

# North Point Blues

By: Jeff Crowder

Fiction

Joe Sherman pulled into his driveway at precisely 3:45 that afternoon. His wife Millie had been wandering the small trailer in terror as per usual all afternoon. "Lord, please let him be sober" was all that could run through her head. You see, when Joe was sober, he was pleasant, if not dull. Certainly sweet. But when he was drunk, every frustration that had ever happened to him spilled out of him, and mostly into his fists. He hit Millie often, and without concern. Every morning when she awoke with fresh bruises, Joe would say nothing. He knew what he had done. It was best if they left it unspoken.

Joe was not drunk as of yet, but he had his case of Busch Light tucked under his arm as he ambled into the trailer. It was smallish, as most trailers are, but Millie kept it nice. There were cute curtains at all of the windows, freshly planted flower beds in the front yard, and the house was always spotless. Joe made a good wage, and they could certainly afford a better place, but why bother? Joe had wanted children all his life, and after having tried for the longest time, it was determined that Millie was the reason why. That's when the abuse really kicked up. Joe would punch her in the face, the stomach, and the back of the head. He would kick her when she was down. He would say he was sorry, but not really mean it. When he drank, he would sometimes be relentless. The bathroom door had been replaced 4 times, from Millie hiding in fear and Joe ripping it off to get to her. Joe could have killed her numerous times, but always seemed to stop before Millie was too bloody or too unconscious.

He walked in and greeted her warmly with a smile. A small sense of relief washed over Millie. "How was your day sweetie?" she asked meekly.

"Same shit as per usual" Joe snorted. "What's for supper?"

"Chicken with potatoes and corn and biscuits. That okay?"

Millie felt the need to end all of her sentences with a question to

placate Joe.

"Sure is honey" he grinned and slapped her ass. They had been together for 20 years, since high school, and Millie knew no other way of life. She had thought about leaving him every day, only knowing that he would hunt her down and kill her with his shotgun. He kept it in the back of his rusty Ford F-150, which she had no keys to.

"I'm gonna go get cleaned up. Dinner best be on the table when I'm done."

"Okay, Joe."

Millie thought long and hard about running in there and stabbing the bastard. She played this film in her head over and over again. How the years of abuse would most certainly get her off with the murder. How she could start her life over somewhere outside of this shit town, North Pointe, Idaho. How she would do it when he was in the shower, so the blood would wash away, and then wrap him up in the shower curtain, and dump him in the quarry. No one would be the wiser, and only his drinking buddies would go looking for him. His kin all hated him, and Millie knew why. Joe had been an asshole all his life. His parents were dead, and his sister hated his guts. If only Millie could get up the courage to do it. Everyone would be happy.

Joe had grown up in North Pointe, as had Millie. Joe's parents were dirt poor, and they lived in a trailer park on the outside of town. Joe's dad was a raging alcoholic who hit his mom occasionally, but never the kids. Unlike Joe, though, Joe's dad was always sorry he did it, and unlike Millie, Joe's mom would hit back. They loved each other truly and raised Joe and his sister as best they could. Joe would struggle in school and dropped out before his senior year. He found a job working for a local plumber, and that's what he had done his whole life. He didn't know anything else.

Millie had went to school with Joe. Things were so much different then. Joe and her began dating and soon fell in love. Millie got good grades and had hoped to go to college after high school. But when Joe dropped out he issued an ultimatum: Me or school, take it or leave it. Blinded by love, Millie thought they

could make a nice life in North Pointe. Now, every day of her life she regretted that decision.

Joe wandered down the hallway to the bedroom, not knowing that his wife was always thinking of murdering him, and stripped down to his old fashioned underwear. It was summer in Idaho, but Joe wore the same kind of long johns every day, no matter what. He didn't care, and Millie didn't seem to mind. Of course, she didn't mind. She knew her place, and that's the way Joe liked it.

As Joe walked into the bathroom, he felt strange. He looked in the mirror and splashed some water on his face. He glanced down at the ugly vinyl floor that had been in the trailer since it was built. He stared back at his reflection. He looked pale and fragile, for the first time he could remember. He had always been strong and felt invincible most days. Yet today was different. Hell, the last five minutes were different. His arm was feeling funny. "Must've messed it up at work," he thought. Then, like a flash, a hot spear stabbed him in the heart. Or at least that's what it felt like. Joe was out of breath. He couldn't seem to catch it. He reached in the air with his massive hands for nothing. He reached again and grabbed the shower curtain to gain his balance, but it ripped down as he fell to the cold vinyl floor. He was gasping for air at this point, but it was to no avail. He was turning blue by now. He was struggling for his life, and he knew it.

Millie heard the commotion and frantically rushed to the bathroom. When she arrived, she found Joe barely holding on. She felt a rush of emotions, all mixed together, like a poor cocktail at the local bar. She saw her husband on the floor and dying. She knew it the second she saw him. And though she was his husband, every kick, every punch, every day he put her down and made her feel worthless all rushed through her head. In an instant, she felt guilt, and then it rushed away. She wanted him to die, hell, she had planned out his murder, and this was so much easier. He was laying on the floor trying his best to stay alive. He mustered, "Call the ambulance" as Millie just stood there. She simply said "No." She watched Joe die, naked on the floor. And she didn't really care one bit. She simply waited to make sure he had passed and quietly



and calmly called the ambulance.

"Hello, this is Millie Sherman on Old Oak Road in North Pointe. My husband Joe is dead." As she spoke, she almost felt a giddiness come over her. She finished with the 911 operator and sat down at the dining room table. She lit one of Joe's cigarettes inhaled deeply and thought to herself "I'm finally free." A million things raced through her mind. College. A new town. A new start. A real man. Everything was possible again. She would take Joe's insurance money and kiss North Pointe goodbye forever. She would never look back. No one would ever lay hands on her again. And no one would ever know what she went through to get to wherever she was going. A second of regret flashed through her mind, as she thought about falling in love with Joe all those years ago. But it quickly passed, as she thought about the beatings and the near rapes she had to endure.

"The fucker's dead. Good." She said to no one. A sly grin slipped upon her face and hung there until the ambulance arrived when she knew she would have to hide it.

