

Charlie's Redemption
by
Lindsay Grace

Chicago, IL

ON THE WAY TO WORK

EXT. CITY STREET EARLY MORNING

Outside a small, nondescript urban apartment building,

CHARLIE leaves his apartment for work. He is a slow moving, small man in his late thirties. He wears a gray accountant's suit, and carries a briefcase.

Charlie walks out of his apartment and into a pile of dog shit. Ms. Klienshmidt is walking her dog a few feet in front of him.

CHARLIE

(trying to get the shit
off his shoes)

Ms. Klienshmidt, could you please pick up after your dog.

MS KLIENSHMIDT

What for? The rain'll wash it away.
I'm an old women, I can't keep
bending down when Mr Smoodles needs
to go number 2.

CHARLIE

It's just that I . . .

MS KLIENSHMIDT

I know it's the law, but what ah
they gonna do, arrest an old lady?
You won't tell on me, son, will
you?

Charlie walks on trying to wipe his shoe as he walks.

Beggar is standing in his usual spot.

BEGGAR

He man, you got that dollar you
promised me?

Charlie gives him some change.

BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Man, that's it? Come on look at you
man, you got a suit 'n everything.
(MORE)

BEGGAR (CONT'D)

I ain't got shit. That's all you have?

CHARLIE

Sorry.

BEGGAR

Man, I see you everyday. You go to that nice job of yours and you make all that money. Do you know what it's like to be homeless? C'mon, you ain't got another dime. I'm trying to get myself a McMuffin.

Charlie turns around and gives him more change.

BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Solid, thanks little man.

Charlie stands, waiting for the train. He is nearly indistinguishable from the rest of the work-a-day crowd. He is jostled about as people file into the train. It's as though no one sees him.

AT THE OFFICE

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

CHARLIE is sitting at a cubicle dutifully doing his work. It is mundane computer work and paper-pushing. Charlie's cubicle is as plain as his dress.

SAM

Hey, big guy, the magic number 35. Are you psyched for tonight?

CHARLIE

Ya, but I just got three more reports dumped on me.

SAM

Ditch 'em. It's your birthday, what's the worst that could happen.

CHARLIE

I could lose my job.

SAM

They're not going to fire you for a late report on your birthday. Half the department's going to be there anyway.

CHARLIE
They'll probably be there before I will.

SAM
Well you too busy to go to lunch then?

CHARLIE
I'm afraid so.

SAM
C'mon, were going to go with that new girl from HR.

CHARLIE
She's 20.

SAM
That's legal.

CHARLIE
You're married.

SAM
I didn't say we were going to go gang bang her in the parking lot. We're going to lunch.

CHARLIE
No, I better not.

SAM
Man, we've got to get you a backbone. You've been here five years and you've never stepped outside the line. You've probably never even stolen a stapler.

CHARLIE
I already have one at home.

SAM
You're turning 35. You don't have a wife. You don't have kids. You have a tiny little apartment. You work all the time, but your boss barely knows you exist. The most exciting thing you did last week was finish the weekly crossword puzzle.

CHARLIE

Thank you. Happy birthday to me.

SAM

I'm just saying you need to live a little.

CHARLIE

I am living. And to live, I need to eat. And to eat, I need to make money. And to make money, I need to get those reports done by tonight.

SAM

Suit yourself. But don't be late tonight. I spent a lot of time pulling this little shindig together.

CUT TO:

Charlie returning to work eating instant soup at his desk.

He checks his voice mail while eating.

EX-GIRLFRIEND'S VOICEMAIL

Hey Charlie, it's me. I know it's only been a few dates, and you are the sweetest guy, but I just don't think it's going to work. I need a man who's going to stand up for me. A man's man. You're great guy, you're just not for me. Good luck and take care. I mean it.

EXT. OUTSIDE O'RYANS NIGHT

Charlie is noticeably tired as he walks to the front of O'Ryan's bar. Charlie's group celebrates without him.

INT. O'RYAN'S BAR - NIGHT

Sam and group are drunk.

SAM

Hey, there he is. The man of the hour

CHARLIE
Those damn reports took me longer .
. . .

SAM
Let's get 'em a drink. What are we
having guys?

WORKER 1
Tequila

WORKER 2
Irish Car Bombs

WORKER 3
A Shirley Temple

SAM
You get the Shirley temple. I think
you've had enough.

CHARLIE
I'll just have a beer

SAM
No you can't just have bear. Can he
just have a beer guys?

WORKERS
No!

SAM
Bartender, we need a round of
tequila shots.

CHARLIE
I hate tequila

SAM
By the end of the night, you'll
love it.

The drinks are poured

SAM (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, everyone. The first
toast of the hour. Let's go.
Everyone gather around.

The drinks are passed around. Charlie is skipped. The party
celebrates, but they don't celebrate Charlie

SAM (TO CHARLIE) (CONT'D)
 What's this, trying to get away
 without a shot, huh.

