

Change the Music
by JC Brady

Ed walked into a grocery store and approached the nearest clerk.

"I want to talk to the manager," he says.
"What seems to be the problem?," says the clerk.
"I don't like the music on the intercom," says Ed.

Amused, the clerk calls the manager. After a moment, he shows up, a heavy set guy in his mid 40's, short and balding. His name is Bob.

"What seems to be the problem sir?," says Bob.
Ed nods his head to signal that he wants to talk in private. The cashier goes back to helping customers and Ed has Bob's full attention.

"I don't like the song that's playing on the intercom," Ed says through clenched teeth.
"The song?," says Bob.
"I don't like this music... I didn't like the song before it either"
"What?," Bob laughs.
Ed looks at him with a cold stare, he's not joking around.
"I don't... like it," Ed says again, getting in his face.
The manager looks at Ed confused and a little startled.
"It'll be over soon just give it a minute"
"You think that's good enough for me?," says Ed.
"Excuse me?," says Bob.
"You think that's good enough for me?," Ed says again. And then motions down at the lump in the pocket of his leather jacket.
Bob sees that the stranger is concealing something.

The Fear shows in his eyes. Uneasy, Bob tilts his head back and looks at the speakers on the ceiling. When his head comes back down Bob meets the strangers eyes perfectly.
"Let's go," Ed says.
"Debbie," Bob says. "I'm going to go back and change the music".
"Watch it," Ed says to Bob softly, whispering in his ear.

Ed begins to follow Bob to the back of the store, then through the doors into the back offices. There are piles of boxes and crates, it's about 10 degrees colder and the noise of the fans is deafening.

Ed and Bob step into a small office and shut the door, it's insulated from the sound of the refrigeration units. There's a long rectangular window on the office door that Ed presses his face against, double checking to make sure no one has followed them.

Junk is piled everywhere in this tiny office. Bottles, loaves of bread, and papers are strewn about. It's a mess.

Bob hunches down behind the unkept desk and starts to open the safe. While he's doing this, Ed picks up a piece of paper from the desk and starts to read it out loud.

"October special, all Halloween candy will go on sale starting October 25..."

Suddenly curious about Ed, Bob stops messing with the safe and looks up at him.
"Would you mind showing me your gun" says Bob.
"My what?!" Ed says, menacingly.
"You're Gun" he says.
"Get back to your god damn business", Ed says in a stern voice.

Bob takes him seriously and goes back to fumbling with the safe. Ed continues reading the October Special.

"Candy that is still around after Halloween will go into the bargain bin..."

Ed thinks he sees some movement outside the small window and moves to investigate. It looks like someone is coming but he can't be sure. He opens the door for a quick check around, nobody there. Ed goes back to reading the October special, pacing back and forth in the small office.

"...remaining candy will be priced at 75 percent of it's regular value..."

Again, Ed thinks he sees some movement outside the door and this time he presses his face against the glass to see if he can get a better look. There doesn't seem to be anyone. He keeps reading as if he's waiting for Bob to tell him to shut the hell up.

Suddenly, Ed experiences a HARSH flash of light followed by a loud ringing in the ears. He's just been hit over the head with a large

bottle. Ed finds himself lying on the floor, looking up at Bob, the store manager. His vision is blurred and he can barely make out Bob's figure, it all fades to black.

When Ed awakens, he's in the hospital. Feeling like he went on a drinking binge when he already had a hangover. Ed's situation is dreary but he'll live. All he really needs at this point is some recovery time.

The police come into Ed's room.

"Why we're you in the back room with the store manager?," one of them asks.

"We were going to change the music," says Ed.

"Change the music, huh?"

"Yeah," Ed says, "Then he just went all crazy and attacked me... I don't know what came over the guy".

"Maybe he already liked the song that was playing," says one cop smugly.

"All we found on your person was an i-pod, so we can't convict you for robbery," says the other cop.

"Robbery?," Ed says.

"Yeah, I think we all know what happened here," says the cop.

Ed expects the cops accusations and does his best to play innocent.

"We do?, I'm confused... my head hurts, all I wanted was to have the music changed."

The cops leave and a paramedic comes in the room.

"How ya feelin'?", he says.

"Been better," Ed says.

"A guy who chased our ambulance wanted me to give you this business card" he says.

"Thanks," Ed says, "But I've already got an attorney".

The End