

# Between a Rock and a Hard Place

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John Boston

Waylon Coombs was up to eyeballs in shit. The kind of shit most people don't even want to think about. It was bad.....very bad.....and getting worse by the minute.

He ran drugs and collected money for a dealer named Mr. Kiss. He had never met the man, only his people. He ran the operation from some yacht in the Bahamas, where he was virtually untouchable. He ran drugs all over Florida and the Southeast. Waylon dropped off the drugs and collected the money. Ten minutes of work and he was ten thousand dollars richer. In six months, he had made over a hundred thousand dollars, all of it in untraceable cash.....the kind Uncle Sam can't touch.

He was still collecting food stamps from the state of Florida and making insane amounts of money at the same time. Life was good. It was not all wine and roses. He had a gun pulled on him twice. Waylon wore a tiny body cam on him at all times when he made the drops and received the money. Mr. Kiss was watching it the whole time. If someone didn't pay, it was on them. Waylon was in the clear. He counted all the money, then handed over the drugs. Normally, it went off without a hitch.....normally.

A few months ago, some punks from the keys wanted five kilos of coke. They were young, far too young to be involved in this kind of business. Young and very stupid. Waylon asked for the money first and two of them drew down on him. They put their guns right up to his head and took his coke.....without paying.

"Amigos.....you might want to think very hard about what you're doing. You don't pay for the coke and Mr. Kiss is going to be very upset," said Waylon, trying to ignore the loaded gun pressed to the side of his head.

"Shut up gringo. The *Loco Boys* run the show down here. You can tell Mr. Kiss to kiss my Cuban ass." said another one.

*Those kids may as well have signed their own death certificates.*

They let Waylon and his partner live, but the experience had unnerved him so much, he began to think that ten thousand might not be enough to put his life on the line for Mr. Kiss. He began to think that this line of work might not really be for him and that he should just back out. The problem was.....*you just don't walk away from a job like this.....or walk away from Mr. Kiss.*

Money is great and all, but it's not worth dying over, or going to prison over. He knew he had to get out, he just had no idea how to go about doing it.

His cell phone rang immediately after the deal with the *Loco Boys* went south. The man on the other end demanded to know exactly what happened. Waylon told them. The man did not sound amused. He couldn't really fault Waylon. There were far too many of them and only one of him. His partner was recording the entire transaction and sending all of the information to Mr. Kiss as it unfolded. The kids had used their own vehicles and the license plates were quickly traced. What unfolded next was like something right out of a nightmare.

Three families were massacred that night in Miami. The parents and brothers and sisters of the *Loco Boys* were all killed as well. Mr. Kiss had sent everyone in Florida a very clear and unmistakable message.

*You mess with the bull, you get the horns.*

The FBI was involved, every law enforcement agency in South Florida was involved, but he knew Mr. Kiss would never be caught. Even if they had evidence linking him to the crime, the Bahamas would never give him up. His contacts ran deep. Waylon wouldn't be too surprised if he had contacts in the FBI as well.

Waylon knew he was dealing with monsters. He also knew if he was going to make a run for it, he needed a nest egg to fall back on. He had to stay under the radar for quite a while until Mr. Kiss lost his scent. He had seen enough. The pictures of the crime scene were horrific. The entire family was slaughtered including two children. Waylon might be a criminal, but he was not a monster. He never wanted to kill anyone, just make some quick money.

Maybe rob on Mr. Kiss's other men and take the money. He knew exactly how that would end. He was on borrowed time. Eventually, the cops would link him to the drug deal and the dead families. Someone was going to have to take the fall for this madness and he certainly didn't want it to be him. He made a phone call that changed everything. He called the FBI and asked to speak with someone about the murders. He made certain he used a disposable cell phone that couldn't be traced. Waylon told them everything...right up to him making the phone call. Selling drugs was one thing, slaughtering entire families was another. He was no killer.

The next day, the FBI arrested him on the way to his favorite burger joint. He was handcuffed and taken to an office building. Where he met with three FBI agents and half a dozen DEA agents. He told them exactly what he had said the night before. They sat him down, gave him a drink, and ordered him some food. One of the DEA Agents was named Marquez. He seemed to be the most personable out of the bunch.

