

“McKinley”

Written by James Robertson

‘McKinley? That bastard? I hate him. You see him, you tell him: “I have a message for you from an old acquaintance: rot in hell, you bastard.” You tell him that from me.

‘You know what he did? He put his wife on the street. That beautiful, innocent girl. She wasn’t so innocent by the time he finished with her. First he turns her into a junkie, then he puts her on the street to pay for his habit and her habit. But she stuck with him a long time, years and years. She became as desperate as he was. No, that’s not true, he was never desperate. He always was a calculating, self-serving bastard.

‘I never knew anyone so selfish, or so capable of getting people to do things for him. Oh, he was a charmer all right. Everybody gave him money. Even I gave him money once. It was a loan, theoretically, but I knew when I handed it over I was never going to see any of it again. I remember one poor sucker gave him twenty dollars, a lot of money back then, and you know what he did with it? He set it on fire. He burned that twenty-dollar bill in front of the guy’s eyes. And somehow he made him laugh about it. Me, I’d have killed him, but somehow he persuaded the guy that it was only money, you had to despise it to be liberated from it. That’s never stopped McKinley taking it though, as much of it as he can get. It makes my blood boil just thinking about him.

‘People say he’s a genius, they say he’s so far ahead of his time, but let me tell you something: McKinley is a talentless shit. He wrote a couple of novels that weren’t too bad, sure, but that’s it. He used to copy the first one out in longhand and then sell what he’d written as the original manuscript so he could score more heroin. That’s not genius, that’s pathetic.

‘They had a son, didn’t they? Can you imagine? What kind of life, I mean, what kind of life? God knows what happened to that boy.’

To view more of James Robertson’s work and explore the 365: Stories + Music online exhibit, please click the link below.

<https://three-six-five.net/Stories-And-Music/May/29>