

Jacob D.

## “Crimson”

You know, right about now, people will have started setting up for Halloween. All the decorations, and candies, and costumes, and blah blah blah. People will have invited friends and family over to celebrate the spooky month and to have a blast. Of course, that’s just for ‘Normal’ people. This year, my plans are a little different. How different? Well, this year, I plan to beat the ever-loving Christ out of this prison guard for his key card.

Now, I know that isn’t exactly something that would put me on your average nice list, but just hear me out. 6 months ago, I was accused of killing my family. Ever since, I’ve been awaiting trial in one of the most god-awful prisons in the state of Arizona. Every day it’s consistently 100 degrees out, the AC doesn’t work, (if there even is one,) the food tastes like it’s from the garbage, the bed frames don’t even have mattresses, and it smells like every prisoner here simultaneously decided to take a dump. And I’ve had enough. So tonight, I’m going to escape. But I doubt you really care too much about that. I’m sure you want to hear more about the whole ‘Killing my entire family,’ ordeal. It’s simple. I was framed.

I don’t know why, or how, but I do know that I was framed. The night my family died; I saw the killer. He had a mask and a very large, very heavy bat. He then used said bat to beat me seven ways to Sunday. Or, at least, he had to have, because all I remember is blacking out and waking up in a pool of my mom and dad’s blood with a very conspicuous kitchen knife in my hands. The killer was thorough, I’ll give him that. Enough reminiscing about the worst night of my life. Back to the guard and... Oops. I already knocked him out. I guess that’s one of the advantages of working out every day, huh?

Alright, back to escaping. I've laid out a thorough plan for tonight. What was it again? Right, first, nab the key. Done and dusted. Second, take the guards outfit. It's a little awkward, but what can you do? And the last step, walking out. I've been casing this joint for the past 3 months, so I know where to go and who'll be in my path. Tonight, there'll be 2 guards from here to the end of the hallway, and about 5 others guarding the entrance. I haven't seen the first guard so far, I'm guessing he already passed by, but I can see a flashlight and an outline of a man swaying in the distance. Guess I'll have to put that one acting class I took 4 years ago to good use.

This is more nerve-wracking than I thought it'd be. But that's fine. If that acting class taught me anything, it's that when you get stage fright, just think about your happy place. Yeah, that's not helping. I guess walking alone in the pitch dark in a place where one mistake will probably get you killed makes you a bit distraught. I think I'll just start a friendly conversation with the guy. Those always work, right?

"Hey!" I say, a little too enthusiastically.

He takes one good look at me and says,

"I thought Bob was on the night shift?"

I won't lie, I panicked, but I think I handled it well.

"Uhhhhhhh, Bob has cancer," I say, super convincingly.

The guard stumbles and places a hand on the wall.

"W-w-what?" He stutters.

"Y-yeah, Bob got the news last night. His doctor told him he needed some sleep, and last I saw him he was really knocked out." I say. Man, I'm pretty good at lying! The guard looks straight into my eyes and says,

“W-well, thanks for telling me, and I’m sorry to bother you.”

Then he walks away, never to be seen again. Phew! That was a close call. Guess that acting class was worth the 200 dollars.

•  
•  
•

I didn’t have much trouble after that. All the other guards either didn’t care enough to bother me or were too tired to say anything. It’s more than a little weird that an inmate was able to break out and not get a single alarm triggered, but hey, I’m not complaining.

3 miles later, along with a little crying, I make it to my house. It’s just the same as I left it, which is to say, a piece of garbage. My family and I used to live in the slums. We just couldn’t afford anywhere else. My dad was only able to get a job as a mail carrier, and my mom was a stay-at-home one. And yet, they always provided and cared for me. I miss them. But I don’t have time for sentiment now. I open the lockbox that holds the spare key and walk into my once cozy, now murder-y, home.

The place smells SO bad. Like, think about what rotting cabbage smells like, then dip it in 10-year-old expired ketch-up, and you still won’t be able to imagine what I’m smelling right now. I guess the police couldn’t be bothered to bleach the place. I head into the basement where the old camera footage is held, and immediately I’m struck with nostalgia. Old little toys and family photos are everywhere, and suddenly I feel like crying. I miss them so much. Once I pulled myself together, I searched. After quite a while, I found the footage of the night of April 5, 2022.

It starts off normal. My parents in the living room, watching TV, and me saying goodnight and heading off upstairs. I fast-forward and get to the part I'm looking for. Then I see my dad, fighting so desperately against the intruder, to protect my mom. And then the intruder stabs him. Just like that. 55 years of life, gone with one stab. And it's the same with my mother. The masked man shows no remorse and stabs her in the chest. I can barely watch it, but I have to know. And I finally see him. I look into the footage, into the eyes of the killer, and my own bloodied face stares right back.