

Truth, Lies and Birthday Cake

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Truth, Lies and Birthday Cake

by [RickylLover](#)

Summary

Michael tries to keep his mom from prying into his relationship with Fiona...

Notes

I loved Burn Notice and recently binge-watched the first four seasons again and this story just popped into my head and had to come out. I hope you enjoy it. :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Every spy knows the best place to get information out of someone is at a party. The target is among friends, there's usually alcohol to loosen them up. They will often let their guard down. Unfortunately my mother was also well aware of this technique. Though, she hasn't mastered the idea of bribery if she thought her cooking would get anything out of me.

I'm Michael Westen: Target. The setup: my nephew's first birthday party. All the prerequisites were there. Balloons, streamers. Cake. All the things I never had growing up. And the one thing that was a constant in our house, beer. Though, as much as Sam liked to drink he only ever got more animated. Nothing like my old man who used to knock Nate and I around.

The operation was simple. Get in unnoticed, drop off the gift Fiona had helped me pick out, eat cake and escape before my mom could give me the third degree about why it was Fiona and I weren't speaking. This time.

Getting in unnoticed was easy being I had a key to the back door. And every spy knows the best way to stay under the radar is blending in. So, when you are at a toddler's birthday party you wear the paper hat. No matter how ridiculous you might look.

Sam was the first to spot me. Partly because the fridge was near the back door. And the beer was in the fridge. "Hey, Mikey," he cracked open a cold one before passing it my way. His hat was decorated with clowns, making him look like one himself. But, I thought it best not to say it out loud. "Fi's in the living room with Charlie," the guest of honor. "I've been running interference all night, but Maddie is determined to get her alone and find out what's going on with you two."

I sipped the beer. "But, if you're here she's got her opening." I knew Sam hadn't had enough beers to need me to point out the obvious. He'd never do that on an operation. Or around children or my mother. So really I was just prompting him for the rest of the story more than stating facts.

"You're gonna love this, Mikey," Sam knocked back a swig of beer and jabbed my side with the neck of the bottle. "I set Ruth up to run interference for me," he snickered, quite proud of himself. "Told her Maddie was dyin' to have the recipe for that quinoa, garbanzo bean whatever-the-fuck she brought."

My mother never cared for Ruth. A Vegas blackjack dealer was not the ideal match for Nate and his gambling problems. But, I was never sure what she disliked more. Her profession or the fact she was vegan.

"You did that on purpose," my mother stomped into the kitchen and put her cigarette out in Sam's beer bottle. "I don't know why those people have to preach and shove their lifestyle down your throat every five seconds like those damn Jehova's Witnesses always knocking on my door."

"At least she didn't shove her hummus down your throat," I tried to find the bright side. Plastering a smile on my face as big and fake as the 'field roast' Ruth had brought. The

meatless competition to my mom's ham. I'm not sure which I dreaded more. "In their defense they're easier to get rid of than FBI guys in suits."

"No they're not, Michael," Mom was already lighting up again.

Before I could say more Nate walked into the kitchen. His paper hat printed with monkeys. Perfect for our little circus. "Look, I just need to apologize in advance," he choked on the cloud of smoke in the room. "Ruth's not speaking to me after she found out about some money I secretly spent."

If only I could be so open with my mother. "Seriously, Nate?" I scolded. "Are you gambling again?"

Nate looked hurt. Not his fake pouting, but genuinely hurt by my accusation. So I knew it wasn't gambling he was into. But, I would almost prefer it to him having another woman. "Tell me you're not cheating."

Everyone looked to Nate. And we all knew it was true. The bowed head. Hunched shoulders. The guilt. He'd been caught. "I've been cheating," he confessed. "On my diet."

He looked so sad and serious and pitiful I felt bad for laughing. But, it was so ridiculous. "Cheating on your diet?" I had to repeat it to be sure.

"I like meat, okay?" He was pleading. "I go to this place on Rhodes Street once a week to get a steak."

My mother was the first to speak. As usual. "You see that, Michael?" She pointed her cigarette at me. "Why can't you talk to me about your problems like your brother?" She scooped Nate into her arms, ignoring that he hadn't spoken to his wife about them. "I am your mother afterall."

Her words struck me like a sucker punch. Every operative undergoes rigorous training to withstand the most persuasive interrogation techniques. How to endure torture for hours on end without giving up valuable information. Or how to give them false information that rings just true enough to buy yourself time to escape or time to keep them busy until the operation succeeds.

And I wondered if my CIA training had made me the way I am or if my mother did. Because, a Yugoslavian mob boss's henchman who specializes in wet work has nothing on my mother. I would much rather face questioning by Sergei Petriov and his impromptu electrocutions with a jury-rigged car battery while sitting in a pool of water than be interrogated by my mom. Especially about Fiona.

With Sergei I could fight back. Fight dirty. But, in this case it's my mom who fights dirty. And she's less forgiving than jolts of electricity. Even if the only burns she leaves are accidental. From her cigarette waved in my face.

