Maybe regroup?

'ANSWER THE DOOR, CUNT!'

You bang on the glass of his door, hope it breaks. Any nigga takes this long to open up's up to some devious shit back there, guaranteed. It's been three seconds already, four. Five. The morning crawls up your back, baking your neck. Your coat's too hot and heavy in the daylight, shit man, you shouldn't hafta be creepin' at this hour. You don't exactly got a regular pad to crash at when the sun's out, it's three nights here, four there, it's just too aggravating at Jacinthia's with the kid screaming and giggling at Bob the Builder. S'pose a night at Stucky's is what you'll hafta do.

'You got eight seconds! Yoza, yoza, yoza!'

One time you had to ask him for a lighter twice and he didn't even hear you 'cause his head was stuck in this nerd-book, and you knocked the book out of his hands and picked up his book and carried on underlining big words with his little pencil, pretty much dissin' you. He was unpatched from that moment on, in your pointa view, and

lucky for him – most people hafta earn a tombstone to get unpatched. Or have a kid. Same diff.

Time's up. The door disappears and there he is, blinking fifty times. The bro's got no stubble and his teeth got white caps on them since the last time you saw him. Somethin' ain't right: he looks like he's about to catch a plane outta here. Bro, you used to practice the mean UFC holds on this guy! YOLO, boy. He's hidin a lounge behind him: one couch, two arm chairs. Desk, computer, web cam on top. The monitor's got a screensaver goin, slideshow of white hoes and white snows: snowboard bitches. On his walls there's letters inside glass frames with, like, old school writing. There's a suitcase leaning against the fridge.

'Bin sent to tax ya,' you go, and the bro shits himself. 'Lax bro, I'm fuckin' with ya.'

'Come in, Angus,' he says, blinking behind his glasses. He's tall – too tall. Like he's tryina say somethin' about ya. Bony face, too, bin lookin like a Gandhi ever since yous was at playcentre.

'It's Angus *Beef*,' you tell him, leaning into his face. 'From BLUNT FUCKIN' 4ORCE. I had to put us on Hiace, didn't I, 'cause... ah, never mind.' You can smell your own breath, and it makes you need a drink. Somethin with healthy with lots of Coke in it. 'Ain'tcha got any piss?'

Stucky shifts the suitcase, leans his weight on the fridge door as he opens it. 'Got a alcohol and drug test this week. Down to my last Woodie.' He rolls the can in his hand, looking sad. 'Gotta have some fun, don'tcha.'

'You used to be tonnes fatter. You looked like that Susan Boyle bitch.'

'I do a daily regimen of push-ups,' he says quietly. His back's against the wall.

You put your finger inside his top lip and check his gums. Healthy cunt. 'Shoulda gotcha teeth fixed in lock-up.'

You push his face away, move to the couch, 'How come you're Facebookin all the time? Got no life or somethin? That's how I found ya. You don't know nothin. Shoulda covered ya trail, else bitches'll stick ya with that Child Support.'

Stucky hands you the can of Woodstock bourbon and Coke like it's his last ciggy. His hands is shaking. He sits down in one of the armchairs real cautious like he's got those sucky little blood-blisters on the inside of his arse. His PS3's all dusty and the cord's wrapped up like he ain't even bin playin' it.

'Can you tell me what it's like? Paying child-support and that?'

'Sheeeeet, I don't pay nothin'. Gotta find us first!' You go for a high-five but he doesn't come in. He's forgotten how to be a G.

'I mean – a lot of days, I wonder, if we could trade places, if I'd had a baby– '

'Rather do another stretch than have a baby stretch out Jacinthia's pussy. Babies suck arse.'

'You know I'm on home detention, Ang– '

'CAREFUL WITH MY NAME 'LESS YOU WANT A SMACK.'

He looks at the floor, pulls back the cuff of his long-as track-pants and shows you a ankle bracelet. 'The shackles of modern living,' he says, tries to smile. You don't get it – what song's that from? That don't sound like nothin you ever heard.

'I got a hacksaw in the boot,' you go, standing up, reaching for the door.

'DON'T! It's okay. Thank you for the offer. Listen, Angus, ah, Beef, it's got a transmitter so they know where I am at all times. Microphone too, they scope my conversations, record everything. There's peeps I'm not...

encouraged to associate with.'

You're hardly listening – you're pulling his posters off the wall to see if there's a safe behind one of them, like that movie Mrs Pruitt made you study.

'What peeps?'

Stucky looks at you with big cow eyes magnified by his stupid glasses. You wanna punch those eyes. There's somethin' about bitch-boys that riles you up big time, how they stop for zebra crossings and slow everyone down.

'Fuck ya get Home D for anyhow? I coulda got you off. Pyow pyow, doof, gone, later. Five grand, that's my price. Cheapest in the South Side, bro.'

