

## Bullets

A plastic princess plate, and three sets of fine china occupy a dark, mahogany table. Blood overwrites the taste of warm chicken in Joey's mouth, and plates and silverware crash to the ground. Joey's mother, and his kid sister, retreat to a corner of the dining room.

"Fuck you, Harold," says Joey

"And fuck you, too. No son of mine would disrespect me."

"Please, don't make me call the police again," Joey's mother says.

"Go ahead. They'll just be wasting their time like always."

Joey rises from his seat, but Harold shoves him down. He takes a swig from a large bottle, and shambles up to Joey's face. The smell of blood and alcohol fills his nose.

"Daddy, no," Sussie says.

"Shut that brat up, Danielle."

Joey pushes Harold out of his face, and forces his attacker to stumble into a glass display. Family photos shatter from the human wrecking ball.

"Stop it, you two. Don't do this in front of the little one."

Joey's mother rushes to Harold's side, and caress his face with a bruised arm.

"D-dadd-y-y-y, no. Daddy, no-o-o-o," Sussie says. Joey picks her up, and she latches around his neck and chest.

"Why have you put up with this monster for so long? We can leave right now, and forget about him."

"How can you say that when he's provided for us?"

Danielle holds Harold's leaking head in her arms, and he mutters something intelligible.

"Well I'm taking Sussie with me. She doesn't deserve this kind of behavior."

"You are NOT taking my daughter away from this house."

Joey walks to a room with Sussie still attached and packs large and small clothes into a duffle bag. He produces a jar hidden behind his desk, and stuffs clumps of bills into his bag.

"Daddy, no."

"Don't worry, Sussie. We won't be living here anymore."

Joey hands Sussie her favorite stuffed animal. "Mr. woofles will take care of us. I promise."

Sussie grips the toy and buries her damp face into Joey's shoulder.

"Where is that bastard? I'll kill him. I've got six chances," Harold says from the living room. He shuffles something around, and small, metallic objects hit the marble floor.

"Harold, we are fine. We can get this under control. Just put that away."

Joey walks out to the living room. Danielle pins Harold to the arm of a couch.

"First you make me mad, then you steal my daughter."

"I'm saving her from you two. You let him do this, mom," Joey says. "When will you realize that?"

"If you just listened to your father more, none of thi--"

"Do you really believe that? Neither of you deserve to be parents."

Joey adjusts Sussie to his back, and slings his bag over his shoulders.

"And where do you think you'll go, huh? You ain't got anyone to run to."

"Anywhere but here."

Broken plates and glass crunch under Joey's shoes as he walks to the front door.

"I've got six," Harold says.

"Daddy, no."

"We're going to be free, Sussie. It's alright."

Joey unlocks the front door, and walks out to the front porch.

"Six. Six, boy, six."

"D-daddy, no."

Footsteps come stumbling behind the two, and something clicks along with it. The cool night's air displaces around Joey as he runs into the darkness.