

Forced Entry

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Yeah, I wrote this shit. Blame no one else.

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## Dedications

Personal: This for my best friend, komrade, and love of my life. Yes, you.

Political: Dedicated to every oppressed woman and man who ever came up off their knees with their fist clenched. Respect.

Pot-litical: To all of those who grow da herb. Whether for profit, for medicine, or recreation... thank you.

## Forced Entry

### Part 1

Oh fuck!

I heard the text message arrive while I was driving home to Florida. Not on my regular phone, but on the little clamshell disposable that I'd hoped would never make a sound. Today it did. I drove a few miles further to the exit, and then pulled over into the parking lot of a large, big-box convenience store off of Interstate 10. It was the only thing at that exit; they couldn't attract any other civilization around it. Some places just look better through a rear view mirror.

Burgers, pizza, freshly made sandwiches (or so they said), frozen yogurts and fruit smoothies, gasoline, junk food, beer and cigarettes – all presented before us from multiple vendors with large, plastic logo signs everywhere. Hours of effort in expensive meetings went into discussing how to have the best eye-catching and noticeable signage. But finally, it's all provided in such large numbers as to be reduced to visual noise that begs to be ignored like the hum of a florescent light. The only difference between this big multi-acre commercial oasis in the US and a similar one in Europe is the noticeable absence of prostitution here. The flesh trade is apparently less open and probably less safe in the US. But then twenty-five percent of the population of the nation is bat shit crazy for Jesus and live, concentrated, in parts of the country – these parts. So the flesh trade is frowned upon 'round here. This is a place where the cops are just well-armed thugs... all rules, no justice. Welcome to Mississippi.

I pulled my other phone from my pocket and opened the mobile browser. Then I went to my special bookmarks and a secure browser session. I usually checked my rooms three or four times

per day, and then made any adjustments to the environment remotely in the evening, after dinner.

Wireless microvalves, connecting to an IP enabled controller, were the last pieces of my dream puzzle... this is cool, technical, geeky shit, folks. It was originally intended for lawn and landscape watering systems. The online description promised, "Make your grass grow from any computer in the world." Yes please, I'll have one of those. It took about three days of fucking around with it, and a particularly rough afternoon taking over fifty measurements of the flow rates, before it was ready to go. I did a final test run ten times to ensure that it was accurate, easy to control, and any variances in the process had been eliminated: eighteen seconds of flow from the "bloom" reservoir, twelve seconds from the "micro" reservoir every three days. Finish with things up with twenty seconds of reverse osmosis filtered water, injected with enough force to stir everything up. Then thirty minutes later, a pan and zoom from the camera onto the tri-level meter showing EC, PH, and temperature to ensure everything was fine. I'm a Lucas formula grower (Google it; I'll wait).

No, you're going to have to find this one on your own. It's out there to be found,, though. Yes, on the Internet. You'll know when you've hit the model because you'll be forced to buy one entire system before they'll sell you the IP controlled valves as a replacement for a failure. That's the only part you really want.

Wireless technology has presented options that have never been available before, and they're finally affordable to almost everyone. Before, I had to go to all four houses every two days to check the equipment and replenish the reservoirs. Now I only go by twice a week and cover them all in four days. I drop by each one with a bag of garbage for the waste management truck. There are timers on appliances like a television, a stereo, and the house lights in non-productive rooms like the living room, the bathroom, kitchen, etc. There's even a recorded dog bark for the

night; it's set for different times each night.

I've never had an alert before, except while I was testing the setup of the wireless IP cameras. A sense of panic tightened in my stomach. I'm a planner by nature and have been for years by profession. This was not planned.

Worst case: it would be the cops. I would get to watch them rip everything apart until they found the last camera in the house, listening to them congratulate themselves and slap each other's back as they wildly over estimated the street value of the cannabis. They'd throw numbers about like third graders trying to estimate the size of The Incredible Hulk.

I've considered that having an untraceable conversation with pigs could be entertaining. It would be a taunting conversation at first, enjoying the sight of frustrated cops who're unable to do what they do best: beating up suspects and arresting those who do not submit to their authority and rules. After a few minutes of teasing and verbal abuse, I would then mention explosives and end the conversation using the line: "Now, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die." Then all I'd have to do is sit back and watch a room full of cops climbing over each other. They would scramble for the door and the safety of outside as if they were inside a Dunkin Donuts when Al Qaeda attacked it. Charging toward the door they'll forget civility and pig camaraderie as they shove each other aside in the mistaken belief that their lives will end in the next nanosecond. Save that shit to a memory stick and anonymously post it to YouTube – definitely LMFAO.

