

Billiam Hines

By C. Jade Wyton

Billiam Hines, a well-respected banker, goes about his daily routine. He comforts his mourning father, aids his struggling client with her loan, and looks into hiring a bounty hunter team for his boss.

Contains some depictions of alcoholism, and mentions of kidnapping.

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Billiam Hines awoke to the sound of his father stumbling into the hallway wall, and quickly threw on his pants and shirt so that he could exit his bedroom and check on the poor older man.

His father, a dark-furred tabaxi named Nathaniel, was lifting himself from the floor as Bill stepped out of his room.

Doing up the last few buttons on his shirt, Bill stepped to his father's side and held down a hand.

'Good morning, Father. Here, let me help you.'

He tried to ignore the heavy smell of drink that clung to the man's fur and breath, and instead tried to focus on the warmth of his father's smile.

'Hey, son,' Nathaniel greeted; his rasping voice tired but genuine as he took his son's hand and let himself be pulled to his feet. 'I didn't see you, last night. You had us worried.'

'I was working late,' Bill explained. 'Claire was feeling ill, so I offered to finish her paperwork.'

'You're a good boy,' Nathaniel praised, petting his son's shoulder proudly. 'I'm so glad to have you....'

Bill gave a short nod and, keeping his hands on his father so he could guide him down the stairs (gods knew, he didn't trust the old man to get down them on his own) led him to the dining room.

He sat his father down and held back a sigh as the man pulled a flask from his pocket and threw his head back; downing its contents.

He worried about his father, but there was no point in trying to stop the man. His mother had been trying for over twenty years to comfort him, but there was nothing anyone could do to ease the guilt in the man's grieving soul.

He still blamed himself for losing Olivia.

Bill didn't understand his parents' grief. Not really. All he had ever known of his sister were the photos they kept on the mantel, taken before her kidnapping.

But he knew it had hit the family hard; he could see it in their eyes. And in his father's ragged, unkept fur that contrasted his handsome self in the photos where he had Olivia on his knee.

He had been a well-kept, well-dressed man once. Though Bill had never remembered him to be so in his own lifetime.

Despite his grief, though, Nathaniel had never been anything but a supporting

and loving father; and even through his drinking and his late nights at the bar, he had never been neglectful.

If anything, Bill found had his father a little *overbearing*, especially in his earliest years. Though he understood why.

*It had only taken a minute for Olivia to be taken*, he remembered overhearing. *He'd simply turned away to pay for their lunch, let go of her hand for just a moment to take out his wallet, and then she was gone.*

Perhaps, if they had known who had taken her, they could continue their search.... But two decades and thirty bounty hunters later, and they were no more knowledgeable about her whereabouts than the day she was stolen from them.

He shook the thought from his head and retrieved the suit jacket from the back of his chair (his mother must have placed it there for him after washing it, bless her) and pulled it on before sitting down opposite his father.

They spoke politely until Bill's mother, a ginger-and-cream tabaxi named Emerald, entered from the kitchen and placed their breakfasts on the table.

'I wish you wouldn't,' Emerald commented as she tapped the empty flask beside Nathaniel. 'Please, dear. It's not even eight.'

'I'm sorry,' Nathaniel apologised, a long, sorrowful sigh escaping him. 'I just....'

He didn't finish his sentence as his wife sat beside him and pecked a kiss on his cheek.

They never spoke about Olivia anymore. Not out loud, anyway. They hadn't for a very, *very* long time.

It was just easier to keep her name out of their mouths; less painful.

Bill couldn't blame them for trying to forget.

'I'm leaving for work early today,' he said, trying to distract his parents from the sad thoughts that had come to them by acting as if nothing was wrong and simply starting breakfast as normal. 'I have an appointment with Mrs Fiddlestone about her late mortgage, poor thing, and want to deal with it before anyone else attempts to get involved.... Will you be alright to clean up without me, Mother? I appreciate the breakfast and I hate to leave you to *all* the morning chores on your own, but I don't want to dally.'

'No, I understand,' Emerald gave her son a warm smile. 'See what you can't do to help that poor woman.'

Bill nodded, quickly finished his breakfast, and then wiped his mouth before standing. 'I love you both very much,' he said, kissing each of his parents in turn. 'I'll see you tonight.'

He made his way through to the hall, where he paused at the sitting room arch and picked up yesterday's paper from his mother's armchair.

'Mother?' he called down the hall. 'Are you done with yesterday's paper?'

'Yes, Bill!' she replied. 'You can take it!'

'Thank you!'

And with that, Bill was out the door and on his way to work.

It wasn't a long walk to his town's branch of the Pal'thar National Bank. But it was just long enough that he didn't have time to stop and talk to his neighbours—

'Bill, dear, is that you?' an elderly orc called from her front porch, and Bill stopped to wave. 'Oh, it is! Off to work, are you?'

'Yes, Mrs Robertson,' Bill replied, pausing by her gate. 'Is all well?'

'Yes, yes— Well, all except that old bathroom light,' Mrs Robertson replied.

'Has it gone out again?'