'Home detention was actually the culmination of, God, well, a few convictions, I, like, I mean I had a suspended sentence for the time you chucked that bottle, at that cop, 'member you said that was me?' His hands tell the story with him. They're moving like he's preparing a magic trick. 'Thing is, I got pulled over for a breath test, um, ten months ago? They found your stash in my boot. So that was me.'

'Yeah *my* stash, that's right boy. And your arse couldn't boost with a ankle bracelet on.'

'You got your chronology fucked up, but sure: I'm waylaid. For now.'

He's makin your head hurt with his twisted story, like he's tryin to blame you for gettin him to hold a few ounces. You look at the walls around him. You manage to read one of the framed stificates, crazy Ye Olde English: one says *Applied Diploma*. There's words like Merit and Licensed and shit. Your ears come back to him and he's still havin a cry about takin the rap.

'... and the transmitted, urgh, ankle bracelet recordings go through to Police Comms who share information with the surveillance helicopter's radar gun and they get the

security company to enforce the actual visitation... yeah. Espionage, in my humble opinion.' He reaches out to try and touch your shoulder. Fuckin' queer. 'Don't say nothing incriminatory. I'd rather my life didn't get pakaru'd any further.'

'What's that mean?'

'Well, it means 'to be broken'.' Then he tilts his head and grins a bit those teeth which used to look like broken windows til Corrections paid for him to go to the dentist. 'Guess it also means breaking through.'

'Go read ya dictionary, nerd.'

'I have. Several times.'

You knock back your drink and burp as loud as you can and put your can on the Maori dictionary on his coffee table, hoping your can spills sticky sweet Woodstock on his pages. The can doesn't spill by itself so you tip it, then you spit on his carpet. The gob spreads like a cracked egg. You look hard at him, daring him to challenge you. 'Pretty convenient you didn't get sent up.'

'Least they got *libraries* in prison. What do I got here? Blog; toilet with a door I can actually close; web cam for a girlfriend in Sweden who doesn't even... I haven't told her... '

'There's that Tweeter, oi.'

'What am I supposed to tweet? How many times a day I do the dishes? Today I went from the bedroom to the lounge to the fridge. Same as the last two months, well, not even: fifty-nine days, seven hours. Same as the *next* two months. If I had a kid, just... it'd be like discovering a new colour, eh, a new dimension.'

'Have my one, I'll bring him round.' There's a suitcase parked against the wall and you kick it to test if it's solid. 'What's with the suitcase anyways?'

'Soon as I'm done, I'm outta here. Bags are packed.'

Counting the days. Not many to go. Not many double digits left.'

'Sweet for you but I gotta protect my patch.'

'Who else is left that actually thinks they're B.P.? Just you, isn't it?'

'Bro, if your ankle bracelet wasn't gonna squeal, I'd drag you to the kerb right now. Kerb-stomp them pretty teeth. Get me another Woodie.'

'I'm going to *Sweden*, bro. Sverige. This chick sounds... she's like, I don't know, like when your mum cleans your room for you, you know, it feels real spesh. If you *got* a mum, I should specify. And she wants kids, bro, she's, like, sent from above.'

'She's usin' ya,' you snort, 'That's how they get rich, they get you to get em pregnant and GLECK. Life over. How you gonna find gangstas to roll with in Switzerland?'

'Sweden.' He taps his chest then adjusts his glasses, like he's sayin sorry for daring to tap his chest. 'In here's my gangstas.'

'You trippin!' you lol. 'You lucky, bro, you livin' the sweet life. No work, G! Let's get us a mixing desk and *vwaaaaa*. Tuuuuuunes.'

'You got any idea how many times a day I check the job listings?'

'Hundred? Fuck would I know? You gotta get out more, Mister Home D. I seen that blog of yours. 'Sall bitching.'

'Angus, in case you haven't noticed, I'm rather incapacitated,

You kick your can against the wall. It spatters like a exploded paintball. Stucky grabs a sponge from the kitchen and starts scrubbin the dribble. You're about to smash him, but at the men's group they said you're meant to count to firteen and light a smoke, so you do that instead. You signed this commitment to not break things or people's

faces and specially not to hurt your kid. 'There's a light beeping on Stucky's ankle under his cuffs. Probly a smoke alarm. Your kid loves them LED lights, the lil retard.

'Fuck *incarcerated*, your arse weren't *incarcerated* when I dropped off that post-box we rolled. Remember how many Carl's Jnr coupons was in them letters? Me, Angus Blunt Force Fuckin' Scott, does you a favour. I got me some big words too, bro, like *privilege* – thas a privilege, holding onto that shit for me. My Moros, ME, cunt, MINE. If I put it in your fuckin' boot, it's fuckin' mine.'