"Waylon, we strongly suspected it was Mr. Kiss. Hell, we know it was him. The problem is we don't have shit to tie him to the crime, except you. Even with what you told us, I doubt it's enough to get a grand jury to indict. We need you to record him saying he was involved in the murders. Somehow, someday, we need you to get him to say that on the tape. Anything you can do to help."

"I want full immunity."

"Not a problem. You cooperate with us, I can assure you, you won't be charged," said Marquez.

"I'm a dead man walking. If Mr. Kiss even though I was talking to you guys, he'd kill me and my whole family."

"Isn't that reason enough to help us take him down?" asked Marquez.

Waylon was excited, but also nervous. Very, very nervous. One screw up and he was dead. Problem was, Mr. Kiss got to him first a few days later, before the feds could do anything. They surprised him in the alley behind his house. He shot one of them, but then he was shot and dragged into a van. There were seven of them and one of him. He put up a good fight, but it was no use. They zip-tied his hands behind his back. He was bleeding. It wasn't life-threatening, but it hurt like hell. They drove for what seemed like ever, out to the swamps on a dirt road. He was barely conscious when they stopped and dragged him out. They lifted him out of the van and brought him into an old trailer in a deserted fishing camp on the edge of the river. Waylon was scared. This was not a good spot to be in.

They tied him to a chair and waited for what seemed like an eternity. None of them said a word. They didn't have to. They knew who would be doing the questioning. The waiting around was the worst. He could hear the hands on the clock moving in the trailer.

At around midnight, he arrived. He walked into the trailer and sat down right in front of Waylon. The two men looked at one another. Mr. Kiss looked like a grandfather. He was just an ordinary person. No tattoos or piercings or anything. He certainly didn't look like a monster.

"I trust you know who I am?" said Mr. Kiss

"Yeah, I know who you are."

"Then you know why you're here."

"Yeah."

"Waylon. I need you to be very honest with me here. No bullshit. One wrong answer and you get fed to the gators, understood?"

"Understood."

"What did you tell the feds about our operation?"

"Nothing. Jesus, they arrested me and threatened me with all kinds of crap. Said they wouldn't even let me post bail, the hell was I supposed to do?" said Waylon, trying to sound convincing.

"You could have said nothing, or just lied."

"I'd be in jail right now if I had said nothing. Federal prison. The kind people like me never get out of alive."

"So, what did you tell them?"

"Nothing. I said I do deals for some big fish in Miami. I never even said your name. I just told them what I thought they wanted to hear. I was trying to protect you." said Waylon.

"Waylon, they must have somehow linked you to that drug deal that ended with all that unpleasantness last month. You must have known you were going to be caught eventually," said Mr. Kiss.

"They never even mentioned it. The only thing I can figure is that someone in your organization is talking. You got a rat somewhere, somewhere close by you. They picked up a bunch of players like me. I guess they all thought we were working together."

"Why do you say I have a snitch in my organization?"

"How else would they have found me?"

"That is the million-dollar question now, isn't it? How did they know you were moving merchandise? Either we do have a rat in our organization, or you are the rat. That's pretty much what it boils down to, doesn't it?" said Mr. Kiss lighting up a cigarette.

"I ain't no snitch."

"Well, for your sake, I hope not."

Mr. Kiss seemed unsure about what to do. Waylon knew if he didn't give an Oscar-caliber performance, he was dead. He had to buy some time. Long enough for the feds to find him, or find a way out of here.

"So, we have ourselves quite a situation here, now don't we?" asked Mr. Kiss between puffs.

"I guess we do."

"Waylon, the last man who was tied to that chair died in it. I can understand being picked up by the feds and having to face them alone, I can understand you might have to talk your way out of it but to just let you walk away? It just doesn't add up.....unless you cut a deal with them."

"They didn't have shit on me. I was in that conference room with them for almost nine hours. They knew I ran drugs for a while, but they didn't know it was you. They searched me and my car. They never found any drugs on me. They had to let me go. I never mentioned your name. I never mentioned anyone connected to your operation."

"That's incorrect, Waylon."

