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[nose blowing] **Thunderbolt:** Excuse me.

Nick: No problem.

[nose blowing] **Thunderbolt:** Bad sinuses. Gun shot.

Nick: Yeah. Do you mind if I ask you about that? What happened?

Thunderbolt: Eleven years old. Wrong time wrong place.

Noah: Where'd you get shot in the face?

Thunderbolt: Through the mouth. Smashed all the teeth. Hit the jawbone. Tapped the carotid artery. And I spent thirty three days in the fucking I.C.U.

[nose blowing] **Thunderbolt:** The guy's name was Janus Siljunsy (sp). They smuggled him and his mom outta Poland.

Noah: The guy that shot you?

Thunderbolt: No, the doctor that fixed me.

Noah: Do you know who the guy that shot you was?

Thunderbolt: Couldn't tell you. I was coming home. We had martial law in the town back then. Police state. Ten o'clock you had to be off the streets. Well, I was allowed ten-thirty, even by the cops. I'm white. I stick out a little bit. "Hey. Hurry the fuck up and go home." "Yes, officer." I never messed with them. Ever. Going home one night – kid jumps out from the alley – this close. "You're dead!" Boom. I laid in the alley for an hour.

[phone rings] **Thunderbolt:** Before finally this black lady in the second floor apartments said "I think he... I think there's something wrong."

Nick: So Noah...

Noah: Yeah...

Nick: Can you describe what Thunderbolt's house looked like after we arrived?

Noah: Um... It's got like this... this Seventies furniture that's really well worn. The carpet's all... kinda matted down... It's got this really nice table in the corner, like a six-legged table or something that he brought up out of... that his parents had handed down to him at the house. He's got a computer to the right of one couch that he puts up slide shows of girls doing shows. And, he's got a coffee table in front of us, ash trays, and maybe a coffee cup that hasn't been washed yet. Dimly lit. I think he had the curtains closed on all the windows. So there was some sun coming through. Kinda dim and dusty. It didn't seem like... Like it didn't smell like there was like stains on the floor. It just smelled like it had been lived in and air was... hadn't been going through there for a long time. So it was just kind of ... claustrophobic... I don't know.

Nick: And... just who is he? What does he do?

Noah: Jay runs a strip club out of his house.

[phone rings] **Thunderbolt:** Good afternoon, Thunderbolt Entertainment. Hi Dericka. Say hi guys!

Noah: Hey.

Nick: Hey.

Noah: Other than owning the strip club – fake strip club – He is the bouncer, he's the DJ, accountant... basically he's the party planner. He does everything.

Thunderbolt: You guys got any money on you? You want some dances?

Noah: Besides the dancing.

Nick: I was trying to start–

Thunderbolt: You are fucking chicken shit cocksuckers, aren't you? Naw, they don't want any dances. Gimme a call in two hours, dear. Cuz I'm gonna throw them the fuck out when this bottle is– this bottle is almost gone now. [pause] Alright. Bye.

Thunderbolt: Back in the day. Mixed Labrador Doberman. His name was Abraham. The great thing about Abraham was he was a big boy. Used to be a butcher shop on the corner. Abraham used to get the bone. He'd chew that bone to shit in two days. The great thing about Abraham was – inside the nicest dog in the world, unless you tried to come too close to my mother. My uncle would come over, he'd lick all the aftershave off, but then when my uncle went to go give my mom a hug, Abraham would lean up against my uncle Jim and go "Rrrrrr." He was extremely protective.

Nick: This is my memory of the first conversation I had with Jay Thunderbolt. [phone rings] **Female Voice:** Thunderbolt. Thunderbolt Entertainment.

Nick: Hi my name is Nick van der Kolk, I'm calling from a public radio station in Chicago.

Thunderbolt: Yeah?

Nick: I read the article about you in the Metro-Times. I'm going to be in Detroit this weekend, and I was wondering if you had a couple of hours to sit down for an interview.

Thunderbolt: Great, how much are you going to pay me?

Nick: Well, we can't actually pay interview subjects, we're a non-profit public radio station.