He's squatting in the corner, like he's in a cell, patting his head and shaking it and going, 'Don't say that, don't say that, don't say–'

'Either you're on crack or you need some. Makin' me wanna not come round here anymore and rap about the good ole days.' You open his fridge and toss things around. 'Be more fun hangin' out with Jacinthia and the baby, *sheeeeeeeet*.'

'I wasn't legally the owner of this residence at the point in time the letterbox was brought here, as court records will indicate I've already testified,' Stucky goes, looking at his foot, 'I'd like it acknowledged I was merely–'

'*Speak fuckin' English!* I just said it was one of mine! You deaf, nono? Like how I stuck me that Blood-Dog at that piss-up in July, you gonna lay that on yaself? Thas on me AND I'm still on the streets.' You put your foot on the coffee table and show him ya metal. 'This here's the tool, cunt. Not yours, not no one's: MINE. And where you gettin' these nerd words? You honestly readin' the dictionary all day, straight up?'

'Many days I do. Not all of me is stuck in here. Parts of me are in the Library of Alexandria, bro.' He's blinking at you. You wanna stick him right in his pupils and you got the metal to make it happen. Fuck his degrees, fuck his

dictionary.

‘Dunno why I even bother,’ you go.

He folds his arms. ‘I’m goin’ straight.’

‘Straight ta jail!’

‘Not much of a listener, are you Angus.’

‘I went to the beach last week,’ you say, chin up, chest out, ‘You ain’t even allowed out. Your screensaver ain’t no beach.’

‘Did you swim? Build a sandcastle?’

‘It was at night, dick. Parked up, lit a cone. I ain’t gettin’ sand in my Hi-tops. I seen on *Coastwatch* what it looks like in the day, anyhowz.’

‘Did you even get out of the car? Did you smell the palms, the salt, hear the waves?’

You stick a finger at Stucky. ‘I got TNT. From Fulton Hogan, they jus leave it in the caravan when you bust in, that construction yard just over by the school—’

‘You don’t wanna talk about that, please bro...’

You start pacing the short lengths of his lounge. Fully makes you think of being stuck in a holding cell again. You can’t even feel the rug beneath your feet, your shoes is too padded. You’re never goin back. When you got your own flat, you’re not gonna act all stuck-up, hardly swearing, forgettin the good times, breakin’ up with bros what care about you.

‘I said I can blow you the fuck up! T-N-T, bitch. How much you got? None? Zacly.’

You’re chasing him around the couch. He stumbles over a pile of TV Guides. He cringes against the wall, crumbles like a soft biscuit. ‘I think they heard you the first time.’

‘Who heard? Ain’t no one here ‘cept for me. *Me*.’

He falls onto the couch. His ankle’s still flashing that lil light. Thas it: you reach over and grab the cuff of his pants, pull it up. He tries to pull his leg back, squealing. His arms

are protecting his top half. He shrieks. You stamp on his feet a couple times, slap his head. A diploma falls off the wall, its glass becomes a spiderweb.

‘You just a fall-guy! I’m syndicate, cunt! Alls you got is big words and a small mouth! Big fuckin’ internet star!’

You wrap your hands around his ankle. His head hits the floor hard. You drag him through the spit. You pull him into the kitchen across the lino, kicking spottles and bottle-bongs out of the way, pull the metal out of your sock, hold the blade against Stucky’s spasming leg and saw through the bracelet. That signal’s drivin’ you mental.

‘Pipe bombs in my trunk mu’fucker!’ you yell at the bleeping light, ‘Licence plate CM-GT-ME! *Come get me!* Where you gonna go, loser? Where you gonna go?’

It’s hard to breathe. You lope around the kitchen. You think you might have asthma, you grew up in a cold house where the air was always blue. Your lungs clutch at spots of oxygen. You settle on the floor. Stucky’s holding his legs. He reaches up and puts the kettle on for some reason.

Thirteen seconds. Thirteen seconds. Where’d your ciggies go?

‘Fuck you doin?’ you say between gasps.

‘They’ll want a cuppa.’

The sawn-off bracelet is still winking at you. Between breaths you manage, ‘Wassa ankle bracelet worth anyway?’

‘A few more months, if you cut one off, I dunno. Definitely an offence to cut one off someone. They’re gonna stick you at home with your kid.’

‘What? Who’s comin? Why’s that light blinkin’ at me?’

Stucky pulls his glasses off and wipes his eyes with a thumb and forefinger. ‘I told you before, that’s the transmitter. Like a police scanner. Broadcasts everything you say to the pigs.’ In his hands, he turns the ankle bracelet over, like he’s pulled one of his organs out and he’s

always wondered what it looks like. ‘They’ll be here shortly, bro, they’ll search your car, I promise. What size ankle bracelet you take?’

‘Ziff I care about home D.’

‘You’re gonna get twelve months with your kid and your woman, this is, like... Bro, I texted you like months ago how they bin droppin' round lookin' for you. Why'd you come round here if you knew that was gonna happen? Angus?’