

BESIDE YOU

Written by

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INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

The dull walls encase a gallery of sun-bleached decor.

An OLD MAN lays on his back in bed. ROGER, a wooden male puppet, sits on the headboard above. The puppet dangles a LANDLINE PHONE above the man's mouth as he speaks.

The man anxiously sways. His eyes are glossy and bloodshot. NONO, 76, looks as if he's been crying.

FEMALE V.O.

You're going to have to speak up if
you want me to help, sweetie.

NONO

I said I'm sorry for the mess.
That's it.

The voice turns concerned.

FEMALE V.O.

But what mess? Articulate! I'm not
just going to be left here hanging
in the dark again!

NONO glances at the shredded corpse of a WOODEN FEMALE PUPPET that hangs halfway off the bed. He is in a panic.

NONO

Roger and I were uhm, practic-

FEMALE V.O.

Roger?! Honey?! When was the last
time you used Rog-
(beat)
You know what? I'm pulling in the
driveway now, give me a minu-

BEEP The hang-up tone fills the room.

CLUNK! The PHONE drops onto the man's shocked face.

A deep, raspy VOICE calls out --

VOICE (O.S.)

Sounds like she missed me.

NONO sits up and looks at the headboard. Roger slumps over with a sly grin, revealing --

--A MODIFIED, WEAPONIZED NAIL GUN.

ROGER
Might as well end it all before she
does.

NONO jumps out of his bed, and takes a step back.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Right? Ha!

NONO
Okay slow down with that shit. I
would never have killed her puppet
if it weren't for you.

A beat. Roger stands silently. He holds the contraption.

NONO (CONT'D)
Where the fuck did you even get
that?

ROGER
I threw it together with her help.

Roger gestures toward the female puppet corpse.

Nono's face drops into a soulless expression. He grabs the
NAIL GUN.

NONO
You want me to kill myself with
this?

ROGER
Go on...

NONO
Why do I even entertain your
nonsense?

A beat.

ROGER
That's a stupid question. I have a
better one. What's your wife gonna
think when she sees her beloved
puppet shattered across your bed?

He clears his throat with the same sly grin.

ROGER (CONT'D)
We both know you're far from happy,
old man. Surely you still can't
believe life is going to get any
better for you. Right?
(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

You need to either man up or take some accountability for what you did. This is embarrassing, Nono.

Nono walks out of the bedroom and into the living room, where he sits on a couch near the entrance, disturbed...

...he puts the nail gun down on a table beside him.

NONO

I know I know. I just don't know what to tell her. Where do I even start?

ROGER

See old man? This is exactly why you should just get it over with. No questions asked.

Roger slides the gun closer to Nono's hand.

NONO

We'd be done. She'd never want to see me again. This puppet was her everything.

ROGER

She'll probably tell all your friends about it as well. I'm telling you, if you don't pull the trigger, someone else will.

NONO

So if I killed myself right now, you wouldn't mind dying beside me? You know that if I go, you go.

(a beat) Roger chuckles and gathers his thoughts.

ROGER

This is something I've accepted awhile ago, old man. I'm just here to get you through this mess.

Nono picks up the gun.

ROGER (CONT'D)

There we go bud. Through the mouth is the quickest.

Roger directs Nono's hand to point towards his mouth.

Nono sniffles. He cries.

NONO
I don't deserve this, do I Roger?

ROGER
Listen. It's all up to you, of course. But, if I had to choose...as bad as it sounds...I'd pull the trigger.

NONO
Thank you for being so loyal to me, Roger.

Nono cocks the gun, holds it to his mouth, and closes his eyes.

--AN ELDERLY WOMAN, 75, blasts through the front door.

NANA
Where's Roger? Where's that stupid fucking puppet?!

NANA sees NONO with the gun in his hand.

NANA (CONT'D)
Put that down! What're you thinking!

NONO
I don't-

ROGER (O.S.)
He was thinking about making your life a lot smoother, Nana.

Roger laughs at his own joke.

NANA
Put it down!

NANA slaps the gun contraption out of his hand, and onto the floor.