The best case is that it's some sort of repairman standing there with a dumb-fuck look on his face. Better take a look, but be sure to turn off my microphone first.

Whether fortunately or un, it was a teenage kid, about five foot six inches tall, skinny, wearing a dark gray hoodie, baseball cap, and blue jeans. His clothes were dirty, and his hair was

closely cut. All the miss-cuts of someone cutting their own hair with regular scissors, but has never done it before were evident. No understanding of the geometry of cutting hair, except at the front, where it still hung long over his forehead and eyes, like the drawbridge of a castle, a final protective barrier. There was evidence of a good solid smack to the left jaw within the last two weeks: new white flesh rows, absent of the scabs, and lighter skin. His face was one of those that you've seen before. He had that soft gentle flesh that won't need a razor until his mid-twenties, if even then. This is the kid in school who's constantly accused of being gay, whether he is or not, just because of the gentleness of his features. He's the kind of kids we were fortunate enough not to have been.

A huge sense of relief came over me. No pigs, just some kid who'd stumbled into more bad shit than he'd be able to handle. It seemed a better outcome... but I wasn't sure about that, just yet. Assess circumstances, generate options, assign probabilities of success to them and identify milestone actions during implementation, measure success. The habits from the decades on the corporate plantation kicked in.

There were three cameras in each room. I had one in each of the two corners, on the top shelf of rack shelving, nestled between boxes. The third camera was located in the middle of a stack of plastic milk crates, looking like hauling containers ready for use in a quick escape. However, in fact, their only purpose is to hide the camera. Nothing leaves the house except in taped and fully sealed cardboard boxes. A crate where you can see the contents inside? Fucking worthless for transporting anything from a grow house, but still good to sit on... and conceal a camera.

The cameras are capable of 320 degrees horizontal rotation and 100 degrees vertical tilt rotation. The entire room is viewable. It was the same setup in every room in the house, except for the bathroom. There were two weatherproof, wireless cameras hidden in the front garden

shrubs and two in the backyard. They're inexpensive and I figured that the security was a good investment. I bought them in boxes of three.

Here, take a look - Cool shit, huh? And not too expensive, really, not when considering what's at stake. I turned on the microphone and adjusted the car seat slightly.

**Narrator:** We have a problem

The kid on the screen of my mobile phone leaps nearly a foot to the left when he hears my voice. He spins around in anticipation of seeing me standing behind him.

**Kid:** What the fuck?!

**Narrator:** Don't panic... and don't touch anything! I can see you and hear you. You won't be able to see me.

It took a second before he connected that I wasn't really physically present in the room and his whirling dervish routine stopped. Then he turned toward the source of my voice and bent forward to see the camera and the small speakers. He closely examined them.

**Kid:** Fuck me. Cool.

The panic response seems to have quickly left him. His young mind was racing, trying to understand all the possibilities of the deep shit hole he had fallen into. It was like playing an entire chess match in his head from opening to checkmate, a staggering assembly of possible moves, but only three basic outcomes. Over the next minute, the belligerent attitude he always shows the world returns. This attitude is always betrayed too soon by a keen sense of curiosity about everything.

**Narrator:** Our conversation cannot continue until you expand your vocabulary a little. Please go have a seat in the chair over at the table so we can have a discussion.

**Kid:** I ain't never seen so much fucking weed in my whole life! Never.

He shuffles over to the chair in a stupid gangsta style walk. He sits down in the chair with his legs crossed, one over the other, as if he were being interviewed by MTV about his new album and the stylish essentials of necessary bling. He looks at the square machine taking up a large part of the right side of the stainless steel table. He reads the knobs and raises the cover.

**Kid:** What is this?

**Narrator:** A vacuum-sealing machine. Seals the herb in airtight bags so it doesn't smell when it leaves here.

**Kid:** How much weed is here?

**Narrator:** This room produces between ten and twelve pounds per harvest, depending on the strain grown. THIS IS NOT A TOUR! We need to focus on the problem we have and how it's going to be resolved. You're not supposed to be here.

**Kid:** Yeah, well... you ain't supposed to be growin' fuckin' weed.

The cocky little bastard has now returned fully. His arms are folded across his chest and his chin is raised arrogantly, like Mussolini in some old documentary.