Thunderbolt: C'mon man. I hear you guys selling those tote-bags. Can't Jay Thunderbolt get a little tote-bag money?

Nick: So I'll be in town about mid-day on Saturday. Is there a time after that that would work for you? I can work around your schedule.

Thunderbolt: Tell you what Nick, give me a call when you get to town. We'll see if I'm in the mood. But I've got to tell you, if you come with some money, I'll definitely be in the mood.

Nick: Great, let me give you my number in case you need to—

Thunderbolt: No, no, no. Don't give me your fucking number. You're trying to date me, not the other way around, remember? You have to chase after me, don't forget that.

Nick: OK, so I'll give you a call on Saturday.

Thunderbolt: OK.

—
[music plays in background] **Thunderbolt:** Come on Nick.

Nick: Alright.

Thunderbolt: Oh sorry, lemme turn this off. [turns off music] **Nick:** Uh, well do you have any questions for me before we get started or...

Thunderbolt: No.

Nick: Alright.

Thunderbolt: I tried to tell you the other day when you called: it's good to bring money.

Nick: Yeah.

Thunderbolt: But you didn't fucking listen to me on that one. You didn't have to, cuz you were ^{to} already coming to visit him...

Nick: Right.

Thunderbolt: That's two birds with one stone. Cuz ain't nobody in their fucking right mind's gonna come here to vacation.

Nick: Yeah I mean it's... it's tricky cuz my employer, like, can't have me pay interview subjects, um it's like a...

Thunderbolt: So how the fuck does your magazine make any money?

Nick: It's not a magazine, it's a radio station.

Thunderbolt: OK, so how does your radio station make any money?

Nick: It's a, it's a non-profit so we get—

Thunderbolt: Where is it on the dial? AM or FM?

Nick: FM

Thunderbolt: Mmm Hmm. Where is it on the dial?

Nick: Eighty nine point five FM. In Chicago.

Thunderbolt: You're not even college radio.

Nick: No. No. It's the real deal.

Nick: Let me— I'll tell you what: why don't I have Noah go grab us some beers.

Thunderbolt: I'm not drinking beer. I drink tequila.

Nick: Okay. You want to grab some tequila?

Noah: Sure.

Thunderbolt: You want to borrow a pistol? Wanna borrow a vest?

—
Thunderbolt: Your mother and father like what you do for a living?

Nick: Yeah, they listen to public radio so, y'know—

Thunderbolt: Are they NPR fans?

Nick: Yeah. Do you listen to NPR at all?

Thunderbolt: No.

Nick: That's fine. It's pretty boring.

Thunderbolt: I didn't ever really care for Rush Limbaugh, although I did like the little piece of the Pretenders — that they use at the start of the show. Other than that—

Nick: Yeah. Doesn't really seem to fit the rest of the show.

Thunderbolt: Doesn't really fit when he's doing a handful of fucking pills and getting on the radio. —

Nick: What were your parents like?

Thunderbolt: Dad was an ex-marine. He didn't marry my mom until he was forty two. I think my mom was twenty. Mom... I got a picture of her somewhere... leaning up against a '52 Chevy Coupe. [unintelligible] and cat's eye glasses on. "Who's the girl with all the legs?" "That's me." "That's who? You?" "Yeah that's me." I'm like "God damn Dad, you lucked out didn't ya?" Good think you bought a fucking Corvette that year.

Nick: Did you grow up in a rough neighborhood?

Thunderbolt: Marlborough was, that was an education. It was like hell. Eight hundred and sixty kids, only 25 white kids. So I kinda knew racism from a different angle. "Honky"... "peckerwood"... da da da. Stop when you get to "pollack." Every day was a course in survival. They would pack us in—39 to a classroom. One time I had two guys holding me—one guy beat me from the back, and one guy beat me from the front. That was three days out of school.

—
Noah: Do you want it in the kitchen or do you want it out on the table? I got cazadores

Nick: I don't know how my bosses would feel about this.

[glasses placed on table] **Nick:** Thank you sir.

