



Word Count about

Syd in Retirement

By Drake Koefoed

Syd Silver, the Director, sat alongside her producer, Grigory Wasisneusesueski. “That won't do, Angie. You have to hit him much harder than that. Alvin's not made of glass. He's a fucking stunt man. Hit him. Make it look like you are trying to hurt him. Fucking A, what is it with you kids? We aren't making some low budget DV movie, this is the real thing. You want the effects people to take your lunch, or what? He's got the protection, so hit him hard. If you can't kill an NFL fullback with one punch, you don't belong in my movie, girl.”

“Sorry, Ma'am.”

“Be straight, don't be sorry. And don't call me Ma'am. If you were a SEAL, you could. You're not, and I don't think they would want

you.”

A young black guy wandered up to Syd. “Syd, they want you in S 112 for the interview.”

“Waz, see what you can do for us on this?”

“Ya. They'll be all right. Not everyone is Little Syd.”

Syd, who was 4' 11 and 87 pounds, and possibly the most dangerous animal on the planet, looked at one of her best friends in the eye. Waz was sitting, but that left them about even. Syd said, “Waz, this is going to be a good flick.”

The enormous man held up a hand that could tear the door off a car.

“It is. They will get it. We have to show them how it's done.

You're too old to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge again, girl.”

“Fuck you, too.”

Syd went to S 112, and walked in on her hands. The interviewer, the very effusive and glamorous Cheryl Rains, was a little surprised. David Frost would have known who he was interviewing, and been ready for this, but Cheryl was the more puffy sort.

“Ms. Silver, why are you walking on your hands?”

“It's something I do.”

“Why is that, Ms. Silver?”

“Is there some reason you are not calling me “Admiral Silver?”

“No, Ma'am.”

“Are you in the Navy, Ms. Rains?”

“No, Ma'am.”

“Then don't call me Ma'am. If you want to be formal, call me 'Admiral' or you can call me Syd, but don't call me Ma'am. You are not a SEAL.”

“Admiral Silver, did your Navy experience help your career in the movies?”

“I would never have been in the movies if I had not been in the Navy.”

“Would you recommend the Navy as a career for young people?”

“If they are chick enough for it, yes.” She shifted from a one hand handstand to sitting in the chair she had been intended to sit in in the first place.

“What does it take to be in the Navy?”

“You drive down the street, and there are little creeps wanting to cut you off, and play school yard games. You see people whine because someone hasn't given them every damned thing they want for nothing. If you look at those people, and say 'that isn't me,' then you want to be part of something that means something, then maybe you should talk to a Navy recruiter. If you're too dumb for the Navy, you can always go into the Marines.”

Cheryl missed the playful tease in that. If she had done her research, she would have known that Syd's best buddy was Major General David Cale, USMC.

“What would your advice to young people be, if they are considering the services?”

Syd was upside down in her chair, knees over the back, fiddling with the wheels. “They should think what they are getting into. It can be a good career, and it can be a good way to get out of the ghetto or whatever. If you are on a search for excellence, you might want to try to be a SEAL or a Marine Scout/Sniper, or Special Forces. If you feel that blue sky calling, then maybe you

should go in the Air Force. Those are the only people I know of that will let a 19 year old kid fly a twenty million dollar aircraft.”

“Do you fly?”

“Anything I can buy, beg, borrow or steal.”

“You don't really steal, though.”

“Of course I do, did. You have an enemy, you screw him over any way you can. You think I wouldn't rip off the enemy, you out your mind, girlfriend.” She jumped out of the chair and climbed up into the overhead area where the lighting and such was sited.

“I don't think you are supposed to be up there, Admiral Silver.”

“Have faith in your camera crew. They have me.”

They did, and were having no problem tracking Little Syd as she negotiated the utility area with all the difficulty a chimp would have had.

“It's, I don't know about our insurance and all that.”

“I never do what I'm told. If you went on the Serengeti, you would meet thousands of herd animals, and a few lions. Of the lions, there would be one lioness who is the number one in the pride. She

doesn't take orders from anyone. Even the President hesitates to tell her to do something.”

“Who do you think you are?”

Syd dropped to the floor. “I know who I am, baby cakes.” She walked out.

* * *

Syd went back to the set, just in time for an attempted lecture from the executive producer.

“Ms. Silver, I need to talk to you about your leaving the set during filming.”

“Talk, if you need to, Mr. Goldman, but I don't need to listen.”

“This attitude isn't helping.”

“It isn't helping what?”

“You have some responsibility to the studio.”

