

LAW DOG

Written by

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EXT. MARKET - DAY

ELLERY, 29, wearing heavy rags and looking destitute, clutches his hands together as he walks into an open air market that used to be a small park, surrounded by aging, cracking or crumbling brick buildings. The glass in the windows of the buildings are shattered and cracked or simply missing.

People walk to and fro, ignoring Ellery as they do their shopping. He eavesdrops on a WOMAN, 33, and a MERCHANT, 41, arguing.

WOMAN

Come on, cut me a break!

MERCHANT

Twenty coins, you heard me - take it or leave it.

WOMAN

You're such a bastard - I have kids to feed!

MERCHANT

Yeah, who doesn't? You gonna pay or not?

The woman thumps her fist on the table, glowering at the merchant. He notices Ellery standing nearby.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Hey, you! Get outta here, ya bum - ya friggin' moocher!

ELLERY

Sorry. Sorry about that.

He limps visibly on one leg as he stands in the middle of the market, watching everyone walk by.

ELLERY (V.O.)

You can judge a community by how they treat their people.

People pass him by. Some give him derisive looks or sneer.

ELLERY (V.O.)

I've heard older folks say that people use to treat each other with civility. Before the bombs dropped, that is.

Ellery hobbles over to a broken sidewalk and leans against the wall, his eyes darting from person to person as he rests.

ELLERY (V.O.)

Now, each town is just one
desperate grab for things. People
barter their ill gotten goods and
find new ways to lord over each
other.

A group of THUGS led by AIDAN, 17, wearing a mix of motorcycle leathers and cheap clothes and sporting a pompadour, follow a BEGGAR as he tries to walk down the walkway. One of them throws a rock at him.

THUG #1

You wanted a hand out, didn't you?
Here's a HAND OUT!

Another rock is thrown, bouncing off the back of the head of the beggar. Ellery's eyes dart from the beggar to the thugs.

AIDAN

What? No crying? No whimpering? You
a man or a dog?

The beggar passes Ellery and Aidan jumps forward to kick the beggar in the back.

Ellery sticks his good leg out and trips Aidan. The beggar stumbles off while the gang surrounds Ellery.

ELLERY

Whoops.

THUG #1

Oh, you done fucked up now!

Aidan throws a punch that Ellery smacks to one side, then returns to Aidan's nose. Aidan staggers onto his gang, then stares back furiously.

AIDAN

Look, another little beggar thinks
they're bad ass? Guess what? My
mom's the mayor - that makes me the
king, and makes you my bitch!

Aidan and Ellery exchange a few punches until Ellery looks like he's winning. The rest of the gang members jump in and beat on Ellery mercilessly until he falls unconscious, his head banging against the ground.

Darkness.

ELLERY (V.O.)
Same as every other town.

EXT. STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

A YOUNG ELLERY, 12, stands in tattered rags over a dead couple covered in stab wounds. His knife slowly drips blood.

ELLERY (V.O.)
I was just like them, once. Killed
for the sake of killing. Stole what
I could get my hands on. It's what
I was taught. It's what I was good
at.

He is surrounded by other YOUNG THUGS, cheering him on.

YOUNG THUG
He blooded! Ellery finally blooded!
He's a man now, a man!

EXT. BAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

The bar is filled with men and women in various conditions, from the relatively clean to the disfigured. The BARTENDER, 34, slings drinks while the waiter hands out varieties of food, like fried rat.

Young Ellery walks in coolly from a side door, gauging people with his eyes. Eventually his eyes settle on ARTHUR, 43, a graying man wearing a heavy cloak and an obvious SACK of coins on his belt. Ellery scrutinizes him further, getting a view of a SHOTGUN in a holster.

Arthur turns a bit and talks to some of the other patrons as Young Ellery avoids people, bee-lining to Arthur's side. He fake-trips and bumps into Arthur's shoulder, stumbling and grabbing the SACK. Arthur pulls out his shotgun smoothly and FIRES a shot at Young Ellery's legs as he runs off, downing him.