[drink pouring] **Thunderbolt:** Alright. Cheers boys. Here's looking at cha.

Nick: Cheers.

Noah: Pleasure to meet you.

Thunderbolt: You ain't left the house yet. Be careful Noah.

Thunderbolt: What do you do for a living Noah?

Noah: Uh... Nursing.

Thunderbolt: Mom and Dad must be happy you don't have to be on their Blue Cross card any more.

Noah: Right. Exactly.

Thunderbolt: I have a different Blue Cross card.

Noah: What's yours look like?

Nick: Hey this is Nick again. You know I hate interrupting like this but what's not actually clear from the tape is that at this stage, Jay has taken out a gun and is now pointing it about two inches from my face. Here it is again.

Thunderbolt: I have a different Blue Cross card.

Noah: What's yours look like?

Thunderbolt: It's about like that.

[nervous laughter] **Thunderbolt:** Never leave home without it. Nick: So what is that?

Thunderbolt: Thirty-eight.

Nick: That's a thirty-eight?

Thunderbolt: Except it's got p-loads in it.

Nick: How long you been carrying that around for?

Thunderbolt: I'm licensed to carry a gun since I got outta the service.

Nick: You were in the service? Where'd you fight?

Thunderbolt: I was with the 160th SOAR. Special Operations Armed Response. I can't really tell you. How about this – when Reagan was in office I did a lot of southern hemisphere work.

—
Noah: Yep. Cheers.

Nick: Cheers.

Thunderbolt: Up and down. In and out.

—
Nick: Tell, tell me about your uh... your armament there. Like... you got a thirty-eight?

Thunderbolt: Yeah...

Nick: You got brass knuckles...

Thunderbolt: Mmm hmmm. Got a knife...

Nick: Have you ever had to use that shit?

Thunderbolt: You fuckin A right.

Nick: What, like—

Thunderbolt: Do I look like a guy who needs to sit around a tap dance with ya? Fuck that, let's get down to it. Right to the throat.

Nick: Yeah.

Thunderbolt: Let me get you down to the ground. I'ma step on you a couple times. They're only size twelve.

—
Nick: How's business going?

Thunderbolt: Good. Neighborhood sucks since they set that house on fire last Saturday.

Nick: How much is a dance anyway?

Thunderbolt: Ten dollars with a G-string on, twenty with a G-string off. We actually use a whole fucking song.

Nick: What is your playlist? Like what're your like big hits that you play?

Thunderbolt: Nothing but rock and roll. Marilyn Manson "Beautiful People..." Nickleback... Nine Inch Nails "Fuck You Like an Animal..."

Nick: What are the rules that you have?

Thunderbolt: No lickin', stickin', bitin' or slappin'... period.

Nick: People follow the rules?

Thunderbolt: Don't you think you want to follow the rules? Don't you want to have a good time?

Do you want me to back us all outta there? You wanna listen to me, doncha? You want to be my friend, doncha?

Nick: What's uh... What's your relationship like with the girls?

Thunderbolt: The lines blur a little bit, but I tell everybody the same thing, "You worry about taking your fucking clothes off, I'll worry about everything else." That's all they have to do – show up, do what they're supposed to do. I'll take care of the rest. And I'm good at taking care of the rest.

—
Thunderbolt: You gotta be true to the customer, number one. You gotta be honest with the girls, number two. Anything after that... they're grown-motherfuckin' women. Shit. You're eighteen. They can ship you off to war.

Nick: The stereotype of a stripper is, like, a girl who, like, comes from a broken home or whatever... Is that—

Thunderbolt: We don't have that... I got a girl, probably my fifth year in... her dad was a doctor, a heart surgeon, her mother was a lawyer. She wanted to be an equestrian. Really. And she, she was a million dollar motherfucker, her name was Kat. Alright Kat, c'mon man. She had little... two eyes, the kitten nose, the whiskers, the little bitty mouth. She's on the wall of fame upstairs.

Nick: Yeah. Can we see the Wall of Fame?

Thunderbolt: Yeah... keep your camera in your pocket chief. This is radio.

Nick: Alright.