“If I am breaching my contract, you should sue me.”

“Ms. Silver, this is very irregular.”

“I'm sure it is. I'm just not your regular chick. I'm not going to make this movie the regular way, and it is not going to be the

regular dog crap. I've never listened to people like you and I'm not starting now.”

She went back to her seat walking on her hands, and looked at the latest gag with Waz.

Waz shook his head. “The effects guys promise us astounding blood and gore, and I bet they will deliver, but we need this scene to come off harder. Angie thinks she is going to slap him, and then it will be done.

Syd seethed. “Alvin, are you ready to get hit?”

“I got up this morning figuring on it, Syd.”

“Roll. This is how you do it.” She proceeded to knock Alvin on his tail.

Waz giggled. “That's what we're talking about.”

Angie said, “I can't hit like Syd can.”

Waz laughed. “No shit. She's the meanest kitten in the litter. What we want is, you make it look like it. Alvin can fake it some, but not entirely. He didn't have to fake it just now.”

Alvin said, “There was no faking needed. How can something that little hit that hard?”

They did a few more takes, and got one Syd liked. They packed it in for the day, Alvin as bruised as he might be. He went for a beer with Angie.

When they were sitting behind their beers, Alvin said, “Man, did you see Syd hit me? That was like being hit with a backhoe.”

Angie said, “She's bbbadd to the bone.” imitating the George Thoroughgood and the Delaware Destroyers tune.

“There is this little bitty chick with gray hair standing there, and then you get hit like Larry Csonka just came out with a football, and had no intention of stopping for you.”

“That chick ran over the United States Navy. You're just a bug on her windshield.”

“Well, at least I didn't get smashed that bad.”

“I'm glad that didn't happen.”

How the stunt-men's evening worked out is not for us to know.

Little Syd went back to New Mexico to her adobe house next to, in the sense that the land was adjacent, to that of Dave Cale. She was flying her new Sikorsky Silver, which in the ads, is bright silver and looks like George would have liked. In the ads, it looks like it

should be out to destroy Delaware. Syd's own bird was painted dark gray on top, and light overcast gray on the bottom. Well, actually, it wasn't painted at all, but those were the colors the active camouflage defaulted to. Syd filed a flight plan using the same tail numbers she had come in with, and headed for a destination she was not really going to. At the appropriate time, the tail numbers disappeared, and the black chopper landed on Dave's ranch, and became very rapidly unobservable.

Dave's wife, Candellaria, welcomed Syd into the shop. They sat with Dave, who was throwing pots.

Syd said, "This is what a General does when he retires from the Marines?"

"Fuck off, Syd."

"I was going to tell you about this new movie Waz and I are making."

Candellaria said "Gosh, Syd, we had no idea!"

"General Lane told you."

"We could have never found out any other way."

Syd tired of the game. “You're getting awfully good at throwing pots, Dave.”

Candellaria said, “He has no fingerprints any more, he does it so much.”

“Will you guys show me the cactus house?”

Dave wired the pot off the wheel onto a piece of plywood, and set it in the drying cabinet, closing the door. “We have some new babies.”

Syd knew that would mean some things the size of push pins that she was supposed to ooh and aah over. They might be a year old, they might even be worth immense amounts of money, but they were just little green bits with little spines to Syd. Candellaria could identify several hundred varieties of cacti. Dave, several thousand. If Syd wasn't careful, she could end up trying to admire push pins that were the only known specimens of their genus and species in North America. She didn't want to look at that stuff.

She wanted to look at the enormous barrel type cacti, some of which were hundreds of years old, with spines like bayonets and flowers as big as clarinets. Her favorite would bloom for a few

days in late summer. It sat in a pot Dave had thrown on a special wheel Dave called M-88, after the Hercules tank retirevers he had once driven. The cactus, 'Hedgehog' sat in her own custom made pot. The pot alone weighed 900 pounds. Hedgehog herself was much heavier. You could not buy seeds. They had to be given to you by Apache warriors.

“Dave, I want to visit Hedgehog and see your Africans.”

The Africans were frost tender cacti who lived in a special greenhouse that could be heated by natural gas, diesel, wood, or electricity. They would die by frost some time after the demise of the Apache, and long after the Devil bought a parka. Dave took Syd to look at these rare and precious cacti, some of which might not exist any more in the places they had come from. He skipped the little stuff Syd didn't like. They walked among huge African cacti sitting in gigantic pots on blocks of limestone, with other blocks of limestone left for their admirers. On the other side of the house were the ordinary sized ones, which really did not interest Syd. They went to a place in the middle of the house where there was a circle of stone benches of immense mass. A major

quarryman doesn't seat his guests on stones that weigh a ton each.

