

The Wrong Path

By Heather Danielle Crabtree

Dominic sat in the living room, in a gray chair that once was white. His hands twitched, shaking the ashes of his burning cigarette onto the dingy brown carpet. Sweat beads rolled down his forehead, glistening in the fluorescent lights that were scattered disorderly around the room.

The pair sat across from him, tossing what they believed were the rewards to their lawless escapade in the air, not bothering to catch the green as it floated down to the floor. They were dressed in the latest style; same as Dominic, making their presence in this dilapidated house seem unreal.

“Man, I say we hit Europe, Amsterdam. We can sit back and smoke all the buds we want,” Mike dreamed before taking a long drag of his cigarette. He held the smoke in for a few seconds before exhaling tiny ringlet clouds that floated to the ceiling, a smile on his face.

“I’m down,” Chris said laughing, in a dream like fantasy of his own. He held his hand out, fist clenched toward Mike, who greeted the gesture with his fist hitting Chris’s, knuckle to knuckle. “What do you think, Dom? Amsterdam?”

The pair turned to their friend, their smiles fading as they watched his nervous twitch, lost in his own mind, a creepy display of madness. “Dom, man, are you all right?” Chris asked, cautiously speaking.

Dominic started rocking back and forth, his cigarette now down to the filter, and creating a nasty stench that filled the already pungent air. His eyes were filled with madness, a rage even preceding the most primitive man, tangled and twisted, frightening to those who dare tame the savage soul.

He stopped rocking, and stared into his friends eyes, piercing them with the daggers of ice that were once cool crisp pools of blue, refreshing to anyone who looked into them. “You’re all nuts. You just don’t get it do you? We ain’t going anywhere, just a little hole in the wall. Told when we get to eat, sleep, fighting for our existence, separate for eternity from all those we hold dear. I should of listened, I should of listened. But, no I go off with you two. My future’s gone, and so are yours.” Dominic pointed at them, before curling up, knees to chest. His white shirt stained with sweat. His eyes locked on his friends that now stood outraged in front of him. His cigarette long since dropped to the floor, smoldering a black patch on the carpet near the side of the chair. “The walls are closing in, they have eyes, always watching from now on. I should of listened, because they’re coming.”

Mike reached down grabbing Dominic by the shirt, yanking him to his feet, shaking him. “Get it together, they’ll never know it was us, so calm down. You’re giving off bad vibes, and I ain’t about to get caught because you’re paranoid.” He threw Dominic back in the chair and attempted to light another cigarette, his twitching hands delaying the command briefly.

Chris stared at his two friends, one then the other, panic rising up slowly. By the time he noticed his hands were shaking the wad of cash he held was already on the floor. “Come on you two, chill,” he pleaded, scratching his eyebrow; a nervous habit that always gave him away. “You’re making me nervous. This is our break, we’re getting’ out of here, but not if we keep this up!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Mike mumbled sarcastically, then sat back down, dust exploding out of the front of the cushion. He held his cigarette to his lips, inhaling deeply before slowly blowing exhaling the acrid cloud in Dominic’s direction.

Chris flopped back down on the couch, perspiration now streaking down his face. He pulled off his gray sweater and tossed it across the room, before he spoke. “Just be cool man, both ya. We’ll drive out of state tonight then book the flight out’ta here.”

Dominic slowly rolled his head to the side, before locking his eyes on his dearest friend. His lower lip twitched slightly, disgust and contempt seethed in every word from his mouth. “Don’t be a fool. It takes passports, visa’s. Besides, we won’t make it out of this room.” He tilted his head slightly down, sending a chill down Chris’s back, and slowly spoke, “The walls are closing in.”

Mike’s blood boiled with anger, barely able to control the urge to knock his friend around. “One more word and I swear I’m gonna take you apart,” he promised, teeth clenched

The smoky room was creating a nightmare world, real or a dream, either way explosive from the depths of the souls that had been captured, like a volcano building up pressure before it explodes, displaying its wrath to the outer world. Dark and deceiving, plotting, ignorant and knowing, they watched each other. Tick, tick, tick. Tick, tick, tick. Eyes meeting eyes, each with a hatred, a knowledge, and fear.

Dominic leaped from his chair, up to his feet, staring down his two withdrawn friends. “It all comes down,” he said bluntly, not looking at the wall behind the chair but knowing their undoing was creeping up the haggard wallpaper. “Doomed to life in living hell,” he seethed.

“I told you to shut it,” Mike screamed as he tackled Dominic, crashing over the chair, slamming into the wall that carried the living flame. Mike had him on the floor, between his legs, punching him repeatedly, lashing out in response to his own fear. Chris tried to pull his friends apart but only ended up flung back into a pile of moldy boxes in the corner by the wall and out of the fight, unconscious.

The fire rose up, covering the wall, scorching marks that gave the paper eyes, allowing it peer into the souls of the torment men it was engulfing, but still the violence didn’t stop. It raged on, closing in the room from the outside world. Trapping the trio’s souls in a fiery hell.

Dominic awoke in his cement cell, staring at the springs that support the mattress above him. His hands shaking, heart pounding, like every morning since he came here. *Why didn’t I listen*, he thought, while running his fingers across the bubbling burn scar that covered his right arm, a permanent reminder of walking the wrong path.