**Narrator:** Valid point. We have to decide what we're going to do about this.

**Kid:** How about I just take all your weed and tell you to "Fuck off!"

He gets up from the chair and begins to examine the room. His gait betrays the "living large" thoughts swimming in his head. He examines the two large plastic reservoirs, noticing the markings "Micro" and "Bloom" on them. He stops for a moment to think about the purpose of each. He closely examines the valves with the little antennas on them. He traces the lines from them down into the main reservoir.

**Narrator:** Stealing my herb is not an option for you.

**Kid:** Why not? You ain't 'round to stop me.



His eyes follow the supply lines from the reservoir to the tables. He walks over confidently to one of the plants. He pulls a large bud toward him and takes a big whiff.

**Kid:** Damn... this is some dank shit.

He leans over to examine the pots.

**Narrator:** Stealing it would present you with two problems. First, this herb has just started the final flush to get the chemical fertilizers out of it. If you take it right now, you'll lose fifteen to twenty percent of its value because it'll taste like shit and it's not cured. And I doubt you would know the right people to be able to get market value for it.

**Kid:** I know some people, asshole.

**Narrator:** Your second problem is that you would never make it out of there alive. You'd just be charred remains. Your bones will be found by the fire department. You don't really want to die running face first into a series of gas line explosions, trying to see if you're faster than the Internet. I can assure you that you're not. You'll just be another grower who died in a fire, although the youngest in a long time. This will be your fate about half a second from now. Is that your final answer?

His knees weaken and he reaches out to steady himself against the grow table. His sense of panic has returned. He looks toward the door as if he wants to run through it so badly, but his brain screams to him that it would be certain death to do so. His body tenses; he's on the verge of running.

**Kid:** No! NO! That is NOT my final answer! Fuck, fuck, fuck, damn, shit, FUCK!

There are no incendiary devices. It's just the break-in protocol shit I developed one late stoner night. At the time, it seemed that it would either work or it wouldn't – but it was worth a try. When starting from the assumption that the entire house is lost, any activities that may

change that outcome should be considered.

**Kid:** No, no, no please don't! Just give me a minute to think.

**Narrator:** Why should I do that?

**Kid:** Gimme a minute, for fuck's sake!

**Narrator:** You broke in here and have just threatened to rip me off of tens of thousands of dollars worth of ganja. Seems to me I would be better off to cut my losses and torch it all, including you.

**Kid:** No!

**Narrator:** It's a loss for me, but not a big one and less aggravation than trying to figure a way out of this mess that leaves you alive. I walk away; you don't.

**Kid:** No, no, no... fuck! NO WAY! Damn it, why do I always fall into this shit!?

**Narrator:** (Calmly) Perhaps you should sit down.

He returns to the chair. The gansta is gone and his shoulders are slumped. It's a death-camp inmate walk.

**Kid:** I'm sorry. You don't know how sorry I am. Really, really sorry. I was just looking for a place to sleep. That's all, honest. Fuck, fuck, fuck, damn, shit, FUCK!

His frustration is caused by his lack of options. He leans forward and lets his head slump forward into his hands like a grief victim trying to come to grips with a tragedy in a hospital waiting room.

**Narrator:** Why don't you sleep at home?

**Kid:** I don't live there no more.

**Narrator:** Why?

**Kid:** They foreclosed. Mom lost her teaching job and can't pay for it no more.

**Narrator:** What about your dad?

**Kid:** That asshole? He ain't been around for years. He can't even remember my birthday or Christmas. He's just a worthless motherfuckin' piece of shit, and I hate him.

His face shows both the anger and the remorse for the father that doesn't care about him.

**Narrator:** So you needed a place to stay, fair enough.

He looks directly into the camera located near the speakers.

**Kid:** C'mon, I won't tell a soul. Promise.

**Narrator:** What's your name?

**Kid:** Taylor. (A second after he speaks his name, he wishes he hadn't.)

**Narrator:** Taylor, today will either be the luckiest day of your life or the last. It all depends on you. For the next few minutes, I want you to concentrate carefully. Forget your tough guy attitude for now. That results in an outcome you don't want. Do you understand me perfectly?

He nods his understanding.

**Narrator:** Taylor, you've broken into one of my houses. This isn't supposed to happen. But despite all the planning, sometimes things like this happen anyway. In this business there are no outsiders, only us and the cops. We observe simple rules. Rule one is simple: TELL NO ONE. Rule two: You talk; you die. Rule three: Only the paranoid survive. Do you understand?

**Taylor:** I ain't never snitched on anyone since I was seven years old, and the kid I told on beat the shit outta me afterward.