"What do you mean?"

"I guess at this point it's *our operation*, now isn't it?" said Mr. Kiss.

"I guess it is," said Waylon.

"I want to believe you, Waylon, I really do. You're not stupid. I don't do stupid, but I'm too old and seen too much to just take people at their word. In this business, if you make just one mistake, you're done. It's one strike and you're out."

"Look, this whole thing is bullshit. I fell on the sword for you and this is how you repay me? By cuffing me to this fucking chair and shooting me? Jesus, I hate to see what you do to people you don't like." said Waylon.

Mr. Kiss walked over to one of his associates. They were muted, but Waylon could still hear what they were saying.

"What do you want to do with him?"

"We can't do anything yet. Not until we know more. We kill him now, we could be cutting our own throats." said Mr. Kiss.

"No way would the feds just have picked up and let him go unless he was working with them." said his associate.

"We still have the million-dollar question of just who tipped the feds off? I've got a few suspects. We can't do anything with him until we're sure." said Mr. Kiss.

"Come on, he never even called us after he got picked up. Why would he do that, unless he has something to hide?" asked another associate.

"I figured they had my phone tapped and they might be following me. I call Mr. Kiss right after I meet with the feds? How's that going to look?" asked Waylon.

"You do have a point there Waylon."

"Thank you."

"I suppose you did do the right thing. I wonder why though, you shot Marco when we came to pick you up? If you didn't have anything to hide?" asked Mr. Kiss.

"I didn't know who any of these people were? I sell drugs for a living. I kind of assumed the worst." said Waylon.

Mr. Kiss motioned for the group to head outside and out of earshot of Waylon. They were gone for a few minutes and then Mr. Kiss returned. He stood right in front of him.

"Waylon, if everything you told me is true, then you have nothing to worry about. On the other hand, if you've lied to me, you're going to die a horrible death. Am I clear?"

"Yeah, crystal clear," said Waylon.

"See, we have a friend of ours inside the DEA. We pay very dearly for his information. We will soon find out if it was you who alerted them or not. Might take a little while, so you will remain here until we return. If you leave here, you die, understood?"

"Yeah, understood. Why did you kill all those people in Miami? Jesus, their families never did anything to you?" said Waylon.

"Waylon, we're in the drug dealing business. I had to send a very clear and very convincing message to anyone who tries to steal from us. That type of behavior will not be tolerated." said Mr. Kiss.

"Jesus Christ, your guys killed a seven-year and a six-year-old, that's quite a statement."

"That's what it was supposed to do," said Mr. Kiss as he walked out the door.

*Guys like Mr. Kiss get made at an assembly plant in hell.*

He didn't even seem remorseful about slaughtering entire families. People that had done nothing to him. People he didn't even know. That's what monsters do. The ends justify the means.

"Why don't you just let me go. Jesus, you know where I live, you probably know where my whole family lives. The hell do you think I'm going to do?"

"I really don't know Waylon. That's the problem. I hate uncertainty."

"I can't believe this. I never said a word to them. They threatened me with all kinds of shit. They even said they would revoke my sister's probation if I didn't cooperate with them. I told them to go to hell." said Waylon defiantly.

Mr. Kiss poured himself a drink. He looked right at Waylon.

"Waylon, the worst person in the history of humanity was Judas. He sold out the son of God for 30 pieces of silver. Who does that? The last person who was in your position.....my goodness. It got ugly. Quite ugly. We did things to him.....well, let's just hope your situation turns out for the better. Tell me, have you ever met a person whose specialty is torturing other people? They're really quite a unique breed among men. Our man plays the violin. He's a violinist. He also loves to torture people. Quite an odd combination if I do say so myself. I didn't know a person could take that amount of pain. It's like having open surgery, but fully awake, with no pain killers. Very unpleasant business. I'll be back Waylon. Sit tight." he said and walked out the door of the trailer, which was barely hanging on.

There it was, in black and white. Waylon was on borrowed time. He wasn't sure if he had minutes, or hours or days. One thing was for certain: when they came back, he was as good as dead. He had to get out of here. He just had no idea how.

