

Jason Wylie

The stark brilliance of the cool white light within the padded cell could make almost any ordinary man edge closer to the precipice of madness. The room felt like one of those horrible scenes in a movie theatre where, by the time your eyes adjust, you have been thrust back into the depths of darkness with the silhouetted image of a character burned into your retinas.

Except, this time, there was no darkness.

How long had it been? Six minutes or six days? I could hardly have answered earnestly.

A loud CLACK reverberated through the outside halls, albeit strangely muffled within the cell. A lanky, bespectacled man entered the room, flanked on either side by a pair of armed guards.

What did they think I could do, shackled to a bench? Insult the man to death?

The man's eyes told me everything I needed to know. They avoided me and searched the white void for anything to attach his focus upon. Finding it vacant of all but vinyl furnishings, his attention was drawn to the single brass element of the room, the floor waste.

"So, which one are you?" I questioned knowingly. "The vicar, the journo, or the psycho head shrinker?"

"You know very well who I am," the man said in a matter-of-factly tone. "I am here to assess you through a pre-trial psychiatric evaluation to see if you are legally fit to stand trial."

"A trial!?" I gasp in mock surprise. "Whatever do you mean? Surely this is all some sort of misunderstanding."

The doctor attempted to look up at me and found my gaze firmly bearing down upon him. It is incredible how uncomfortable you can make someone by simply widening your eyes and refusing to blink.

"Misunder...", the man sputtered incoherently. "What misunderstanding? You stand accused of murdering three people and consuming at least one of them. Do you understand the charges that have been brought against you?"

I paused for a long moment. If there is anything an uncomfortable man desires less than piercing eye contact, it is a long, drawn-out silence with nothing but heavy breathing to fill his ears.

"Truly, the greatest crime here was that I was out of HP Sauce and had to do with the Masterfoods equivalent. I do love a good steak; what about you, doctor? Are you a rare or well-done sort of fellow?"

The poor man looked like he was sizing up the ability of the floor waste to handle the contents of his stomach as he reached for his clipboard and attempted to conduct his formal requirements.

“Have you ever been treated for mental illness before Mr Edwards?”

“Once,” I stated as the doctor scrawled notes on his assessment.

“And what were you prescribed?”

“Well, I specifically asked for a good recommendation, and the shop clerk recommended the American Honey whiskey. Gotta say it did the job. I felt much better that evening.”

The doctor stopped writing again and slammed his pen down onto his clipboard. “I have heard enough. My assessment will be on the judge’s desk by the morning. It will state that you are argumentative, manipulative and completely fit to stand trial.”

“Oh, don’t forget dashingly handsome.”

The doctor arose at once, knocked on the door and was led out again by the uniformed men.

All-in-all, I think that went reasonably well. Wait until he turns up in court to be cross-examined and finds out that Mr Edwards is in the cell next door. If only he had known whom he had actually sat across from.