Sam gives Charlie his shot, and Sam grabs a beer.

SAM (CONT'D)
 To Charlie. The oldest thirty-five-
 year old I know. He may never have
 done a whore in the back of an
 impala, but he'll never have to
 visit the VD clinic either.

WORKERS:
 To Charlie!

SAM (TO CHARLIE):
 C'mon buddy, you want to say
 something.

WORKERS:
 Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!

SAM
 Maybe another drink will loosen
 your tongue. Where's that O'Ryan's
 birthday special I ordered? Do we
 have the birthday special in the
 house?

A monstrous concoction of alcohol is brought out by the bar
 staff. They deliver it to Sam, he passes it Charlie.

CHARLIE
 Sam, I'm really tired, I can't
 drink all this.

SAM
 C'mon. It's your birthday and this
 is a \$35 drink.

WORKERS:
 Drink. Drink! Drink! Drink!

Charlie drinks hesitantly.

CHARLIE
 OK guys. I'm drinking. It's good.

WORKERS:
 Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink!

The chant continues and Charlie drinks reluctantly. The crowd loses interest shortly.

SAM

Congratulations Charlie. You are now on your way to being drunk beyond all comprehension. I was afraid you weren't coming.

CHARLIE

No, those reports just took so long I couldn't . . .

SAM:

C'mon Charlie. We're out of work. Less stop talking shop, more drinking.

The party continues

SAM: (CONT'D)

OK, Charlie, you ready to give that speech now? Everyone, the birthday geek is ready to give his speech. Pull down your skirts and listen. C'mon now. C'mon now.

The crowd turns their attention to Charlie

CHARLIE

I just want to say thanks for coming out tonight. It's all very nice for you to . . .

WORKER 1

Give him the gift!

WORKER 2:

Ya, he hasn't opened the gift yet.

CHARLIE (TRAILING OFF)

. . . .it's been a great year . . .

They give him the gift (it's tacky, without character, and completely disconnected from Charlie's character)

The night winds down. The last few people leave without saying goodbye to Charlie.

Charlie is slow, drunk, and very tired. He has not had a good time.

SAM

Well, buddy, I hope you had a good time.

CHARLIE

Sam, thank you for doing this. It meant a lot.

SAM

No problem. What are friends for.

CHARLIE

It was really nice for you to put this together.

SAM

Well, I'm a good guy, what can I say. Shall we head out?

Sam pulls together the last of the group. Charlie is left on his own at the bar. The group returns. They step outside the bar.

EXT. O'RYANS LATE NIGHT

SAM (CONT'D)

Who the hell knows if we can get a cab this late.

The group waits for a long while. A stray cab arrives.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well it's our lucky day. Another few minutes and I'd have to explain to my wife why my dick froze off.

The group piles into the cab

CAB DRIVER

I'm sorry, I cannot take this many passengers.

SAM

What, c'mon we'll pay Extra.

CAB DRIVER

I could loose my license. Four is max. There are five. Sorry. Not enough room.

SAM

Alright, Jimmy, you're going in the trunk. C'mon, man, it's freezing out here. Another cab won't be around for hours.

CAB DRIVER

I'm sorry, I cannot.

CHARLIE

It's OK, Sam. I can walk from here. It's not that far.

SAM

Are you sure? I mean we could throw Jimmy in the trunk. He's so drunk, he wouldn't even know.

CHARLIE

No, it's OK, I'll walk. Good night

They all file into the taxi. Charlie waves them off and walks home.

EXT. UNDER THE EL LATE NIGHT

ROBBER 2

Let's do this.

ROBBER 1

C'mon man, there aint no one out here t'night. Let's just go home.

ROBBER 2

Nah, we'll go door to door until we find someone.

ROBBER 1

It ain't worth it. I don't wanna do this.

ROBBER 2

I'll tell you when it aint worth it. Now just shut up and keep walking.

ROBBER 1

No one's out here. It just ain't worth it.

ROBBER 2

If you don't shut up I'm going to stick you up. Now shut up.

ROBBER 1

I'm just sayin'

ROBBER 2

And I'm just sayin' shut up. Here we go

The two stick up a victim a drunk stumbling man (who resembles Charlie). This is a reversal - cut to Charlie, he's fine.

ROBBER 2 (CONT'D)

Let's go, let's go.

ROBBER 1

I told you it ain't worth it.

ROBBER 2

Whad are you doin'? Don't count the money.

ROBBER 1:

Thirty eight dollars. Thirty eight dollars. We held this fool up for thirty eight dollars.

ROBBER 2

That's thirty-eight more dollars than we had.

A siren. The cops rush in on them. The robbers run. The gun drops from Robber 2's pocket while they run.

The robbers split up. Robber 2 gets away. Robber 1 is chased, but he is shot while running. Robber 1 is dead. Thirty eight dollars lay on the side walk.