Everything stops. Young Ellery rolls on his back, screaming as Arthur walks over to him.

ARTHUR
You know, most people would have
killed you for that. You're a
terrible thief.

YOUNG ELLERY
FUCK YOU!

ARTHUR

Tsk tsk... How did you live this long?

Young Ellery moans in pain.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Yeah, that sounds about right.

Everyone winces as Young Ellery continues to writhe on the floor.

BARTENDER

C'mon, Arthur - have a heart. The kid's barely livin' as it is. Put a bullet in 'em or take 'im with you or SOMETHING.

ARTHUR

That sounds like a good idea. What do you say, young... uh...

BARTENDER

Ellery. His name is Ellery.

ARTHUR

Young Ellery. We're going to play a little thing called 'shotgun roulette'.

Arthur reloads his shotgun with a single shell picked from under his cloak.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I got a priest to bless this shell here - it'll only kill those who are irredeemably evil. Let's test that, shall we? Are you naturally bad, or just really unlucky?

Arthur points the shotgun at Young Ellery's head, who closes his eyes forcefully and starts sobbing.

YOUNG ELLERY

I don't want to die.

Everything goes quiet as Arthur pulls the trigger.

CLICK.

The bartender waves at a man in the crowd.

BARTENDER

Hey doc, take care of the kid.

The doctor kneels next to Young Ellery and tends his wounds. Arthur walks over to the bar.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

You knew that wasn't going to fire, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Probably.

BARTENDER

Why?

ARTHUR

This kid's something different, I think. He can be taught.

BARTENDER

Hope you know what you're doing, Law Dog.

Arthur grins back.

ARTHUR

Don't I always?

BARTENDER

Oh jeez. You're gonna recruit him, aren't ya?

ARTHUR

If he survives, maybe. Gotta see if he can handle it.

BARTENDER

What're you gonna do about Pike? Heard he's started killin' gang leaders and tryin' to make a name for himself. He and Ellery are tight.

ARTHUR

The choice will be his. It won't be an easy one.

BARTENDER

Giving you free drinks ain't easy, either.

They chuckle.

ARTHUR

And yet, here I am.

BARTENDER

You did save us all. It's only fair.

ARTHUR

I know, and the hospitality's appreciated. It's just... I'm starting to get on up there, and I haven't signed anyone up. Never had to. That kid, though - he's been here, what, a couple of years? He reminds me of me, back before it all went to hell.

BARTENDER

Kinda wish I knew you then.

ARTHUR

No. You don't.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT - PRESENT

Ellery lays on his stomach, head turned to one side and eyes closed, on the ground. He's still wearing his rags, but his wounds seem to have been treated. He blinks a few times and tries to sit up. The cell next to him is also occupied, and they move when he tries to wake up. The cell has a bench in the back.

PENNY (V.O.)

Julia - he's moving.

JULIA (V.O.)

He's alive?!

Ellery turns his head to see PENNY, 18, and JULIA, 19, wearing long button-down shirts and worn pants. They hold hands as they watch Ellery sit up. He tugs his arms - his hands are handcuffed in front of him.

ELLERY

Hmmph... I'm alive.

JULIA

Barely.

PENNY

You look like hell.

JULIA

Penny!

ELLERY
Where am I?

JULIA
Jail.

ELLERY
Unh, my head.

Ellery tries to stand up, and stumbles a bit before sitting on the bench.

PENNY
Who're you? I haven't seen you around before.

ELLERY
Uh... Ellery. And I'm not exactly from around here.

PENNY
Hi, I'm Penny.

JULIA
Julia.

Ellery grunts.

JULIA (CONT'D)
So... Why are you in here?

ELLERY
Started something I couldn't finish. You?

JULIA
I think they called it 'chronic vagrancy'.

PENNY
Whatever. The mayor's an asshole.

ELLERY
Town's full of 'em.

He watches their reaction. They look defensive at his statement.