Mr. Kiss had left one of his goons to watch over him while they were away. He was sure they would switch out at some point. The man in front of him was Mexican, or maybe Cuban, they all looked the same to Waylon. He opened a beer and sat down at a table. Another man came in and sat down with him.

"You got one for me?" asked Waylon.

The two men looked at one another, then at Waylon.

"I think I need it more than you do."

One of the men got up and untied Waylon's hands. He handed him a bottle of water. Waylon was grateful even for that. He was under no illusions about the type of people he was dealing with. Trying to make friends with them was pointless. If Mr. Kiss told them to kill him, they would do it in a heartbeat.....*with no hesitation.*

He guzzled the water and looked down at his hand. If the bullet had gone just another inch closer, he'd be in big trouble right now. He wasn't going to bleed to death, but he had to make sure the wound didn't get infected. He was handcuffed to a large metal office chair. Getting out of it was not going to be easy. His feet were free, but with the giant chair behind him, he wasn't going to get very far. As soon as he was done with the water, the goon had cuffed his hands to the chair again..

"I'll be back tonight." said one of the men.

"Don't be late, I got to see the wife tonight."

*"And don't you fucking go nowhere either."* the man said to Waylon.

It was now just Waylon and the goon. Just the two of them in this dilapidated old trailer in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by mosquitoes and cypress trees. Waylon closed his eyes. He had to think of something. He could literally see the minutes of his life ticking away. Mr. Kiss would be back and when he did come back, Waylon would be gator food. That psychopath was going to feed him to the gators. He wouldn't even have the decency to shoot him first. He'd probably film the whole thing as well. He couldn't believe he got mixed up with people like this. He was looking for a shortcut and he found it, only it led him down a path few people will ever see. He was shot, tied to a chair, waiting to die. This is where his life had led him, a dead-end street.

*You really did it good this time Waylon. There ain't gonna be no last-minute heroic rescue like in the movies. No, that's not how it happens in real life. In real life, people like Mr. Kiss win, and losers like you wind up buried out in the swamp. That's just how this whole process works.*

The entire atmosphere of the trailer was evil. He could almost smell it in the air. Horrible things had gone on in this trailer. The kind of things we read about, but won't let our minds accept. The walls of this place were rotten. The roof was rotten. The whole trailer should have been torn down years ago. Maybe at one point in time, a family lived here. A nice family, with a dog that loved to play in the water. Maybe, somewhere in these walls, there was a sliver of humanity. Maybe he wouldn't die in here.

*Sure Waylon.....and maybe pigs might fly.*

He sat in the chair for a few hours, dripping blood all over the floor. He had been shot. He was going to die in here unless he found a way out. There has to be a way out. He was going to have to think his way out of this one. He could outthink this dumb fuck.....cause if he didn't well, that was just not something he wanted to think about.

He just had to get one hand free. He had to get one hand free. The sweat was dripping down off his face. He frantically looked around the room, hoping for some kind of a life preserver.

He noticed something moving near the corner of the room. He wasn't sure he was seeing correctly, because it looked like a snake or something was coming out of the wall. He couldn't believe it. Something was actually crawling out of the wall. It came out of a crack in the ceiling and was crawling.....*slithering down the side of the wall*. It was maybe five feet long. Waylon assumed it must be a snake or something, but this was unlike any snake he had ever seen. It was almost yellow in color. It had a head and these weird feeler-looking things attached to it.

*Jesus, like this day hasn't been bad enough.*

The weird creature was long and smooth, like a snake, but not like a snake. Like a snake and a worm had sex and this is what popped out. He had never seen anything quite like it and here it was in this room, this horrible room.

Waylon watched it slither down the side of the wall and onto the floor. He saw another one coming out of another hole in the wall. It poked its head out and started crawling on the floor as well. A few seconds later, he saw another one behind it. They were about the same size as the first one, maybe another foot or so longer. They looked right at him, then at the goon who was playing on his phone. The three of them crawled over together and almost seemed to be communicating with one another.

*Like having some kind of goddamn worm convention.*

He watched them crawl on the floor in silence. Their skin seemed to be almost radiating a weird yellow glow. He lost sight of them behind the couch. He didn't know what they wanted, maybe just food or a chance to hang out with other weird creatures, but he figured he should probably say something.....*cause this is getting weirder by the minute.*

Waylon had seen enough.

