

(The Prodigal Brother)

by  
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(Based on, If Any)

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FADE IN:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

HARRY SMITH, 30 and a moderately attractive white man (not overweight but not muscled), mops the customer shopping areas. There are "Wet Floor" signs. BARNEY, 50, approaches him.

BARNEY

Could I have a word with you,  
please?

They go to Barney's manager's office.

HARRY

I counted three times. I'm sure we  
balanced the register this time.

BARNEY

What do you mean, we? I'm on you  
case today about your energy. Your  
movements are just too slow.

HARRY

Thank you for not saying this in  
front of customers.

BARNEY

Why are you putting yourself  
through this? You want to quit I  
won't tell unemployment.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The high rise studio apartment is filled with computers. Harry works on his website. The camera shows legal papers indicating problems with zoning and future employers. Harry pulls up his political blog and one can see advertising on the blog. There is also a copy of his book THE PROLES.

Harry's cell phone, which is clunkish and antiquated, rings. Harry fumbles it and it is dead when he answers it. Then his land line phone seems to be getting a message. Harry picks up.

HARRY

This is Harry. What's the trouble?  
... Oh? So it's over. Another  
chapter of my life starts.

INT. LAW FIRM BOARDROOM - DAY

HARRY and his twin BOB sit at opposite ends of the table, with a lawyer JUDY, 30, halfway between. Bob looks a bit wan compared to Harry.

JUDY  
So, Harry, you let Bob do all the talking at the funeral.

HARRY  
I don't think they wanted abstractions -- pardon me, pontification.

BOB  
It was up to you, Harry.

HARRY  
Strictly up to me.

Judy opens up a large manila envelope with long forms.

INT. LAW FIRM BOARDROOM - LATER

Judy is reading the will out loud, as Harry and Bob look at the copies.

JUDY  
In the event that Harry mentions the family in any publication, his share of ownership goes back to First Union Church.

HARRY  
They call that, what, the dead hand? Controlling me from the grave.

JUDY  
You know your English lit, don't you.

HARRY  
I'm the black sheep.

BOB  
Harry...

HARRY

What happens when I just put it on my own blog. Does that count as publication?

BOB

You used to say, self-publishing doesn't count.

HARRY

No, my adversaries said that. Or they think that.

BOB

And we have to worry about what everybody thinks. Especially at Mom's church.

HARRY

Glad you get it, Bob.

JUDY

Legally, putting something up on a website is publication. If anyone can read it.

BOB

You can check this out, can't you?

JUDY

How.

BOB

With your boss, of course.

JUDY

Oh. I thought I was a professional. I've earned the right to it.

HARRY

Put it in *The Proles*.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Bob sits on the examining cot, talking to DR. GERRY STILES. 31, short, in a white coat. The camera focuses on his smooth hands for a moment.

GERRY

Yeah. I'd really have to scrub and photoflash myself for you after you start on the immunosuppressives.

BOB  
 Since we're identical, we know it  
 all matches.

GERRY  
 You never approached him.

BOB  
 He leads such a different life.

GERRY  
 You really think he will be  
 negative. We can verify the absence  
 of HIV with every conceivable test.  
 Western Blot. Antigen. No real  
 problem. And we can do the same for  
 HBV and Hepatitis C.

BOB  
 He's quiet. He likes to club, but I  
 don't think he brings people home.

GERRY  
 How do you know?

BOB  
 How would you know? I can tell what  
 you must go through.

INT. GAY DANCE BAR - NIGHT

Harry dances on the stand with RUDOLPH, 22 (taller and  
 typically fit for his age), and Rudolph makes the typical  
 aggressive moves.

From the floor, Gerry, still in a surgeon's smock, watches  
 and gradually looks disinterested.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Harry is working on his website when the cell phone rings.  
 This time he doesn't fumble it.

HARRY  
 Hello.

PASTOR DOWNS, 56, is on the other end.

PASTOR DOWNS  
 Well, you talk to me.

HARRY

Why not. You read my stuff, don't you?

PASTOR DOWNS

I do.

HARRY

I didn't give in.

PASTOR DOWNS

The money is still in trust. Don't worry about it, the dead hand. It just won't be touched while you help us, if you can.

HARRY

Oh, I get it. Bob is ready now.

PASTOR DOWNS

Yes, sir. He wants to do it.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Harry, dressed provocatively with an open-necked shirt, as Gerry, in short-sleeved shirt (barren arms) and surgeon's smock, points at the cat scans.

Harry looks at Gerry and keeps looking away.

GERRY

Your brother needs both, Harry. We want to take just a spec of the pancreas, too. It's a new procedure.

HARRY

But then I could take on the risk of diabetes too.

GERRY

We've done this a hundred times, and it's happened only twice. We'd have to do a much more thorough work up. A lot of stress tests and monitoring. But, yeah, we have to slice you open on both sides.

HARRY

How much time.

GERRY

Not much. You haven't interacted much with your brother in the past five years, have you. You aren't close.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Harry lies on his twin bed as Rudolph approaches him. Rudolph unbuttons his shirt, and reaches into his own backpack for a vial of shaving cream.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Harry runs on a stationary treadmill with electrodes pasted to his now barren chest.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Harry leans over Bob's bed.

HARRY

I really gave it up.

BOB

Did you. No more fantasies. Like you could even talk about them.

HARRY

I couldn't talk about them. I wrote about them instead. And published myself.

BOB

And publicized yourself.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - LATER

They operate on Harry, slicing him open on places, after shaving and swabbing him.

