

“Russian Roulette” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 1

(ROGER has a bandage on his head and a bandage on his hand. He's holding an open beer bottle.)

ROGER

The key is to know someone you know knows more than you know. I don't know anyone...really, so I have to learn things on my own.

I learned the hard way that superheroes aren't real. I guess that's the most effective and retentive way to learn something. The hard way. We learn the most from the things we screw up.

Me, I learned that I'm not bullet proof. And, by extension I got a lesson in physiology that makes me assume that no one is bulletproof. And if no one is bulletproof, a prerequisite for being a superhero, then one can rightly assume that there are no superheroes.

Do you know why the Russians in Siberia play Russian roulette? Because it's always cold and fucking boring in Siberia, and there ain't nothing else to do.

The rules to Russian roulette are simple. What else could they be but simple? One bullet in a gun with a revolving chamber... a revolver, if you will. You spin, point, shoot, if you're not dead you win. Pass the gun around. 'Course in my case I lost and still survived, so I guess it was a tie really.

Turns out you can shoot yourself in the head and still live, but you have to be lucky, or unlucky, whatever. Luck. I just hope, if I play again, that I don't lose again. Losing... or tying, sucks. The game's only really fun for the winner.

Don't get me wrong. The game isn't that simple. There are a number of basic questions that need answering before you start trying to blow each other's brains out. Where are you going to do it? Who's going to clean up? Who's bringing the gun? Who's bringing the

bullet? Who’s bringing the chips? Who’s bringing the big plastic sheet? How many rounds are we going to play? And, in my case, who’s going to explain it to the cops and hospital staff when the loser fails to lose.

I bet you want to know why I was playing. I’ll tell you. In a moment. I promise.

(He takes a drink and looks at the bandage on his hand.)

I’m not an alcoholic. Let’s just clear that up right from the start. And I’m not in denial either. What a double edged sword that whole logic train is on. “You’re and alcoholic.”, “No I’m not.”, “You’re in denial.”, “No I’m not.”, “You’re an alcoholic.”, chuga-chuga-chuga.

I’m not an alcoholic. I just really wanted this beer, and didn’t have a bottle opener. The amenities that you lack on the road become the things that define you as a person. Don’t you think? So, no bottle opener and no twist off cap, but even a non-twisting cap will twist off if you twist it hard enough.

I drove through the desert the other day. The day before this. (points to his head.). I’ve never been through a desert before. Want to know what’s in a desert? Sand. But, this is America, and thus we have to tame that sand. Tame that wild... wilderness. Power lines fricking everywhere. Huge towers with mile after mile of power lines strung across the land. At this one point I crested over a hill and laid out before me was this wonder-- horizon -- like a big sand, oh, what do you call ‘em -- basin. Anyway, as far as the eye could see. Flat. Sand. Land. Crisscrossed with power lines. So many of them. Going in different directions, and the towers at different angles. It looked like the land was Gulliver and we, the Lilliputians, had just finished tying him up with extension cords and were ready to plug him in.

We Lilliputians. We. Us. Us little people. Another humbling, or I dunno, annoying thing you learn on the road. How many people

there are out there. And I don't know hardly any of them. Goddamn, so many of them. And they've all got full complete life stories attached to them. Each one! Everyone out there has stories, and loves, and people who care about them. Even freaky homeless guys who smell like sweaty mustard have a priest or some homeless shelter worker who says, “Yeah, he comes in here all the time. Coffee, black.” Everyone.

And they're all driving too slow, or too fast, or too swervy, whatever. They're driving anyway you can think of that's not my style apparently. I dunno, maybe I just haven't noticed the people who're driving like me 'cause they're driving on different roads parallel to mine.

My road. Ha. My Lilliputian road. I didn't build it. I couldn't lay two bricks together straight, much less figure out asphalt.

But I didn't want to sit here and tell you all the things I can't do. Can't build a road. Can't open a beer properly. Can't admit I'm in denial. Can't shoot myself in the head correctly.

Turns out, one of the things I can do is kill someone else. Yep. You're looking at a man who is directly responsible for the death of another living human being. Another Lilliputian. A person with a full life story. Start to finish. Born. Died.

That desert that I was talking about. It's only got one road going through it. Four lanes, but one road. I was listening to music and singing along. “She Loves you, yeah, yeah yeah.” Happiest Goddamned song in the world, will now be forever connected in my mind with a horrific car crash.

Driving. Singing song. Speeding. Slightly. Glance too long at the desert scenery. Clip bumper. Wham, bam, thank you ma'am. 87' Dodge Shadow. No seat belt. No air bags.

She was 24. I suppose it would have been ironically perfect had she been just 17. But no, she was 24. Her name was Carrie Pike. She was a veterinarian assistant. She was traveling on a working vacation, a convention for veterinarians with guest speakers from PETA and break out sessions on heart worm. She was not married. I don't know if she was seeing anyone at the time. There comes a point when you just don't want to learn anymore.

So that's it. I accidentally killed someone else. I got depressed. I tried to kill myself. And failed. Perhaps I was saved for a reason. I mean, I could have got killed out there on the road. And I could have got killed by the gun. Heck, I could have killed myself drinking any number of times. But, I didn't. So, the way I figure it, I'm either a superhero, which I've already eliminated as a possibility. Or, I'm just really lucky.

OR. And this is where it gets really sticky. I could be protected by God. For some other purpose. Course, that'd be the same God that helped kill Carrie Pike, but maybe her purpose had already been served. They say that God loves us. All of us. And he just wants us to find our purpose in life.

And with a love like that, you know, I should be..... glad.