**Taylor:** What rules do the cops follow?

**Narrator:** None

**Narrator:** I have invested a considerable amount of time building this. I have grow systems, security. This entire house costs money to setup, but the time it took is the investment that I most

want to protect. This was my first house ever (a lie) and it means something to me.

Taylor squirms around in the seat. His curiosity has regained the upper hand in its battle with his panic response.

Behind me, another big eighteen-wheeler pulls into the parking lot of the roadside oasis. I watch it in the rear-view mirror, and then look back at my phone. There are more important matters at the moment.

**Taylor:** Can I smoke a joint of this shit?

**Narrator:** If you want. Look in the box on the third shelf of the rack to your left. Choose the one marked Satori. You'll find some rolling papers in the box.

He gets up from the chair, removes the box from the rack, places it on the floor, and opens it.

**Taylor:** What's Satori?

**Narrator:** It's a Sativa strain that enhances creativity and thought processes. but without the Sativa paranoia.

**Taylor:** Fuck me. OK.

He removes a mason jar containing just under a half ounce of buds. It's my personal stash for when I'm working in the house and want to get a buzz, but still need to be functional and get my work done.

Satori is the kind of strain that will give the smoker an excellent, strong, and thorough buzz, yet with complete functionality retained. This is the herb to smoke before class because you'll enjoy it more. It's the herb you smoke before going to the art museum or try painting or drawing or writing poetry. It's been my daytime smoke of choice for the last year, and it's easy to grow. Out and about, going through the daily routines, trip to the bank, the big-box hardware stores, interactions with others, not a problem – Satori is your strain. Totally baked and no one ever

knows. Even driving, something I never advise others to do while high, is a pleasant and easy task after smoking Satori. There's an Iolite portable vaporizer full of Satori in my coat pocket most days and right now.

He sniffs the contents of the jar and a smile comes to his face. He rolls a fat one, lights it, and takes several large puffs. Billows of smoke come from his exhale. After about the fourth really big hit he can feel the strong effect starting. He relaxes some, leaning back in the chair. His shoulders begin to gradually lower with his tension level. For someone in deep shit, he's smiling.

**Taylor:** (in a fake redneck accent) Damn fine stuff you grow here, mister. Wow!

He continues to take large hits from the joint.

**Narrator:** Thank you. I had to grow almost fifty plants of this strain before I found the right one to be the mother plant. You're smoking the best Satori I have ever found.

**Taylor:** (normal voice) This is definitely some good shit. The best I ever had. HIGH AS FUCK and not paranoid. We don't get stuff like this around the people I know. Ain't no fancy names. It's just weed. If it gets me high, that's as good as it gets. This stuff is awesome!

**Narrator:** Back to our problem. How old are you ... and don't lie to me? I'm not some chick you're trying to fuck and you aren't trying to buy alcohol. Honesty is the only way you'll stay alive today, understood?

He hesitates for a moment. His shoulders move up again.

**Taylor:** Seventeen... and the drinking age in Mississippi is twenty-one.

Fuck! A minor. I was hoping for a higher answer, considering one possible outcome.

**Narrator:** Can you prove that?

Taylor reaches into his front pocket, removes his wallet, and then holds his driver's license a few inches in front of the camera next to the speakers. I hit the image capture button on the

control panel of the software. He hasn't lied about his name or age.

**Narrator:** Good, thank you.

Behind me, a police cruiser pulls into the oasis and up to the front of the box store. I watch this through the rear-view mirror. All the spaces are full, so rather than park over on the side and walk fifty feet to the store, the police car quickly whips into a handicapped parking space. Thug life (with badges). Assholes. To anyone observing, I just look like a middle aged business suit sitting in his BMW, having a conversation on his phone about some business negotiation and who's parked over on the side for quiet. Technically accurate, I guess.

**Narrator:** How long have you been on your own?

**Taylor:** A couple of months now.

**Narrator:** How are you doing?

**Taylor:** It was hard the first two weeks. Not much to eat. The only choices I could find were either rob people, give blow jobs, or steal shit and try to sell it.

**Narrator:** Which did you choose?

**Taylor:** Steal stuff. But it ain't always easy to sell.

**Narrator:** No it isn't. Successful thieves are rare – except in government and business.

**Taylor:** I tried robbing some lady in a mall... grabbed her purse and ran. But she started screaming. Bitch held on to it forever before she let it go, and then I dropped her fucking wallet. Mall security almost caught me, but I broke free from that fat ass and then there was no catching me. (Pride smiles on his face).