"Hey....I think we got company," he said.

The goon looked up from his phone and shot him a nasty look.

"What?"

"Behind me, on the floor."

The goon got up and slowly walked over to the yellow-looking snakes. He stopped as soon as he saw them.

"What the hell are these things?"

"I don't know. I can't really see them from here. Why not untie me and we can both have a look." said Waylon.



"Yeah, that might happen. The fuck are these things?"

"I don't know, some kind of weird swamp creature I guess."

The worm creatures stopped and looked up at the man. He almost seemed to recoil in fear. The weird yellow skin seemed almost hypnotic like it put him in some kind of a trance.

"There's more.....over there," said Waylon motioning with his head toward what was left of the kitchen.

"They weren't invited to this party."

The goon stepped on one of them, killing it instantly. He took out his gun and shot at the other one, blowing it in half. He bent over to look at the remaining one who turned its weird-looking head. The two were now only a few feet from one another.

"What the hell is this thing?"

The worm creature spit out some kind of fluid right into the goon's face. He recoiled and started firing blindly, nearly hitting Waylon. He stumbled and fell backward in the chair.

*"What is this shit?"* he said trying to rub it off his face.

Two more creatures dropped down from the ceiling and fell on top of him. Waylon was in shock. These worm-like creatures moved quickly. They were all spitting and biting him. The goon stepped on one of them, then grabbed another one and flung it across the room. He seemed to be almost paralyzed.

*"I can't breathe.....I can't breathe."*

Another creature emerged and began biting him as well. Whatever they were doing to him, he seemed unable to move. He was fighting to get to the door, but his body almost seemed to be fighting him, his limbs seemed unable to move.

"Unlock me!" screamed Waylon.

The goon tried to run over to him but collapsed on the floor. His hand was violently shaking as he tried to hand Waylon the handcuff keys. He fell about two feet short. There were now nearly a dozen of these strange worm-like creatures all over him. He looked up as one of them spit fluid right into his face. The man was still fighting.. The worm creature then proceeded to crawl into the goon's pants and disappear into his pant leg. Waylon was frozen. He had to get those keys and get the hell out of here.

*Lord Jesus, help me now!*

Waylon watched the man desperately trying to fend off the worm attacks. They were swarming all over the man. He took out his gun and emptied the last two bullets into one of the creatures. They continued to spit that strange venom at the goon as he crawled towards the door. He

collapsed in front of the door and stopped moving. The worm creatures were crawling all over him, one of them began crawling into the man's mouth.

Another creature crawled inside the man's mouth and started working its way down his throat and into his stomach. Waylon had to turn away. He felt like he was going to vomit, but he was too scared to vomit. He didn't want them to turn their attention towards him.

Waylon looked all over the room and could see dozens of them emerging from the walls and floorboards.

*These damn things were everywhere.*

For whatever reason, the creatures left him alone. There were now a group of the creatures all over the dead goon. A whole pile of them on top of his body. Waylon thought about just making it for the door, but the damn chair was too big and heavy. He'd get stuck in the doorway.

*Was this some kind of weird torture by Mr. Kiss? Did he know these things were in here?*

Waylon looked back and could see over half a dozen of those things swarming all over the dead body. They were doing something, he just couldn't see what. He knew he had to get out of here and fast. He didn't have any idea if the creatures would try and follow him if he were able to get outside. He tried slowly lifting the chair. It wasn't nearly as heavy as he thought. He just wasn't sure if he could fit through the doorway. Others were coming from all sides, trying to feast on the body of the dead goon. Waylon looked over and could see that some of the worm creatures were now glowing bright yellow.....and they looked a whole lot bigger than they did earlier.

Waylon just froze. He had to concentrate to breathe. The worm creature slithered over him, glowing brightly as it moved. The lights were hypnotic to Waylon. He had to close his eyes to keep from passing out.

Another creature had slowly made its way towards him. They didn't really seem to know what to do with him. He heard noises over by the dead goon's body. Horrible noises. He never looked over to see what was happening.