They operate on Bob, slicing him open at several places. The two brothers look alike -- leveled -- in the operating room.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE - LATER

Harry is helped to get up, and go over and look at his brother, who tries to extend his hand.

Harry resists closeness. He backs away. Bob, sitting up and with nose and throat tube, fidgets.

BOB

Harry.

Harry walks away.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Gregg paces around the office as Harry remains quite calm.

GERRY

He is going to look like more man than you.

HARRY

You mean, the steroids. I get it. I've heard about them.

GERRY

It's the way you measure people, Harry.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LAVATORY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Harry and Bob, teens in this scene, measure each other. Bob is slightly taller. Harry winces.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

GERRY

You get my drift. You're gonna see things that rip off your head.

INT. BOB'S HOUSE - DAY

MARTHA, 28, pregnant and with old stretch marks showing because of a tank top, gallivants around the house, and pampers Bob, seated at the kitchen table. She cooks a puree.

Harry knocks, Martha lets him in, and Harry brings a paper sack of groceries into the kitchen. He sets it down and unpacks it somewhat dispassionately. Not quite done, he bolts over to look at Bob.

Bob stops slurping his cereal. He looks up, a bit like a child.

MARTHA

You can keep it down, honey. You gotta start using it.

BOB

I remember throwing up as a kid. The cereal bowl would be fuller than it was when I ate it.

MARTHA

Harry, come on.

EXT. CHURCH PICNIC - DAY

Harry walks alone into an outdoor picnic area. He carries a deli-prepared potato salad. Nearby there is a softball field and a swimming hole. CHARLOTTE, 27, brunette and rather petite, approaches Harry as he approaches the food area.

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Harry.

HARRY

It's been years.

CHARLOTTE

You never called me Sis. I guess you're here where you belong.

HARRY

You seem like the stranger.

Harry puts the small crock down, and it pales in comparison to all the home-cooked dishes. He walks over and sees Bob, in the distance, standing in the outfield.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

Harry walks up toward the batter's box. One of the other churchgoers motions him. He steps up to the batter's box. He misses one pitch and then hits a soft fly to left, which Bob catches.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Harry walks up to the pool, and sees Bib dogpaddling in the pool.

BOB

Come on in!

Harry looks at Bob, who, despite the scars, looks much hairier than before.

INT. MEN'S CHANGE AREA - DAY

Harry slowly changes into swimming shorts. He looks at himself in the mirror and makes a mental comparison to his brother Bob. He smiles.

He walks out to the pool and jumps in.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Harry pounds away, looking at his website, which has grown snazzier and more professional, with flash animation.

ANIMATED CHARACTER 1  
That's an old wife's tale.

ANIMATED CHARACTER 2  
Wrong. They call it an urban legend.

Harry keeps typing.

INT. JOB INTERVIEW - DAY

Harry makes eye contact with a YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER, who sits across a small table.

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER  
So, tell me, you said you have a couple of web domains. It sounded like an admission.

HARRY  
For five years. The text of my books.

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER  
On gays in the military.

HARRY  
About my discharge. Don't get me wrong. It was honorable. I didn't even get a Spin code.

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER  
What do you want to do with these. Just create a stir?

HARRY

People find them. Passively.

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER

Can you sell the website? Can somebody else operate it while you work for us?

HARRY

I'd just be an individual contributor. Look, this is the first raw programming job that I have found in eighteen months.

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER

Given who our client is, you can't draw attention to yourself when you work for us, Harry.

INT. APARTMENT MAILBOX LOBBY - DAY

Harry picks up his mail. One of the pieces is an unemployment check that is clearly his last check. Another is a letter from his landlord warning that his lease will not be renewed because the apartment is going condo.

HARRY

Huh

Harry goes upstairs and keeps working on his website. He looks at some ads on his site, and checks his revenue from the ads. It is meager.

The cell phone rings.

HARRY

That's not family.

He answers

CHARLOTTE

Harry, it's your sister. Remember.

HARRY

Yeah. Bob.

CHARLOTTE

Bob's in the hospital. Pneumonia.

HARRY

Pneumocystis? Maybe the rejection drugs. Or maybe my organs.

CHARLOTTE  
They won't say. Look, Martha needs  
our help.

HARRY  
So she doesn't care.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Harry fidgets in front of Gerry.

GERRY  
You did tell the truth. Nothing for  
the past two years. There was  
Rudolph.

HARRY  
We didn't do anything. He just  
shaved me.

GERRY  
Well. Whose razor? Jerome's? This  
is deadly.

HARRY  
I don't want to take care of him. I  
haven't told him that.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NIGHT

Martha, Charlotte, Harry, and the Pastor Downs sit on a sofa.  
Only the Pastor tries to make eye contact.

MARTHA  
We're going to let him die.

Charlotte is sobbing. Harry shows no emotion.

MARTHA  
Too much brain damage.

They walk toward the room, and see Bob in a coma.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

They lower a coffin into the ground. Harry, Martha,  
Charlotte, and Rev. Downs watch.

INT. GARAGE APARTMENT - DAY

An ELDERLY LANDLORD, 70, shows Bob his garage apartment. It has a sliding glass door entrance and looks very insecure.

HARRY

You do have cable service?

ELDERLY LANDLORD

No sir. I have a dish kit upstairs that I never put together.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Harry, in good clothes, stands in front of the Pastor.

PASTOR DOWNS

That's still the deal. You can have half interest in the house if you join our church.

HARRY

The writings?

PASTOR DOWNS

Bob didn't mention that in his will. Maybe he understood.

HARRY

Maybe he did.