JULIA
Hey, not everyone's like that, okay? We all have to deal with her crap - she makes the rules, and there's nowhere else to go.

PENNY

Yeah - it's kill or be killed out there. At least here, we can get food. Everyone hates it, but what can you do?

JULIA

There's some good people in this town, but the mayor's kind of a jerk enabler.

Julia and Penny go quiet, still holding hands. Moments pass.

ELLERY

Why don't you take the power, then? Mayor's just one person.

JULIA

You don't fight the mayor. She's got the sheriff. And her son's...

PENNY

He's... He's a double asshole.

Julia puts her arm around Penny, who bites her lip and tries to not cry.

JULIA

Between Aidan's little group, the sheriff's army and the mayor, we can't fight back. They control everything.

Ellery looks between them for a short while, then pulls his legs up on the bench.

ELLERY

Town doesn't deserve a hero.

JULIA

What would you even know?

PENNY

Yeah! We're just trying to get by, all right? We can't fight. Some people tried a couple of times - lived here for years, before the Mayor's time. They were exiled - never heard from them again.

JULIA

It's a hard life, Ellery, but it's ours. Most are just glad the bandits mostly leave us alone.

ELLERY

But your life isn't yours. What about the mayor?

JULIA

Hey, we work with what we can. At least, I do.

PENNY

Me too. Why do you think we're locked up in here?

ELLERY

Well... Why ARE you in here?

Penny and Julia look at each other.

PENNY

We, uh, fought the law. And the law won.

JULIA

Penny and I have been... close, for a long time. Aidan didn't like it. He told his mom. They told us that we had to find boys to marry. For the town.

PENNY

And I punched Aidan in the mouth.

Ellery chuckles.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

ELLERY

This guy - did he have a ridiculous hair cut and wear an old leather jacket?

He makes a motion of tall hair in the front and going to the back of his neck. The girls nod.

JULIA

Yeah, that sounds like him.

Ellery nods to Penny.

ELLERY

You're right - he is an asshole.

Everyone chuckles.

PENNY

We'll probably be exiled tomorrow.
Or hung up to die.

JULIA

Yeah, you hit Aidan. Mayor's going
to hate you for that.

The GUARD, 28, opens a door in the hall and walks in.

GUARD

Well, well, the vagrant came to.
And here I was hoping I'd just have
to dump a body.

PENNY

Oh look, they sent the resident
fuck-up to watch over the cages.

GUARD

Shut up, little girl. The sheriff's
with the mayor right now - some
emissary from some army showed up.

JULIA

Army?

GUARD

Yeah. The Army of Pike or
something. Stupid name, but it
sounds like they're trying to cut a
deal to join a nation.

PENNY

Mayor won't go for it - then she
won't be the queen of town.

GUARD

She'll probably put it up to a
vote. You know her - always wanting
to be the voice of the people.

Ellery looks over at the girls, who look back.

ELLERY

You said "Pike", right?

GUARD

Yeah. Why, you know 'em?

ELLERY

... No.

GUARD

That's what I thought.

The guard takes a seat on a stool at the exit, and pulls out a torn book. Ellery mutters to himself.

ELLERY

Pike? Shit... That's no good.

Ellery stands up and looks over at the bars - the guard's totally preoccupied. He sits down and reaches into his boot, pulling out a bobby pin. Julia and Penny watch as he picks the lock on his handcuffs. He sits next to Penny and Julia next to the bars, whispering with them.

PENNY

You actually know him?

ELLERY

Long time ago. Betting he's gotten worse, if he has an army backing him. Nobody's gonna win if he takes over.

PENNY

Damn... What do we do?

ELLERY

I need to get out of here. Need to figure this town out.

JULIA

How're you gonna get out of here?

ELLERY

Something'll come up.

A loud scream comes from outside. The guard stands up, dropping his book, and runs outside. The girls look at Ellery.

ELLERY (CONT'D)

I didn't plan that.

He picks the lock on his door and theirs, and they leave through the front door