

Ashes to Ashes

By

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ACT IScene 1

Lights up on the hallway of a burn unit. Gil, a middle-aged man with a white cowboy hat sits on a bench. Stoically sitting, similar to how one might wait for a bus. Maria, a stout and weary but still very pretty, ethnically ambiguous nurse walks in to give the report.

MARIA

Well, 3 stable with only minor burns and injuries, 12 still in critical condition, and we had to move 7 of them to St. Joe's.

GIL

...Okay

MARIA

And the other 26 did not make it to the hospital.

GIL

Didn't make it?

MARIA

Yes, I'm afraid they passed before we could get them here.

GIL

Oh, you mean they died.

MARIA

...Yes. I'm sorry.

GIL

And the others?

MARIA

Others?

GIL

Well ma'am, I'm the foreman for the wing that burnt down. I oversaw about 54 of them myself.

MARIA

I wasn't informed. If they haven't arrived, then perhaps they...

GIL

Still in there.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Possibly.

GIL

These things just happen.

MARIA

You mean massive fires where several of your employee's suffer horrific burns and even more are missing... just happens?

GIL

Yeah, occupational hazard.

MARIA

...Right. Yes, I'm sure several cigar factories burn down on a regular basis! Like car accidents, really. Another bus load of people died. Oh well!

GIL

Well, I wouldn't say that

MARIA

Oh no?

GIL

Yeah, well ma'am, it's like, to use the bus example, I'm on the bus, driving it along, making sure everything rolls smoothly, getting the product delivered safely.

MARIA

With all of your employee's on board?

GIL

No, no, no. The cigars are on board. When the whole fire thing is like if we got a flat tire or seized the engine or something.

MARIA

What do you mean?

GIL

Well, I mean, it slows down production, or the bus, but really I just gotta get out there and replace the tire and whatnot.

MARIA

So your employees are tires?

GIL

They are their function, yes ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

Are they not people?

GIL

(Chuckling)

Oh no. They're Cubans.

MARIA

I see. And you, the driver of the bus, are a person?

GIL

Yes ma'am. A red-blooded American citizen. I work hard, pay taxes, and vote for god-fearing politicians.

MARIA

Work hard by... supervising the workers?

GIL

"Driving the bus", remember? I might not roll a cigar myself, but without me, the bus wouldn't know where to go. Hell, probably wouldn't even wanna run. Well, mean the Cubans would run but--

MARIA

Okay then. I'll come give you a report in a few hours, if you're still here.

GIL

I'll be here until my shift is over ma'am. 5 o'clock every day.

Maria exits. Gil takes out an electric cigarette, takes a quick puff and puts it back in his shirt pocket. Clay, an older man in a gray suit with a large belt buckle, hat in hand, walks in. He rips Gil's hat off.

CLAY

Show some Goddamn respect.

GIL

Yes, sorry sir.

CLAY

Shit. This is gonna set me back. The press is gonna have a damn field-day with this. How many of them confirmed dead?

GIL

26 confirmed, but 54 still missing.

(CONTINUED)

CLAY

Okay, that's 80 paycheck's I don't have to write. So maybe it won't set me back too much.

GIL

Well sir, we lost most of the finished shipment and probably all of the product that was still on the line.

CLAY

God fucking Dammit! Fucking Fuck Gil. I can't fucking believe this shit. As far as I'm concerned, this is your goddamn fault.

GIL

Me? I didn't start any fire.

CLAY

Maybe not, but it's your responsibility. Look, I'm gonna go talk to the police, and if I find out you had anything to do with this, it's your ass Gil. Your. ass.

Clay exits. Gil takes another puff of his electronic cigarette.

GIL

Shit... It's not like anyone was hurt.

Maria returns.

MARIA

Do you know a Gil?

GIL

I'm Gil.

MARIA

One of the patients is calling for you.

GIL

Which one?

MARIA

(Looking at her chart)

Teresa Vargas.

GIL

No thank you, ma'am.

MARIA

No thank you?

(CONTINUED)

GIL

Yes ma'am. No thank you.

MARIA

She's in critical condition. These could be her last words for all your know.

GIL

I'd rather not see her like that.

MARIA

She claims you were romantically involved; called you novio, but I seriously doubt that is true.

GIL

Involved, sure. I don't know 'bout that other thing though.

MARIA

Did... Were you... Dating that woman?

GIL

She was a companion. She would keep me company and help me speak to the other Cubans from time to time.

MARIA

So you're not her boyfriend.

GIL

No, not at all. She's like a...uh.. You know, like dog or something. 'Cept this dog spoke Cuban.

MARIA

And instead of trying to ease her pain in a time of need, you'd rather put "Ol Yeller" out to pasture.

GIL

Is that an option?

MARIA

(Checking her watch)

... 4:57.

Maria exits. Gil takes out his electronic cigarette again and takes a puff, but before he can put it away, Clay returns.

CLAY

What the Hell is that?

GIL

E-Cigar, sir. Healthier

CLAY

Jesus Christ Gil, that shits kills business. Give me that.

Clay takes the electronic cigarette and tosses it in the trash.

CLAY

Look, the police said the fire starting in the storeroom, like one of those little fuckers got their hands on a book of matches and lit some rolling papers then split.

GIL

Sounds about right.

CLAY

Excuse me?

GIL

Well sir, I saw the fire when it was in the storeroom. Caught Romeo red-handed. Got away though. Too damn fast for me.

CLAY

You saw the Goddamn fire and didn't stop it? What in God's name we're you thinking?

GIL

I was chasing Romeo, sir.

CLAY

And you didn't put the god damn fire out!? Jesus Christ! Don't talk to the police, for the love of God. Just go home.

Clay goes to exit.

GIL

(Checking his watch)

Shift is over in 'bout a minute, sir.

Clay is gone. Gil walks over to the trash can.

GIL

Just doing my job.

He reaches into the trash can and pulls out his electronic cigarette.

GIL

Don't wanna lose this. Love this thing.

Gil checks his watch.

Black out.