

## Excerpt from “And Nothing but the Truth”

I knew coming back to St. Mary’s, I would be getting the great lecture from O’Sullivan, who is very outspoken for a priest. I had intentionally avoided this during my divorce, or at least after everyone found out the truth about my divorce. Up until then I had them all eating right out of my hand, but when the truth came out, things were different, as they usually are. The fantasy was over. I dread meeting with Father, but know it is unavoidable. Father has insisted on speaking with me. I did not look forward to this meeting for obvious reasons. I knew Father O’Sullivan somehow felt personally betrayed by me, probably because I had never come to him for guidance. But why would I? I know what he was going to say, and at that time in my life, that was not what I wanted to hear. Yet, as with most events this weekend I know it is coming, I know it won’t be pleasant and I am just going to have to take it like a man. Meeting with Father O’Sullivan is the first of many ghosts I will have to face this weekend.

Walking into his office, I feel like the fourth grade boy who has just pulled Sally Ann’s hair in the lunch line, and has been sent to the principal’s office. I sit in the lounge, as the secretary announces me and then shows me in the door. There he sits in all his goodness. Father O’Sullivan and I have had some good times together. I used to help out at services on Sundays, and at local church events, and he could always depend on me for a good laugh. We were friends. Father O’Sullivan turns around in his chair to face me, as I walked in. He looks as though he has been praying. Praying for me I don’t know, but his face didn’t exactly light up at the sight of me as he dismisses his secretary.

Father O’Sullivan bluntly starting out, “Well, you certainly screwed this one up didn’t you.” I answer him with my head lowered not able to really look him in the eye at this point, partly because I am ashamed and partly because I can’t think of a good enough lie to get myself out of this. “Yes, Father I did, you don’t have to tell me.” Now raising my head to face him, I continued saying, “I screwed up, I did and if I could take it all back I would but you know as well as I do, that it is much too late for that.” I say this hoping that this will end this grueling interrogation. O’Sullivan, now glaring back at me, has no intention of letting me off that easy.

“That’s all you have to say, that you screwed up, and you think that’s going to make all this okay? You lost your wife, John, your family and for what, a women who left you at the first sight of something better. What the hell were you thinking? And why haven’t I seen you at confession, a man truly repentant would have been at confession by now. Well...you sure have made a fine mess out of your life.”

I let him finish as I stew on what I would say next, and have almost just had enough, when the words seem to come flying right out of me, “I know, Father, I know but there’s really nothing I can do about it now is there.” Coming to my feet and pacing, while combing the hair back nervously on the side of my head, I finally let go, “What do you want from me? I said now looking directly at him, “Do, you want me to say I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m so God damn sorry.”

Father O’Sullivan now throwing me a piercing stare I continue, “I know, I know,” now waving my hands in front of me, trying to avoid the blow I thought he might be sending my way, as I said, “I’m sorry I used the name of the lord in vain. I’m sorry every morning a wake up alone. I’m sorry that

everyday some other man is raising my children, and my wife sleeps in a bed with a man, who in every way I look at it, is someone who deserves her so much more than I ever did. Is that what you want to hear? God knows that I'm sorry. I don't know why I have to tell you, too."

With that Father seems to sit up and turn away, as he concludes his reprimand, "Well the ceremony will be held at St. Mary's because that's where the kids want it." Turning back to face me he states, "You know John, God will forgive you if you ask him, if you are truly sorry, go to him and he'll forgive you. If you continue to live with this..."

I interrupt him, "Father I have heard all this before. I'm sorry, but I don't feel I deserve to be forgiven. I don't know that I don't feel deep in my heart, that this was not all for the better for everyone involved. Everyone seems to be doing just fine without me."

"And you John, how are you doing without them? I hear you don't even call the kids anymore. You have almost dropped out of their lives entirely. What is that all about? My goodness, man, I remember when you coached their baseball teams every year. What happened?"

He knew what had happened, they all knew. Why did he insist on asking me this? I left them for her, but he is going to make me say it and I just can't. I'm not that man. "You know why I left, everyone knows. I'm sorry Father, think of me what you will, but I'm the one who has to live with this, and if I don't do anything else in this world, this burden I'll carry alone." I try to leave but Father, being the size of man that he is, grabs my arm saying, "No John, you're wrong, you are not the only one that carries this burden." Glancing back at Father O'Sullivan, I leave the room. I don't say a word to him after that, and that is okay, because I know I will never see him ever again, after this weekend. But still his words circle in my head, as I am forced to look back and to consider my chosen road.

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