NONO looks at Roger with a scowl.

NONO
Roger's little trap can't stay closed today, huh?!

NANA
Honey, when did you start talking with Roger again?

NONO

I'm not sure I ever stopped. I know
it pisses you off. I know.

NANA

That's not it at all. I'm just
worried for you. He's just a
puppet, Sweetheart. The act has
gone too far.

Nono rolls his eyes and turns toward Nana.

NONO

Oh and I don't know that?! I've
been trying to shut him up for
years, babe. Years. I always ignore
him.

NANA

What was the difference today? You
talk about it like he's still real
to you.

ROGER

Not real? Oh please. Ask her if she
thinks the pile of splinters you
turned her puppet into is real? You
gonna show her or what? What are we
waiting for?

NONO is shaken with panic.

NONO

I can't think!

NANA

If you just talk to me, we can make
him disappear.

NONO stands up and picks the gun off the ground.

ROGER

There we go.

NANA

(nervous)

Honey, what are you doing?

NONO

Your puppet...

NANA

What about my puppet?

NONO's head drops. He sobs as NANA opens the bedroom door to see the heap of mangled puppet hanging off the bed.

ROGER
Now might be the time.

ROGER slowly directs NONO's hand with the gun towards his mouth.

NANA storms back into the living room.

NANA
Tell me what's wrong with you.
I...I just don't understand. Put
the gun down!

NONO gestures towards Roger.

NONO
Fine! You wanna know? My best
friend thinks I should die. That's
what.

NANA
Roger? Are you saying your best
friend is Roger?

ROGER
Don't be stupid, NONO.

NONO
Roger can you stay out of this!

NANA
Sweetie. Don't listen to him. It's
just me here. Just put the gun
down. You don't need it.

ROGER
Don't let her tell you what to do.
This is your life. This is your
decision.

NONO is visibly confused. NANA holds out her hand for NONO to place the gun.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You know what to do. Now!

NONO squirms and points the gun at Roger.

NONO
This is all because of you. This
whole time.

(MORE)

NONO (CONT'D)

Her puppet is dead cause of you, I would have been dead because of you. For all I know, you'll take her too!

NONO haphazardly waves the gun towards NANA.

NANA shifts away from the direction of the gun.

NANA

Jesus Christ! Put it down!

Another tear falls down NONO's face as he cries and points the gun back towards the puppet.

ROGER

You're going to shoot a puppet? Pathetic.

NONO's hand begins to shake. He grips it tighter and presses it against Roger's wooden temple.

NANA softly puts her hand on NONO's arm.

NANA

Honey. Please. This isn't real.

NONO lowers the gun. He begins to bawl in NANA's arms.

NANA (CONT'D)

Shhhhh. It's okay.

NONO

I can't keep living like this. He needs to go.

Roger smiles.

ROGER

Remember. If I go, you go.

NANA flirtatiously kisses NONO's cheek and looks into NONO's eyes. She tries to redirect his mind from the chaos to calm him.

NANA

Here. Come. Follow me. We can solve this all.

NANA gets up and walks back into the bedroom, inviting NONO with her eyes. She turns and sees her puppet's corpse once again. NONO stays sitting on the couch in the living room.

--POP!

NANA jumps and runs back into the living room. A beat.

NANA (CONT'D)

Oh...oh my god. He actually-

NANA's face lights up as she picks Roger up, out of a pool of Nono's blood. Roger's eyes glisten with admiration.

NANA and Roger share a kiss over the bloody body of NONO.

ROGER

He had no idea.

NANA

The setup was perfect. I was afraid the bedroom improv was gonna throw things off but you nailed it!

ROGER

Well, what can I say...

--NONO miraculously sits back up. Holding the gun.

ROGER (CONT'D)

N...No!

--POP!

A bullet explodes the puppet into hundreds of shards of wood.

NONO

Just a puppet, huh?

NANA

You don't know what you're doing,
Honey. Put it down! We can solve
this.

A tear streams down NONO's face. He quickly aims the gun towards his wife, and collapses dead.

NANA stands alone in the living room, surrounded by the mess she's made.

THE END.