"You've got girl problems, too?" Sam tried to sound surprised, but just came off sarcastic.

Mom took a long drag off her cigarette. Which was a good thing for once, because if she had not moved her hand we would have been putting out Nate's hair instead of birthday candles. "Why can't you talk to me about Fiona?"

"It's complicated," I shrugged, offering no more explanation. Because, I couldn't understand it myself.

How do you explain that sometimes the trouble with trying to get close to someone, a target, to gain their trust, means that you actually do get close to them. Form an attachment. You find yourself not having to pretend to find all their jokes funny or have things in common. Because, you actually do.

For a spy that kind of attachment can compromise an operation. It can get you killed. Or worse, it can get the other person killed. The person you care about. So, suddenly you find yourself pretending not to be attached to the person you originally pretended to be attached to. And with Fiona that is just as likely to get you killed. By her. In a very painful way. Probably involving C4 and detonators.

So you walk a fine line between how you really feel and what could get you both killed. But, mostly you just try to protect the one you love. Even if it means letting her hurt a little. Even if that hurts you more. And you just keep telling yourself that while she might stop speaking to you, at least she won't stop breathing. And you learn to live with that. Because, it means she lives, too.

I had no words to make my mom understand all of that. And really it was Fiona I should have said them to if I did. I was stuck. But, just like the perfect partner she has always been it was Fi who rescued me from my mom. From myself. Appearing in the kitchen with Charlie on her hip.

It was like she read the situation, or my mind reaching out to her, and came for me. Every operative needs a partner who knows them inside and out. Every strength, every weakness. Every unspoken play in their book. A partner who can disagree or be mad as hell and still have your back. Still come for you. And I guess that's all anybody is looking for. Operative or not.

"This little guy has had enough hummus," she jostled him from one hip to the other with ease. And with the wet blobs of it all down her shirt she'd probably had enough as well. "I think it's time for cake, it is his birthday after all."

Nate brushed ashes out of his hair as he pulled away from Mom. "I told Ruth your cake was vegan so she'd let him have it," he whispered.

"That's fine, Honey," Ma patted his cheek. "It'll explain why it turned out like a brick."

Fiona handed Charlie off to Nate as everyone dispersed, leaving us alone in the room. "Thanks, Fi," I used a gaudy paper napkin to wipe the spatters off her shirt. And while she still didn't speak, her eyes said more than words ever could. And when I caught her hand in mine she did not pull away.

"Come on, you two," Ruth called from the table. "We need Fi to light the cake."

But, as I led Fi out of the kitchen Ma was lighting the candles in typical Maddie Westen style. With her cigarette. "Take your time alone in there, you two," she played it off like she was giving us time to talk to each other, since we weren't talking to her. But, really it was a dig at Ruth. And you didn't have to be a spy to figure that one out.

I seated Fiona to my right then sat down next to Sam. At least he would talk to me. Especially now he found the mojitos. "Looks good," I said of the circus themed table. Wishing I could mean the food.

Sam passed the plate my way. "I don't know what felafel is, Mikey," he choked on the one in his mouth. Wincing like he'd been punched. "But, it sure is named right, fel-awful."

For the first time tonight my laugh was sincere. And while sitting through two hours of small talk, bad food, an ugly diaper incident that made mustard gas seem palatable, and watching a toddler smash more cake than he ate would never be on my top ten list of things to do for the evening, watching Fi handle it all with ease was the one thing I never knew I needed.

She not only tolerated my mom, she seemed to actually enjoy her company. She found little things my mom and Ruth had in common and used them to get them talking to each other. She even let Charlie crawl onto her lap and smear frosting on her shoes. *Her shoes*. All with a smile on her face. And it was not a smile borne of training and lies. It was genuine. It was Fi. And that's why it was beautiful.

That's what made it a distraction. Apparently I was staring after her even after she left the table to help Ma and Ruth put Charlie down for a nap. Of course Nate called me on it. The way little brothers always do. "Whoa, Mike," he reached over the table to punch my arm. "Did you just fall in love with Fi? Like, for real?"

Even Sam put down his mojito. Knew shit just got serious. But, I sipped my drink. Going for casual and buying time. Any good operative can go with the flow no matter what pressure he's under. Of course, any good operative who works with a team works with those who are just as good at reading people as he is. And Sam read people better than he reads books. But, he's also got my back. So his face remained neutral.

"No, I did not just fall in love with Fiona." I did not just fall in love with the smell of her hair, the sound of her laugh, the way she let Charlie ruin her shoes, or the look she gets in her eye right before detonating C4. No, I did not just fall in love with Fiona. And it wasn't a lie. Truth is, I've always loved her.

Nate squinted his eyes at me. But, Sam knew exactly what I meant. Because, sometimes a lie isn't a lie. It's just an omission of truth. Or the tiniest detail that's easy to overlook.

End Notes

Thanks for reading! Normally I write for The Walking Dead, but thought I would give this a try. Hopefully it wasn't a total flop. :)

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