The creatures were now moving all over the trailer, climbing down off the walls. They were concentrated on the goon, but for how much longer. Waylon was a sitting duck in this chair. He had to get out of here and fast.

One of them slithered over and stopped in front of him. It picked its head up and looked directly at him. Waylon had never seen anything so disgusting and yet utterly fascinating before in his entire life. Whatever these things were, they had somehow managed to escape detection. The creature moved slowly towards him. Waylon knew he had to make his move. He stood up with the chair cuffed to his back and walked calmly towards the door. He could see several of the creatures notice him and begin to make their way towards him. He kicked the flimsy screen door open, knocking it apart, stepping over the dead body. He carefully angled himself between the doorway. He had only half an inch or so of clearance.

His arm was caught in the doorway. He pulled and pulled, but it was no use. He just needed another inch. Another goddamn inch and he was out this hell hole. He pulled and pulled as hard as he could. Finally, as the creatures were only a foot away, he broke free from the doorway and ran out onto the porch. The creatures were too slow.

They followed him for a short distance but stopped right at the edge of the deck. They never followed him onto the front lawn. A dozen or so stood at the edge of the deck, with their heads tilted, watching him.

He was free. He would never be back in the damn trailer ever again, with whatever those things are. Things like that belong in nightmares, not in Waylon's world.

He knew he had to get out of there as quickly as he could. He was able to walk quickly with the chair tied behind his back. He found a dirt path and walked down it. He stopped and had to catch his breath. He couldn't believe what had just happened. He had to put as much distance between himself and the trailer as possible. The creatures weren't stupid. They weren't going to make their move when there were six or so of them in the trailer. They waited until they had all left.

Waylon was still shaking. He couldn't believe he had just experienced something like that. He had to get out of these handcuffs.

It took about half an hour or so of slamming the chair into the side of an oak tree for the back support to finally come free. He was free from the chair but still handcuffed from behind. It took another ten minutes of wiggling and he was able to slide the handcuffs out from behind him. Still not home free, but in a much better place than he was earlier. He was out in the middle of the swamps in South Florida. It was getting dark. He had to get back on the dirt road to get to the highway. He just prayed that Mr. Kiss and his gang wouldn't be returning to the trailer anytime soon. He could run into the swamps, but that was risky.....*very risky*. You could get lost or turned around in there very quickly. People disappeared every year in these parts simply for getting off the main trail.

He walked for what seemed like hours until he saw the headlights and heard the trucks on the highway. He didn't want to just walk on the side of the highway in plain sight. Instead, he was about twenty or so feet in the brush. It was slow going, but much safer.

He found a truck stop and ran over. He asked the girl working the counter if he could use her phone to make a phone call, saying he had just been in an accident and lost his. She gave him her phone and his first call was to Agent Marquez. He had memorized his cell number just in case.

"Marquez. I'm at a gas station on Highway 29, right outside of Jerome. Get out here as soon as you can." said Waylon.

An hour later, there were over a dozen DEA and police on the scene. Marquez drove him back to the office building where they had their makeshift headquarters. Waylon hadn't slept in over 24 hours, but he was still wide awake. He told Marquez everything, except for the part about the killer yellow worm things and the dead goon. Instead, he told them the goon fell asleep and he was able to escape.

"Did you wear the sneakers we gave you? The ones with the recorders?" he asked.

"Yup. Wait till you hear it. He practically convicted himself." said Waylon.

The feds were taking no chances now. Waylon was under their wing 24 hours a day. He fell asleep on a cot in one of the rooms behind the office. He woke up and stumbled into the command center. There were now dozens of agents from different agencies running around the room, talking and answering phones. Marquez walked over to him and gave him a coffee and a cigarette.

"Waylon, there's somebody I'd like you to meet," he said and walked him over to a desk and some chairs. Waylon was only half awake. He noticed a few agents smoking, so he lit up his. He really, really needed this cigarette.

"Waylon, this is Special Agent in Charge David Medlock, he's the commander for the entire southeast region."

