

Appointment on Telegraph Road.

Inspired in part by "The Appointment in Samarra" as retold by W. Somerset Maugham.

THE CAST(OUTS):

Jerome Pearl (JP), petty drug dealer.

Reagan Spenser, known as Ray-gun or Ray.

Johnni P — — —, Jimmy's older brother.

Jimmy P — — —, Johnnie's younger brother.

Act 1. JP's place in Detroit, 1980.

JP was high, Johnni and Jimmy shared a bottle, and Ray's fix was speed. Ray twisted one open, a black and yellow capsule, and dumped the contents into a glass of water. The granules hit the surface and darted like angry bees. "THAT'S why they're called yellow jackets," Ray said. "You can party all night and drink on it, too. Damn good, eh?"

" 'Eh'? What are you, Canadian, eh?" They all laughed too loud.

"What's that fat ass joint, JP?"

"Thai stick. Not a joint. From my boys back from Nam. It's dipped in hashish.

Or opium. Yah, opium.

"I got it to deal. This one," JP said, wagging his stogie, "I pinched for personal use."

"No wonder your voice is so high." "What's higher, JP, you or your voice?"

They laughed until they cried. "You don't sell shit."

Written by K.G. Jones.

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"I can sell anything I get my hands on, make me a dollar. Coke, Tylenol #4, Vicodin, T's and Blues. Anything. Acid. I got money in my pocket. Don't have to ask mama or daddy for nuthin, like you fairy queens."

"I dropped acid one time in one eye," Ray said, speed-walking around the room. "My right eye. Just my right eye."

All four of them paused.

"That's bogus, Ray-gun."

"Tripping in one eye not the other," Ray said, reversing direction.

"Sit here on your couch, sell that smack," Johnni said to JP. You gonna get busted."

"Not if you bros got my back. This is our street."

"We need a name," said Ray. "Every 'hood's got a name. "The Flynns. The Young Boys."

"We could be the Dog Boyz," JP said. "B-o-y-z, boyz."

"Lame," said Jimmy, eyes closed, slumped on the couch next to JP.

"And a hand dance," Ray said. "We need a hand dance. And a move." He experimented, his hands and his feet hyper, bumping into the coffee table.

"Jail, prison or dead, guaranteed. You drivin' on the wrong side of the road." Johnni laughed knowingly.

"Prison or dead," JP repeated. "What the fuck."

“The world’s gonna be a cold and lonely place when you admire it from inside a prison wall. Someone tell you when you can piss, eat, sleep, wash your body. Take a shower, drop the soap, get eight inches up your ass. Fresh meat on the block. They take turns on you like you wearing stockings and high heels.”

“Prison or dead?” JP repeated. “Like a firing squad?” Jimmy stirred on the couch.

“Like a firing squad with no blindfold,” Johnni said. “You see it coming at you. Staring up at that razor wire fence, wishing things could be different. You got money in your pocket now? Mr. Wanna-be so popular. Your lawyer paid by the state, you won’t have shit. Ray-gun got your back? Better let him know what color dress to send, little sister.”

“No blindfold,” said Jimmy, eyes closed. “Rifles pointed at you, fire coming out the barrels, the shots, bullets ripping through your body. Bullets ripping into your face.”

“Get real,” scoffed Ray, ever moving. “What do you know, firing squads. Bullshit. Want to get real? Let’s get out of the city. Right now. I got my old man’s Caddy. C’mon.

“Coming with?” Ray asked JP.

“I got Codell coming over,” said JP. Got to wait on him.”

Act 2.

Ray's father's black Cadillac was a boat, a luxury automobile with a full tank of gas siphoned from Johnni's rusted out, hole-in-the-floor, dogshit-brown '67 Plymouth Valiant. Ray drove, Johnni next to Ray. Jimmy sprawled in back, dead drunk.

They took I-94 west, racing, they don't know how many miles, until they're far out of Detroit. Exited at Telegraph Road, south through Taylor. A few more miles and Telegraph narrowed from a divided road to a road with a yellow center line, a straight shot past Pennsylvania Road and then Sibley Road. Ray crossed the center line toward oncoming traffic, their headlights blazing closer and bigger until at the last second the oncoming car swerved off the road and Ray swerved back onto his side. "Woo-ee!" Ray yelled. "Why did the chicken cross the road?!"

Past King Road, the Caddy drifted across the center line, headlights coming at them, Johnni looking at Ray driving, Ray's eyes closed, Johnni alarmed: "Ray!" Ray's eyes opened, headlights of a pickup truck in front of them so close that they see the driver in silhouette, the pickup veering right onto the shoulder to avoid them, at the same time Ray realizing, over-correcting by yanking his steering wheel to the right, the Caddy's weight shifting to the passenger side, lurching all the way across his lane and off the right shoulder, Ray pulling the wheel back to the left, finally regaining control, straightening out in his lane. Jimmy in the back seat, passed out the whole time; he never would've known what happened.

"I did that on purpose."

“Like shit. You’re fucked up.”

They came to a ROAD CLOSED sign on Telegraph. “They paved it,” said Ray, going around the sign onto new blacktop. They had the road to themselves. “They’re all done with it.”

Ray-gun floored it, throwing their heads back. The Caddy shook from the acceleration. At West Road, they blew through more ROAD CLOSED signs, the surface so fresh that traffic lane lines had yet to be painted. The road arced gently to the right. Reagan aimed straight ahead, leaving the curving rainbow of the road at a hundred miles an hour through a chain link fence. In an instant far louder than you might imagine, the Cadillac twisted its chassis around a tree trunk and disintegrated, everything within it transfigured and unrecognizable, strewn like spores that would bring new life into Oak Ridge Cemetery.

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