Thunderbolt: Cuz I'm six-foot five. I can probably kick you fairly easily, without tearing my pants or anything.

—

Thunderbolt: Second girl from the top went to Penthouse magazine.

Nick: Really.

Thunderbolt: No, I'm fucking lying to you for my health. Yeah!

Noah: What does it take to get into the Hall of Fame?

Thunderbolt: You gotta make thirty-five thousand dollars in fifty-two days. Well, a hundred and four – fifty-two Fridays, fifty-two Saturdays...

Noah: This one has two girls in it, which girl...

Thunderbolt: What girl? What girl has two girls in it?

Noah: This one.

Thunderbolt: That's a fucking mirror.

Noah: Alright.

Thunderbolt: Jesus Christ.

—

Noah: It's not as heavy as I thought it would be.

Thunderbolt: Go ahead, gonna strap you up.

Nick: Noah, do you want to describe what's going on right now?

Noah: He's putting a Kevlar jacket on me.

Thunderbolt: Kevlar vest. Get your lingo right. Ready?

[thud] **Thunderbolt:** Not that bad huh?

Noah: No, not really.

Thunderbolt: I'm telling ya, a forty-five, it'll stop that.

Noah: Do you think it'll push me down, like if a forty-five hit me like that?

Thunderbolt: Oh yeah, you're gonna be knocked on your ass, I'm sorry. But, you're gonna live... so... that's the main thing. You wanna try it there sport? Mister "NPR-I-ain't-go-any-fuckin'- money"? You motherfuckers need [unintelligible] **Thunderbolt:** Ready?

Nick: Yeah.

[thud] **Thunderbolt:** Not that bad huh?

Nick: Pretty good

[thud] **Thunderbolt:** Still not that bad, considering you'll live.

Nick: Yeah.

Thunderbolt: This is not that bad.

Nick: This is the first time I've ever been punched by a vet.

Thunderbolt: First time you've been punched by anybody with any fucking class.

—

Thunderbolt: Lookit man, I'm gonna tell you something. If you thing you're gonna come here looking for trouble, you better bring a fuckin' lunch. Cuz I don't fight fair. I haven't fought fair since I was about sixteen years old.

Nick: You ever had any trouble with clients?

Thunderbolt: Yeah. He said "Man, I went to prison, I'll fuck you." I said "Guess what, buttercup. I'mma give you your shot." "Oh, you gonna let me fuck you?" "Mmm Hmm... Go ahead, let go of her. I'mma drop my pants right now"

Thunderbolt: He went to go... he looked at her for a second. And I have a thirty-three inch reach. Boom. And I snapped my wrist and I cut... and broke his cheek bone.

Noah: You were wearing a ring?

Thunderbolt: No. You don't need to. If you take... If ya twist enough... you snap it on a twist... It does more damage that way. Guess where I learned that?

Noah: I think I might know.

Thunderbolt: [sings] In the Army!

Nick: You have a certificate from a Republican committee?

Thunderbolt: Mmm hmm, sure I got one from fucking Newt Gingrich. Got Tom Delay when he was majority whip, before he went on Dancing with the Stars. You laugh, I'm telling you, I got 'em. They're in my bathroom. Upstairs.

Nick: So what're they for? What do they say?

Thunderbolt: "Jay Thunderbolt – congratulations for Young America and you're doing so well for the young..."

Nick: What is that? What's that all about?

Thunderbolt: I'll tell you what I used to do man...

Thunderbolt: For the first seven years I was in business, I would give St. John's Hospital a thousand to five thousand dollars for breast cancer research. I'm making my money. It would be bad karma not to go "I'm kinda doing kinda good... and I got two bisexual girls blowing me right now so... Yeah OK..." I go down and I'm paying in cash and she's like "You don't have a check?" "No I don't have a ch- You want a ch..." I'm scooping up my money. "Whoa whoa

whoa whoa – let me get a security guard over here and we will take care of this." I said "OK man cuz you're kind confu... Do you want money for these breast exams in February? For national breast secu... What're we doing? Alright, so I'm a bit of a Neanderthal, but you called me up. Seemed like a good cause to me. "Fuck it. Yeah man, how much ya need?" Maybe it's just good karma to... to pay this now. To try to do s... Also, I used to help out special education – I'd give money to them. Anybody I though was less fortunate or picked on... or... misfortune, let's leave it at that. Alright man, that sounds like a good deal.

