

PERSUASION

by Eric Boyd

"You're going to have to go back there."

"What do you mean?"

"It says here you're not well."

"All it says is I have nightmares sometimes."

"That means you don't have a clean bill, and I need it spotless."

"Jesus Christ I'm telling you I'm alright. I just have a few night terrors here and there. I'd say that's perfectly goddamn normal; it'd be *abnormal* if I didn't!"

"You wanna keep on yelling and I'll go ahead and knock you right here. If you can't meet the conditions of your parole, then you're revoking the privilege of being on parole, get me?"

"Yeah...When do I go again?"

"I'll call them... Sphinx Therapy? Hello, I need a second appointment with DOC Number 17882."

"..."

"Right, I'll tell him. Thanks."

"..."

"Okay, they'll fit you in next week."

"I'm not crazy."

"That's not up to me to decide. You'll go see the shrinks again."

"Do *you* think I'm crazy?"

"I think you need to see the shrinks again."

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"Hi, didn't expect to see you? I was wondering why the name looked familiar. Why are you back? I thought we cleared you?"

"That fucking P.O. is a real hardass. I still owe the county a couple thousand in court costs and I know he won't lay off until that's over with."

"Between you and I—okay?—you don't even want to know how much money the county gets for referring people to us for therapy; but I'll be honest, most of these men need it. You don't, *so*, what did he even send you back for?"

“When I said I had nightmares. He took that as some disorder or whatever.”

“*Ohh*. Yes, that sounds like something they'd stick to. They'll send people for a second evaluation whenever they can.”

“Can I just help you rewrite the damn thing?”

“Well now, I feel bad for you, but I can't do that.”

“You're a doctor, right? Therapist, whatever.”

“Yes, and that means...”

“That means you need to help people in *need*; me, I don't *need* help.”

“But I can't let you write your own mental eval.”

“We'll do it together. I won't actually type it or anything, I'll just help out.”

“I've never done that before, I really don't know if it's a good idea.”

“Would you rather see me ten more times so I can tell you how I slept the night before? I'm fine, you know I'm fine, and it's three buses for me to get out here...Please.”

“Oh my...jeez. Alright, alright. I'll let you help. What do you want it to say?”

“Just *clarify*, make it real *clear* that, although I may suffer from night terrors—or however you wanna put it—that's perfectly normal for someone just released from jail for a long stretch. Just say that it will pass over time...that everything will be okay. Say that I'll be okay. Back to normal...all...better...”

“Hey...hey, are you alright?”

“Yeah, sorry. Did you get all that down?”