"Waylon, outstanding job son. You'd make a hell of an undercover officer. I know it was tough in there, but we've all listened to the recording. The way you got him to confess was brilliant. We're going to arrest him in just a few hours. We got a federal judge to sign the warrant."

"Don't let him get away, I wouldn't want all of this to be for nothing."

"Not to worry. We're tracking his every move. You understand as part of your plea deal, you're going to have to testify against Mr. Kiss and his group. You're going to have to take the stand, are you ready?"

"Not a problem. I might be a snitch, but at least I'm not some monster like he is. My sister and I are going to have to go into witness protection after the trial."

"Waylon, if you testify, we'll send you anywhere you want to go. We'll even get you a job of your choice. We've been trying to get this bastard for five years. We've lost two agents trying to take him down. I thought we'd never get him and here you go and drop the entire case right in our lap. If you need anything, just call." said Medlock.

Waylon knew this was becoming a very, very big deal. Some very important people, way high up on the food chain were now involved. There was no turning back at this point. The feds were going to take down Mr. Kiss once and for all. Waylon was scared, but he knew he had made the right choice. People like Mr. Kiss weren't just criminals they were downright evil and had to be stopped. Ripping off a convenience store was one thing, executing kids was another.

"Waylon, we have an agent inside your sister's house, right now. Tallahassee PD is watching her house as well. We're following Mr. Kiss right now. I can't wait to see the look on his face when we put the cuffs on him. I want that bastard so bad, I can taste it." said Marquez.

"I'll bet. That guy is straight out of a horror movie."

"By the way, what the hell was it you told the goon to come to look at, in the trailer. You said we got company," asked Marquez.

"Swamp snakes. Two of them. I hate snakes. I think I'd rather get tortured than have to be near a snake."

"I hear that," said Marquez.

Waylon never told him about the dirty agent that was leaking information to Mr. Kiss. He figured it wouldn't matter right now anyway. He never told anyone about what really went down in that cabin. He wasn't sure what he would say when they found the body if they found the body. He just told them he ran for hours through the swamps and had no idea where the trailer was. No one cared. All that mattered was the recording. That was all they needed to convict him. Waylon hoped they had more evidence than that. A judge could rule it inadmissible and their whole case could go out the window. Not that it mattered. He had done his job. He was looking forward to his new life away from all this madness and away from people like Mr. Kiss. It was time to start over.

Agent Medlock and the FBI Swat team arrested Mr. Kiss as he pulled into the airport in Miami. Agent Medlock was the one who put the cuffs on Mr. Kiss. He was charged with dozens of crimes including first-degree murder. If convicted, he was looking at the death penalty. He was in custody for over a year awaiting trial, then the unthinkable happened. On his way to testify at another trial, his transport was ambushed and two officers were killed. Mr. Kiss and two of his associates escaped. Despite a massive manhunt, a year later, he was still at large. They had the devil in their hands and he slipped right through.

He knew the FBI realized they had a leak, cause no one from the agency bothered to alert him. He had to read about it on the internet. He figured Mr. Kiss had bigger and better things to do than to worry about finding him.

Waylon had been working under a new name and some minor surgery. He had gone from sunny, tropical Florida to working on a cattle ranch in Wyoming. He knew nothing about cows or ranching, but he was learning quickly. As the days wore on, his optimism began to fade. He knew in the back of his mind, it was only a matter of time. He knew Mr. Kiss was going to find him, for the simple reason that he was a very loose end. He was going to have to dance with the devil one last time.

He never told anyone about what he experienced that afternoon in that sweltering trailer. He had nightmares about it sometimes. He did his best to pretend it never happened and to be thankful he was still alive. He tried to remain upbeat, but he knew he was on borrowed time. A guy like Mr. Kiss isn't just going to forgive and forget. He kept a loaded gun in his car at all times, just in case. Waylon had come to realize that:

*A gun is a very false sense of security.*

Guns don't stop monsters, only the monster's minions. Guns don't prevent nightmares. Guns are just the tools of the trade in this business.

It was on a warm June day when the old pickup truck stopped by the ranch. He figured it was just some ranchers looking to buy hay. They waved at Waylon and he walked over.

"Hi, what can I do for you?"