'Darn thing keeps burning out!' she exclaimed. 'I swear it was only last week that you changed that globe for me.'

'Well, once I'm off shift I'll call you an electrician to look at it, shall I?' Bill offered. 'Tonight? Around six?'

'That would be appreciated, dear.... Oh, I'm keeping you, aren't I? Well, don't let me make you late. Off you go now, on your way!'

Bill chuckled as he waved again to the old woman, and continued on his way.

The rest of his walk, asides from throwing a ball back over a fence for a young boy, was rather uneventful and he arrived at work just as his client did.

'Mrs Fiddlestone,' he greeted, shaking her hand. 'It's lovely to see you again, please come in. We can talk in my office.'

'Thank you for seeing me,' Fiddlestone replied, letting herself be led into the bank.

She followed Bill through the large room to an office in the back where she was sat down by a beautiful mahogany desk.

'It's no trouble,' Bill reassured as he put down his things and took his own seat. 'I want to make sure you're well looked after, after all! Now...' he retrieved her file from where he had placed it in his drawer the night before. 'I understand you missed your loan repayment, last month?'

'Yes,' Mrs Fiddlestone blushed, deep and red, and looked away. 'I, uh.... Money's been tight.'

'What's happened?' Bill leant forward, his voice turning soft and sweet as he put a hand on the woman's own. 'Is everything alright?'

'Now, yes, but...' Fiddlestone cleared her throat and fidgeted. 'My son, Sammy— I'm sure you remember him? He fell ill, for about a week, and the costs of his medicine put us behind. I've been trying to scrape together enough for the loan, but....'

'I understand completely,' Bill pulled back his hand, picking up a pen from its holder and opening Mrs Fiddlestone's file. 'Leave it to me to deal with, alright? Don't worry about the missed repayment,' he said, checking the "PAID" box next to two of her repayments' dates and making a mental note to move some things around for her. 'Or this month's. Just pay next month's as usual.'

'Just *next* month's?' Mrs Fiddlestone visibly relaxed, and slumped in her chair. 'Oh, that's such a relief. Thank you so much, Mr Hines. You have no idea how much this means to me! How can I ever repay you?'

'Naw, now, Mrs Fiddlestone!' Bill gave a chuckle and rose from his seat to guide the woman out of his office. 'I may work for the bank, but acts of kindness are not something I keep track of nor expect to collect from. So you head on home, give Sammy my greetings, and you both rest up as best you can, yes?'

'Yes, thank you.'

Bill led her to the bank's front door, holding it open for her so she could make her way down the stairs to the street. 'Be safe, now!'

'You too!'

'Ah! Bill! You're early, today!' a voice chimed from behind the tabaxi, and bill

turned to see his coworker, an older kobold known as Miss Ruby Flintlock. 'Just as well, I was hoping to get your opinion on something.'

'Yes? Yes, of course,' Bill closed the door behind him and followed Flintlock as she, without pause, scurried through the bank to continue business as they spoke. 'What's the matter?'

'We've had a request to move Mr Larrison's vault to the Cogturn branch, as he'll be taking up residence there and wants his things moved securely,' she explained, quickly taking and signing several documents from another coworker as they passed. 'Now. He's told us that the contents of his vault are *extremely* valuable, and he's worried about theft during the move. And I honestly don't blame him, after that cock-up with the police escort from Turnbuckle to Onus!'

Bill nodded. He'd known since he was very little that the police were a useless bunch of idiots who didn't know what they were doing.

*Perhaps, if the police hadn't been involved, his family could have paid Olivia's ransom and gotten her back; instead of taking that moron cop's advice that led to her kidnappers cutting contact.*

He shook the thought from his head.

'You want me to find someone to guard the shipment?' he asked.

'You've always been good with paying the bounty hunters their dues when they catch someone,' Flintlock waved a dismissive hand and made a face. 'I've always found that lot rather unwieldily.... But I thought maybe some names may have stuck in your head? Who seemed more interested in the morals, and who seemed more interested in the money?'

Bill chuckled. 'I'd be happy to look into it for you,' he offered. 'When's he looking to have it moved by?'

'Within the month,' Flintlock replied. 'Nothing too urgent, but he says he'd be most comfortable if his things were where he can reach them A.S.A.P.'

'Understandable. Is there anything else you need from me?'

'No, no, that's all,' Flintlock flicked her tail. 'You can just relax until your shift starts.'

'Thank you,' Bill gave a quick nod before retreating to his office and sitting back in his chair.

He picked up the newspaper he'd brought from home and flicked through it.

There was news that in Cogturn, the Legion had been confirmed disbanded. And it also said that the disgusting and immoral tycoon, Franklin Herbert, had been beaten to death by his own abused workers. And it *also* said that the mine workers in Ghostly Gums had unionised.

And all of it was credited to....

*Hm....*

Bill tapped his claws on the mahogany desk, clicking the pen in his other hand repeatedly as he read over the paper in front of him.

*Dawn Runners, huh?*

Perhaps they'd be able to help.

—END—

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