

“That Sweet Sweet Bruce Willis Bounty Money”
William Hrdina

“Did you just see that?” Brad Weatherford asked, pointing at the television, his eyes wide. He was nearly hopping up and down with excitement- his enthusiasm threatened to collapse the eclectically stained dorm chair he was sitting on.

Brad’s roommate Floyd lifted his head off of the back of the couch where it had been resting for about a half an hour and looked at the TV.

There was a still picture of Bruce Willis.

He was bald.

Floyd already knew that. “Fascinating.” He said, and let his head fall back onto the couch.

“No man. Not the picture. What he said!” Brad insisted, pumping his finger at Floyd and the television in turn.

“What did he say?” Floyd asked, knowing Brad wouldn’t shut up until he told him.

“A million bucks!”

“What about a million bucks?”

“He’s offering a million bucks to anyone who captures Osama Bin Laden.”

“Yeah...”

“Yeah!”

And that was it.

Until a week later Brad woke Floyd up from a deep sleep by poking him repeatedly in his chest and saying his name.

When Floyd reluctantly opened his eyes Brad asked, “How do you think it’s coming?”

“What? Why are you bothering me?” Floyd growled, wishing there was some way to turn Brad off that came with a remote.

“My beard. How do you think it’s coming along?”

Brad was doing the thing guys always do when they are evaluating their beards- using the two fingers of one hand to stroke the chin hair accompanied by his best look of contemplative rumination.

Floyd wondered what he did to draw such a moron for a roommate. It was only 11 in the morning- and he already felt like he should be drinking heavily. He sat up in bed. “What the fuck are you babbling about?”

“I’ve started working double shifts at the old Mickey D’s. I get all of my food for free because I’m working so much. I’m pretty much there for every meal. I’m not going to any classes anymore. It doesn’t matter anyway I was failing everything except business ethics. Carl, you know Carl, my manager Carl; he’s cool- he doesn’t care if I snork a couple of burgers- especially when I’m working a double. Hell, Carl himself drops a couple of burgers on the ground every day. It’s almost like he’s doing it on purpose.”

Floyd wondered if he’d walked into some psychology student’s weird idea of a mindfuck- where psychology and surrealism are blended together to create a person like Brad.

“Why are you working all of the time now and what on earth does working have to do with your beard?” Floyd asked, somehow knowing he was going to regret it.

“I told you last week. A million dollars.”

Floyd looked at him blankly.

“Bruce Willis said he’ll give a million dollars to whoever catches Osama Bin Laden. A MILLION DOLLARS! I’m gonna go over to Afghanistan and get him myself- that’s why I’m working so much- to earn airfare. It’s not cheap you know. You can come too if you want- but you’re going to have to start growing your beard right away. Come here- I’ll show ya!” Brad turned and ran out of the room before Floyd could even begin to formulate a response.

A half hour later Floyd gave in to Brad’s repeated calls from the dorm common area and reluctantly left his room- almost afraid of what he would discover. On the coffee table was a map of Afghanistan, a tourism book of simple Egyptian phrases and a GI Joe figure. Brad was now wearing an enormous pair of sunglasses that covered a full third of his face.

“Great. You’re here.” Brad clapped his hands and rubbed them together. Then he broke into a ten minute nearly incoherent monologue which at one point featured him walking the GI Joe figure around on the Afghanistan map, along with the corresponding narrative “Come out come out wherever you are...”.

Even though he took a particularly long time to get it out, Brad’s entire plan consisted of getting a fake tan, growing a beard, buying a gun, flying over to Afghanistan where he would pretend to be an Egyptian, make contacts, capture Osama Bin Laden and get his million dollars from Bruce Willis. Oh, and Bruce would be so grateful they’d totally become buddies and maybe even go fishing together sometimes.

If Floyd wanted to be a good friend he could’ve told Brad that he hadn’t thought anything through yet and that he needed to consider not going to a foreign country to capture a guy the entire US armed forces hadn’t manage to capture in 4 years.

But instead, Floyd encouraged him.

“If anyone I know can get him it’s you.” Floyd said. “Besides, you really hate stuff you don’t understand- you should play that part up- those terrorists love people that hate stuff.”

“Yeah totally.” Brad agreed. “While I was formulating my plan I considered going to a mosque. Before you look at me all crazy I should tell you that I’ve been reading about Osama on the internet and it turns out he’s a Muslim and that Muslims go to mosques- so I thought I should go there- you know, to get the sense of how the terrorists operate.”