Nick: So, where... where does that come from? It sounds like you got kinda like...

Thunderbolt: Cuz I have a fucking heart and I can also cut your fucking heart out right now and drink it?

Nick: Yeah, I mean that's...

Thunderbolt: Hey man, lookit, I'mma tell you something. I spent six years in Special Forces. I have twenty-six confirmed kills. Three of 'em hand-to-hand. Sometimes, the sun isn't always yellow. Sometimes the grass isn't always green. Sometimes the sky isn't always blue. The three things I do know, that are definite, in-this-world, inthis-lifetime, is this: You don't fuck with kids. Physically, emotionally, sexually, whatev... You can't hit em, whatever. You can scare the shit outta them on Halloween, that's what I feel that you're allowed to do. You're not allowed to hit girls. They ain't built like us. Take your ass-beating like a man, but you shouldn't beat on a girl. Another thing is you shouldn't fuck with old people, cuz one day, you're gonna be old.

Thunderbolt con't: Pick a mantra. Pick something that's fit, honest, and not stupid. It'll probably lead you well in life. Firm handshake – always the best way to go. If you don't care for the cocksucker, or he's dating your exgirlfriend,

don't shake his hand. "Aww man I just took a leak and there was no... the pipes aren't... I'm sorry..." Cuz your ex-broad is sucking his dick now. Fuck him. And fuck her too.

Nick: Mmm Hmm...

Thunderbolt: You couldn't pick a different bar? —

Thunderbolt: That's what I know to be true. It ain't "the grass is green, the sky is blue, the sun is yellow." Cuz I've been places where they set shit on fire and you couldn't see the fucking sun anymore... and it was one o'clock in the afternoon. "Mister NPR-I-don't-have-any-fucking- money-radio"... but HE LOVES HIS FUCKING JOB!

Nick: You probably make more money than me though, I'm guessing.

Thunderbolt: The fuck you know what I make man? Be careful... You know I think you got some bullshit.

Nick: Bullshit what?

Thunderbolt: "Radio station, coming to you live from Detroit Rock City..." Didn't even bring a bottle. He had to go and send his buddy for a bottle.

—

Nick: Hey it's Nick – just wanted to jump in one more time – at this stage, Noah and I decided it was time to leave. Thunderbolt was getting kind of agitated and all the booze was gone so we got back into the car, and he insisted that we come back inside. He wanted to make us sandwiches so we wouldn't drive drunk, on an empty stomach.

—

Thunderbolt: Feel better?

Nick: Yeah. Awesome. Thank You.

Thunderbolt: Cheap fuck.

Nick: Well... but I really appreciate it.

Thunderbolt: No you don't. You think I'm some other monkey cock-sucker that you can pull some shit on.

Nick: You really think so?

Thunderbolt: Let me tell you something, when Penthouse comes through...

Nick: Yeah.

Thunderbolt: You'll be able to say, "You know, I fucking interviewed that fucking asshole"

Nick: That's fucking true.

Thunderbolt: Cuz I don't have to say here baby. I got no more mother, father, nothing. This house is ain't nothing but a shell. I take my drumset, my stereo, my TV and my bed and the creatures I love, and I'm gone.

Noah: Do you ever think you understand the way I feel about you?

Thunderbolt: Not really.

Noah: Yeah. I didn't think so. But, let's get going.

Nick: Alright.

Thunderbolt: Never chase a dollar gentlemen, cause you'll never find it. It'll have you talked down to nothing.

Noah: Good luck in life, man. I hope I don't see you on the other side.

Thunderbolt: Don't worry about it.

Nick: Take it easy.

Thunderbolt: I'll be your tour guide to hell. "Hey Hitler, wave to the people on the bus!"