**Narrator:** Good outcome for you, even if you didn't get the money. Consider yourself lucky.

**Taylor:** Can't bring myself to snatch a purse from some elderly lady. She'd be a lot fuckin' easier to take it from for sure. But every time I get ready to do it – to snatch it – all I can think

about is how she'll probably break something if she falls. It stops me every time at the very last second. I am such a fuckin' pussy!

**Narrator:** Were you planning to steal from here?

**Taylor:** Mostly I was looking for a place to sleep, but was gonna take anything worth anything when I left in a couple of days.

**Narrator:** I appreciate your honesty. Where's your mother?

**Taylor:** She's living at my aunt's house with my little sister, Gina. They don't get along, but it was either that or Jesus barracks.

**Narrator:** Jesus barracks? Do you mean a homeless shelter?

**Taylor:** Yeah, crazy homeless people, junkies, and the down-on-their-luck mixed together with a lot of Jesus zombies running the place. The zombies are nice to you until they determine that you won't join their church or follow their rules. Then they look for excuses to throw you back onto the street.

**Narrator:** That's not very Christian of them.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I don't remember Jesus preaching that either.

He takes a final pull from the joint and sets the second half on the table-top.

**Taylor:** I would've gone with her to the barracks, but I ain't goin' to that bitch's house, not while that fucking asshole husband of hers is around. I hate that sumabitch.

**Narrator:** Why, what's wrong with him?

**Taylor:** He gets drunk on Friday nights and starts slapping my aunt around and doing nasty things to her sexually in front of whoever's around. Stuff that is supposed to be done in private, you know... like fingering her.

**Narrator:** In front of other people?

**Taylor:** Yep, then he makes them sit near the front row of the church on Sundays, all pious and shit, like he's some perfect little fucking Christian. I've seen him do that kinky shit before.

**Narrator:** That's wrong on so many levels.

**Taylor:** Yup, when I tried to stop him, he hit me and threatened to make me join in too. Said he'd make me his mouth slave. Fuck that shit. I'm better off out here on my own. He makes my mom suck him off every morning or else he'll throw them out.

**Narrator (Bullshit alarm)**

**Narrator:** That is bad. Repressive beliefs always cause weird things to happen.

**Taylor:** Yeah, just wish my little sister didn't have to see that shit. Don't want her to grow up thinking that it's a woman's place to let her husband smack her around and shit. Don't like her being exposed to all that phony religious bullshit either. Some lessons are too big to unlearn.

**Narrator:** How old is your sister?

**Taylor:** Eleven. She's only my half-sister, but I don't make no distinction.

**Narrator:** That's good.

**Taylor:** Mom shacked up with a really nice guy for years until he went broke about a year ago. Then she threw him out. He's the daddy.

**Narrator:** Until he was broke?

**Taylor:** Yeah, I tried to convince Mom not to throw him out. He really loved her. But she wouldn't have any of it. If he couldn't give her the stuff we needed, then he had to leave. She told me she was just doing it in our best interest. But that is just bullshit if you ask me.

**Narrator:** Why do you think that?

**Taylor:** Mom just likes stuff. She's a real consumer. I'm not. Mom's idea of happiness is a larger Wal-Mart.



**Narrator:** That's a shame. Possessions aren't as important as people.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I don't like that much stuff. The fascination wears off the more you have, like the twelfth cookie from the box just ain't that great.

**Narrator:** That's called diminishing marginal utility. You said your mom was a teacher before... where did she teach?

**Taylor:** Kingston Elementary. After my dad left, when I was little, we lived with my grandfather while my mom went to school to finish her degree and become a teacher.

**Narrator:** Sounds like a good plan. Education is always the smartest move.

**Taylor:** Those were the best times. Grandpa was a tough old man, lots of rules. But he loved us. And he never spanked me. He fed us and he made Mom do her homework. He ain't with us no more.

**Narrator:** Sorry to hear that. Sounds like a good man.

**Taylor:** Yeah, he was. Mom said the state budget cut backs to pay off the banksters hit us, and that's why she lost her job.

**Narrator:** That's happening all over the country. The wrong people are paying the price, as usual.

**Taylor:** But we already live in a poor state. Budget cuts in Mississippi is like trying to rob a naked corpse.

**Narrator:** Forty-ninth or fiftieth in most categories.

**Taylor:** But, you know, sometimes when I get high, I think that it shouldn't be as hard as it is for us. But I can never figure out how to change it. It's like we are playing cards in a game where everyone else is cheating, 'cept us, so we can't win.

**Narrator:** That's about the size of it.

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