“Yeah. But some Muslims don’t believe in what Osama believes.”

“Sure they do- all of ‘em do.”

“Not even most.”

“You can believe whatever you want, I mean there are many people who believe we really landed on the moon too so whatever. People believe all sorts of crazy things. The point is- I decided that I shouldn’t go into a mosque because there’s always a chance I could catch Muslim.”

Floyd paused and waited for the overly enthusiastic laugh track to run its course.

Three days later Brad came back from his first tanning session.

Instead of tan, he’d become a very bright shade of orange.

A day later he started wearing a turban on his head in addition to his omnipresent sunglasses. The resulting combination caused Brad to look like an Oompa Loompa crossed with a Latin American dictator starring in a low budget remake of Lawrence of Arabia.

At first Brad used a bath towel to create his turban. Floyd suggested that he use a bedspread instead. After a minute of consideration Brad decided a bed sheet would indeed make a better turban. The resulting pile of material sat wound on his head nearly a foot off of his skull and was perpetually leaning over and threatening to topple.

When Floyd suggested he put a dot on his forehead with a magic marker even though he knew Muslims didn't actually do that- Brad rejected the suggestion by saying that his pastor back home wouldn't approve of him worshipping false idols.

When Brad wasn't planning how to catch Osama- he was planning how he was going to spend his million dollars. Most it revolved around a big house, a bigger car, and a whole lot of hookers and pornography.

Floyd suggested he give the money to the families of 9/11 victims instead.

Brad suggested Floyd go fuck himself.

Every day Brad woke up and ran to the radio- terrified that he would hear that Osama had been captured- thus spoiling his chances at the Bruce Willis money. But each day it didn't happen. So Brad continued to go to his tanning sessions- his complexion now resembled a ripe Valencia. He kept growing his beard too- it was a patchy mess that made it look like the aforementioned Valencia had a patch of mold on it.

After a month and a half Brad had enough money saved from working doubles that by taking every cent and also maxing out both of his credit cards, he was able to purchase a one-way ticket into Kabul, Afghanistan. He booked the ticket and the next day Brad took the final step.

He went and bought a gun.

Brad went to his local Wal-Mart and purchased a .32 caliber pistol and two boxes of ammo. When the clerk (without health insurance) asked him why he wanted to buy the weapon, Brad told the truth and said he was going to use it to capture Osama Bin Laden.

The clerk laughed.

As soon as Brad got home he dumped all of the bullets onto his bed and wrote "Osama Bin Laden" on every single one with a black magic marker.

The morning Brad left for the airport, Floyd had a change of heart and tried to convince him not to go. It was funny for a really long time- it never really occurred to him that the dummy would actually try to go. He didn't even believe Brad had a real ticket until he'd plunked it down on the coffee table the day before at dinner.

Brad wouldn't listen to Floyd.

He left for the airport feeling sad that Floyd was so dense he didn't see the brilliance of his plan. Brad knew he was going to be rich and he didn't care how much Floyd begged when he got back, he wasn't going to share any of his money with him. He wouldn't even let him meet Bruce Willis.

Pam, the woman working at the airport check-in desk could scarcely believe her eyes when Brad approached the counter. He had his turban and sunglasses on with his crappy beard, a t-shirt that said, "Don't worry, be happy" over a giant yellow smiley face,

sweatpants, and flip flops. About five seconds after Brad stepped away from the counter with his boarding pass to Afghanistan, Pam was on the phone to security.

Brad waited in line humming the song referenced on his t-shirt to himself and mentally spending his cash. When he put the large duffel bag that was his only luggage onto the x-ray machine even the half sleeping attendant couldn't help but notice the gun sitting among several rolled up pairs of socks. The attendant, his name was Steve, took a long look at the gun and then looked at Brad waiting eagerly at the other side. He pushed the button that brought every cop in the airport running as fast as his hand was capable of moving.

As four guards knocked Brad to the ground and handcuffed him he tried desperately to make them understand.

"No! It's okay!! You don't have to arrest me! I'm not a terrorist. I'm going to Afghanistan to get Osama. My guns doesn't fire for anyone but Osama!"

When they didn't listen, Brad tried begging.

It didn't work either.

They threw him into a cell. As they walked away Brad yelled at the back of their heads. "You don't understand- I'm just trying to get me some of that sweet sweet Bruce Willis bounty money!"

All Brad could do was watch as they walked away, leaving him scared, and alone.