

Mates

He could just make out the outline of Reggie's face through the gauze.

"Sorry mate, it's locked."

He waited as Reggie fumbled for the key on the hallstand before unlocking the door. He relocked it after Flipper had stepped inside. Flipper paused and then followed him into the lounge room.

A woman sat, eyes glazed, in a stained fabric arm chair. Her eye sockets grey and hollow. A bruise darkening under one eye.

"Hello Mrs Slaven." There was no reaction.

Reggie shook his head and gestured towards the sofa. It was grubby with cigarette burns on the arms and a plastic bottle fashioned into a bong on the seat. He moved the bong putting it on the coffee table, amongst the empty beer cans and the pizza box. He sat down, avoiding the sinister dark wet patch.

Reggie sat opposite, his hair greasy and lank, his face pale and lined.

"We need to talk."

Reggie twitched and reached for the cigarette pack on the table. He leaned back in the chair luxuriously, inhaling deeply before sitting bolt upright as a spasm of coughing racked his body.

Flipper waited until the coughing subsided. "You know, Merv likes you." He leaned towards him, clasping his hands and resting his forearms on his thighs. "It's just that he finds you," He stared at the open pizza box on the coffee table, the smell of stale peperoni and the line of ants crawling through the topping was nauseating. "unreliable."

"I like Merv."

He watched as Reggie wrapped his thin arms around his chest and began to rock back and forth.

"Maybe it would be easier if you sold more and used less."

"I've just got a lot to do."

He looked up at him. It was hard to imagine that Reggie was busy. He only had one job and it wasn't time consuming.

"Merv wants to help. Improve things." Reggie nodded enthusiastically. He frowned. "Can I use your bathroom?" He looked over Reggie's head before standing and walking towards the back of the house.

Reggie watched him, moving his head sideways and then cocking his ear as he heard the bathroom door close.

He felt uneasy. Flipper was a mate, but he worked for Merv. Merv was exacting. The toilet flushed, he had to make a decision.

Flipper sat on the toilet considering the bathroom and the conversation. Some cheap lace curtains and a fluffy orange bath mat. The constant drip from the tap had left a rust stain on the pink porcelain basin. Merv had been clear. He just wasn't sure about Mrs Slaven. She was out of it, but she might remember his visit. Ah well, they say you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. The gun felt heavy in his hand, and his heart, as he screwed the suppressor to the muzzle. He flushed.

He watched Reggie as he rummaged on the hallstand. Absently touching the key in his pocket.

"Sorry Mate. It's locked."