A drunk Charlie walks through the same alley minute later. He kicks the gun accidentally. He picks it up. He puts it in his pocket.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Charlies' is on the phone, quietly and timidly talking to Sam.

CHARLIE

I've got to talk to you, Sam.

SAM

If you wanted that girls number,
you should have asked her. I can't
get it for you now.

CHARLIE

I'm serious.

SAM

You're always serious.

CHARLIE

I found a gun.

SAM

Funny, I found Leprechaun. Maybe we
could use your gun on my
Leprechaun. Do you think it will
work?

CHARLIE

No, I'm serious, I've got a gun.

SAM

You're as drunk as I am. Go to bed.

CHARLIE

I took it home

SAM

Now go learn to shoot.

CHARLIE

Shouldn't I...

SAM

Sell it for cash. I'm sure it's
worth some money. Is that all you
called about? I've got to go to
sleep.

CHARLIE

Shouldn't I take it to the police?

SAM

Sure take it to the police. Then
they'll ask you how you got it and
you can say you pried it outta the
dead guys hand. Or you got it from
this kid who sells crack down the
street. I'm tired, and I'm going
to have a bitch of a hangover
tomorrow.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Sell it, throw it away, go get arrested with it, or call it birthday gift from god. Just let me go to sleep.

CHARLIE

Okay.

Charlie hangs up the phone and unsheathes the gun. He stares at it for a long time.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

Charlie wakes and immediately examines the gun. A sense of power rushes over him.

He goes through his morning routine, dresses and leaves the apartment.

LOW ANGLE - GUN IN VIEW.

He returns to the apartment to examine the gun again. He tucks the gun in his coat.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE MORNING

Charlie is working diligently at his desk. Sam arrives at his cubicle.

SAM

Hey what's up man? How ya feelin' little buddy?

CHARLIE

I'm fine.

SAM

Hell of a party, huh? How did you get home?

CHARLIE

I walked, remember?

SAM

I'm surprised I remember my own name. My wife said I passed out on toilet humming that national anthem.

CHARLIE

Well, the important thing is that you had a good time.

SAM

I think I did. Listen I didn't do anything stupid did I?

CHARLIE

Nothing out of the ordinary

SAM

OK. Okay. Thanks buddy. You coming to lunch

CHARLIE

Maybe I will.

SAM

I don't believe it. You quitting or something. You never come out to lunch. I just keep offering out of habit. It's an empty offer.

CHARLIE

No. I'm coming.

SAM

Great. I'll meet you downstairs at 11.

Charlie returns to his work. He sneaks a peek at the gun. He gets a rush from it's presence.

EXT. - QUICK E BURGER - MID DAY

Charlie, Sam, and coworker's are ordering lunch.

CHARLIE

I'll have the sloppy burger with onion rings.

CASHIER

I'm sorry, we don't have any sloppy burgers right now.

CHARLIE

Okay, when will you have them?

CASHIER

We have to make a new batch. It won't be for another hour.

CHARLIE
Okay, I'll have the . . . well you
know . . . I really want a sloppy
burger.

CASHIER
We don't have any sloppy burgers

CHARLIE
How long will it take to make 1 a
single sloppy burger?

CASHIER
We can't make one sloppy burger.

SAM
Why can't you make one sloppy
burger? Do they only come in a
litter or something? The man wants
a sloppy burger.

CHARLIE
Sam, I've can take of this.

SAM
Just trying to help.

CASHIER
Sloppy burgers will be ready in an
hour. Would you like to try the
Texas Burger?

CHARLIE
I'm on my lunch break. I don't want
to come back in an hour. I can't
come back in an hour. Just make the
sloppy burger

Charlie pats the gun in his pocket

CASHIER
Look, you can talk to my manger.
You can talk to his manager. You
call the freakin' owner, but you
aren't going to get a sloppy burger
right now.

Charlie fingers the gun.

CHARLIE

I don't understand why you're getting fresh. There's no need to get fresh.

Charlie palms the gun through his coat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What's in a sloppy burger. Chili, meat, and onions right? Why don't you get me a bowl of chili, pour it on a burger and presto you have a sloppy burger.

SAM

Wow, someone's wearing his balls on the outside for once. You get 'em tiger.

CASHIER

Fine.

Charlie releases the gun from his grip.

SAM

That's how it's done. Now make sure they don't spit in it.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Charlie is playing with the gun. He poses with it in front of the mirror and mocks firing it. His gestures are grandiose and childish. He is in cops and robbers mode.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

Charlie has recently purchased a holster for the gun. The holster is now part of his morning routine. He's wearing a black suit, and his clothes are a little smarter. His last accessory is the gun, which is tucked stylishly into it's new holster.

EXT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

Charlie narrowly misses stepping in dog shit again. He turns and bangs on Mrs. Kleinshmidt's door.

CHARLIE

Are you in there? Are you in there?