"Is your name Waylon?" asked one of the cowboys.

"What? No, I'm Claude. We don't have a Waylon here." he said nervously.

"Waylon, if you ever want to see your sister alive again, then get in the truck and come with us."

"Can I get a jacket first?" He asked, walking towards his car, to get his gun.

"Now, Waylon." said one of the cowboys, opening the door of the truck.

Waylon stopped and got into the truck. He knew what was coming. It wasn't going to be pretty.

"You guys could have just shot me. Would have been a lot easier for all of us," he said sandwiched between the two men.

"We just follow orders." said one of the cowboys.

The cowboys drove for almost half an hour to a deserted cabin in the mountains. They stopped and got out. Waylon was led right into the cabin. There was a fire going and sitting in front of the fire were Mr. Kiss and two of his associates.

"Waylon, so nice to see you again," said Mr. Kiss.

"I wish I could say the same."

"Have a seat Waylon," said Mr. Kiss.

"Just get it over with, please? If you're going to kill me, just do it. I don't want to listen to any of your bullshit. I know I'm a dead man. I've known it for a long time.....just get it over with, alright?" said Waylon, closing his eyes.

He sat down in the chair across from Mr. Kiss. He was shaking so badly, he could barely stay in the chair.

Mr. Kiss didn't say a word, instead, they just stared at one another in a very uncomfortable silence.

"Don't hurt my sister, she hasn't done anything to you," said Waylon.

"You've been a real pain in my ass. When I found out that you recorded me, I was blown away. You're a lot smarter than you look, I'll give you that. I just might have room in my organization for someone like you. You have to trust the right people. Trusting the wrong ones will get you killed." said Mr. Kiss.

"Let's just get this over with."

"Waylon.....the devil is always in the details."

"Huh?"

"Waylon, did you meet my friends that afternoon in the cabin?"

"Your friends? You mean those weird worm things?"

"Yes. I found them when I was a child, playing in the swamps. Beautiful little things. So intelligent and wonderful. Have you ever seen anything so beautiful in your life?"

Waylon wasn't sure what to make of all this. What kind of game was he playing?

"Yeah, I saw them. Creepiest fucking things I've ever seen in my life."

"I don't know where they came from, or how they got here. Not that it really matters now, anyway."

"I just kind of figured you ran out of gators to feed me to," said Waylon.

"No Waylon, that's the problem. You just don't understand, you're just like all the others."

"What are you talking about?"

"My children were in that trailer. My little bundles of joy," said Mr. Kiss smiling.

Waylon was getting nervous now. What kind of sick, twisted game was he playing?

"Don't kill me, Mr. Kiss. I don't have much of a life but, it's mine and I like it."

"You think I came all this way just to say hi?" he said

Waylon was unnerved by his smile. It wasn't a regular smile. This was something else. He didn't know a human face could smile like that.

"Smile for me, Waylon. God speaks to us through our smiles."

"You want me to smile?" asked Waylon

"Humor an old man."

Waylon tried his best to smile. He could see Mr. Kiss's face light up."

"I think we have a winner," he said looking around the cabin at his associates.

Mr. Kiss opened his mouth and some kind of strange fluid flew out and hit Waylon right in the face. After a few seconds, his skin started tingling, then it felt like his face was on fire. It was as

if he had just put his face directly into the roaring fire a few feet away. He could barely see, but he could see clearly enough. A worm creature was crawling out his Mr. Kiss's mouth and onto his lap. Mr. Kiss's body was convulsing and then he collapsed on the floor. The creature looked right up at Waylon. He could barely see, but he knew the creature was only a few inches away from his face.

*Hello Waylon. So nice to see you again. You and I are going to become best friends, just you wait and see.*

Waylon fought violently against the sick, horrible little creatures. He looked down at Mr. Kiss's body...or rather what was left of it. He was still trying to smile.

Waylon tried to scream and the creature darted into his mouth. He could feel it going down his throat. He reached for Mr. Kiss's gun to try and shoot himself, but it was too late. He could feel himself losing control of his body, then he realized it. The last real thought he ever had in his life.

*He was never in control of anything.....ever. He was going to take smiling to an entirely new level now.*