

MOTIVATIONAL

I liked to sit in the coffee room at the recovery center and read the backs of video tapes. *Twelve Steps for Men visualizes the future only as a series of new days*, it said. Or: *As the oddest couple ever unleashed, Turner and Hooch—a fussy detective and sloppy, junkyard dog—must solve a heinous crime....* When I got bored with tapes, I watched out the window and I thought about the two types of stories of Bill Fontelle.

Good Bill was a series of stories about flying in planes to work teen drug interventions. Moms and dads called him up—suburbs, money homes—and they said, *Look, little Timmy's locked himself in a closet, and it's either rehab or juvie*. So he got on a plane and flew to the rescue.

Bad Bill was his old self. A bum from Chicago. I listened carefully to the stories of Bad Bill. They were packed with info.

He told me a man could squat anywhere by following the city housing inspector. Once a red flyer goes up—if you see a staple gun and a red flyer—that means *condemned*, and you can break in and sleep there. Just take the flyer with you.

But the trick was flawed. The first time he crashed a house and slept, he was woken up in the night by a group of men. They were kicking and stomping his face.

So the corollary, Bill said, is to find a gang of guys. Of your own.

The images stuck out in my mind. I liked how they formed a checklist, as though I could read it on paper. I used think, *Red flyers*. I would also think: *Need a gang of guys*.

Why was I shocked when they fired him from staff for smoking Ketamine? He was my sponsor. I used to watch him say words from the old days—*cut or whack an eight-ball of coke*—and a glaze went over his eyes and it almost looked like was eating the words or chewing the words. But I can't read clues. A man talks, and all I think is, *Hey, that guy's talking*. I can't see around the next corner. It's a flaw.

One night the intercom sparked up. It was the voice of the house chief. He said: *Guys, can I have your attention? Lieutenant Bobby Krakowski, retired, is gonna give a motivational talk in the chapel room. Everyone is welcome.*

I went there. I sat in the pew.