He seats them on stones that weigh 50 tons each.

The floor was made of stones that had been set by some of the most powerful machines ever built. It was not entirely flat, but you could see it was not going anywhere. The seating was circular, the center occupied by some table like blocks that could be used for food and drink. Outside the seating, the rocks sat in stair step fashion with block walls on them. It looked a little like an amphitheater. The lowest level was ground covered by tiny succulents, and populated by small ones. As you looked up, the stairs had larger plants. From the seating, you couldn't see any end to it.

“This is my favorite place in the world, Dave.”

“I like it here. Candellaria finds it too harsh and spiny.”

“It's here, and it isn't going anywhere. The glass?”

“Stainless posts. It need never be abandoned, not to say what future generations will think.”

“You have foundations and all that.”

”Sure. Alice and I had a great lawyer who could make such a bird nest of titles and so that it couldn't be untangled for what the land was worth. We set up some trusts and stuff.”

“Knowing it will not get trashed is part of what makes it feel so nice here.”

“Sometimes I feel this thing like I am almost about to become one with this. Like an enlightenment.”

“Becoming one with the cacti?”

“We can go out and look at the big guys in a while.”

Someone knocked on the door. Dave let them in. “Candellaria sent you?”

“Uh, yes. We are Alfonso and Sylvia Gonzales Herrera.”

Dave switched to Spanish. “I am very pleased to meet the most distinguished cactus growers in the world. It is a great honor for you to visit our humble home.”

Your author cannot show the wonderful and pleasing elegance of Dave's formal Spanish any more than he can the vulgarity and crude harshness of his gang banger barrio Spanish. Let it be simply said that Dave was speaking with the most elegant language,

sufficient to flatter ambassadors and presidents, and the professors, whose reputations in cactus horticulture, were distinguished, but by nothing within rifle range of Dave's reputation, were extremely flattered.

Dave took the professors around to look at the pincushions, while Syd meditated in the center of the cactus universe. They went to the library to discuss things Syd did not know and did not want to know. Syd went back to the house, and Candellaria took her to the agate house, which was a lowbrow rockhound place. They sat in a silly concrete bowl full of tumbled agate. They played with the polished agates.

“Dave didn't want to build this. He thought it was silly. It is, but they love it. Kids play here, and then their parents buy the stones they select. I'm sure they steal some, but some of them are pretty cool. One guy came and said when he was little, he put some of them in his pockets, and he wanted to be absolved of his sins.

Dave said he should figure out how to do that himself. He said he didn't know, so Dave tells him we have lots of charity waiting to be done, heck, there is a kid who needs some medical procedure that

costs \$18,000, and lots of them who need a lunch. The guy calls the doc about the medical thing, talks him down to \$7,000, and buys American made tennis shoes for all the Apache kids.”

Syd put her feet up. “What would you do with real money? Is there a deal for the tribe? I should ask Robbie this.”

“Ask Robbie.”

In the morning, she did. She talked to a lawyer who had done a lot of work for nonprofits, and had a deal going with the tribe. She gave \$20 million through a channel so convoluted that nobody would ever know where it came from. There was also a matter of a child molester who had evaded prosecution. Syd gave him a ride to El Salvador, where he was provided with a Salvadorian ID. He could live in peace in El Salvador, or he could molest another child. It was all up to him.

Syd took two kids who had been in Dallas for surgery back home to Alaska, and went back to Hollywood. An interviewer asked her “Do you believe in charity?”

Syd said, “Why give money to people who waste it?”

“Ms. Silver, there are people who are in need, but don't know much about finances.”

“That may be so.”

When the water went off in East LA, FEMA was unable to respond, because since George W. Bush, the agency spent all its money posturing. Someone, never identified, had 94,000 tons of bottled water left on the street. Syd, indifferent to the needs of the poor, zipped on to the studio in her hyper expensive helicopter.

When she arrived, the extras were on strike. This presented a problem for Little Syd, because it seemed that among the somewhat more than 100 cards in her wallet that day, there was one that identified her as a member of the union. She might also have found one that absolutely proved that she was the military attaché of Lebanon, but that was not the one she wanted. It would not be possible to film unless some arrangement was made with the union.

As a member, there was nothing Syd could do. It would not have helped much to show that she was a Syrian policeman, an assistant to the Mexican council, or her (for real) ID as an officer of the Office of Naval Intelligence, badge included, although Little Syd didn't actually know where the office was. That would not have

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