BILL'S VARIETY
BY
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"Open the Goddamn safe!" Larry said, holding his gun steadily.

He was of average height and weight and a few years passed middle age, the store owner he was holding up was elderly with white hair and liver spotted hands, that were fluttering like birds as he held them up to show he was harmless though he shook his head no. His wrinkly face was wet with tears but his eyes were hostile.

"He said open the fuckin safe!" said Eddie who came charging from the front of the cell phone store, keeping watch of the door.

Eddie was a short, pudgy Italian; his steps were loud and furious as was his barking command. His fist was clenched around his own pistol as stepped passed Larry and pushed the elderly Asian man to the floor.

"Open the fucking safe, you fuckin gook!" Eddie said through his teeth spraying hot spit on the upturned face of the geezer who held up his hands.

"Shi de, shi de...yes, yes Huhokay-huhokay, I open."

The store keeper was sobbing as he scurried on his hands and knees to the floor safe behind the store register.

"Yeah that's right you fuckin slope head, empty the whole thing." said Eddie.

"Man chill the fuck out and go back to watching the door before Mooney gets spooked and drives off." Larry said, looking wide eyed at the stacks of cash piling up.

"Hey fuck you Larry."

"What did you say you short fuck?" Larry asked, giving Eddie a cold look.

"I said fuck you, if it weren't for me you'd still be asking Fu Manchu to open the safe."

"Hey I was the one who-OW MOTHER FUCKER!"

There was a sharp searing pain in Larry's stomach. He looked down and saw his black pullover hoody had a vertical cut which had blood dribbling out. Larry fell backwards against the wall still

holding his pistol. His stomach felt hot and wet, Larry pulled up his hoody and saw it was a shallow cut at worse, the old gook had a Bowie knife hidden in the safe and had tried to gut him while he was arguing with Eddie, the elderly man held up the bloody blade defiantly as he screamed in Chinese.

Eddie swore as he aimed his pistol and fired three bullets in the store keeper's stomach while standing over the counter. The old man let out a howl and flailed on the floor and began scurrying away as Eddie fired twice more but missed by inches, he snarled and went to climb over the counter when a loud shrill alarm began to ring out all around them. Following that was the sound of screeching tires, Mooney had bailed.

"Fuckin pussy Mooney, quick grab the money!" said Eddie.

Before Larry could do anything Eddie had scooped up most of the stacks of cash and leered at the far end of the counter as he fired another shot.

"I hope you bleed out under there you slanty eyed cockroach!"

Larry figured Eddie took a few bumps of coke beforehand, he could tell by the white crud on the corners of his mouth and the way his nostrils flared with every other breath he took.

"Come on' Lar we gotta book it!"

"Hold on a sec' I'm cut a little!" he said, pushing himself off the wall as Eddie went running through the door, knocking it open so hard it hit the brick wall outside shattering the glass on the door in a loud explosion.

"Oh shit Lar someone's shootin!"

Larry ran after him with a burn in his midsection.

"No one's shootin you fuckin dick head!" Larry said, stepping outside while Eddie was halfway across Broad street, a large four lane city street.

"Come on man, you're...."

Before Eddie could finish talking he ran in front of a Septa bus going over forty miles an hour. Larry heard screams and felt his stomach turn over as he watched Eddie go flying across the street and land head first into a fire hydrant leaving a piece of skull and bloody brain matter on a jutting

bolt, the sight of blood dribbling out through the new hole in the back of his head made Larry physically ill. The bus had come to a screeching halt as screams from inside the bus could be heard as well as horns of cars in the other lanes.

"Hey what's going on?" someone shouted from nearby.

Larry made a run for it down the nearest corner, turning on a street called Porter. He knew this street a little, he wasn't from this neighborhood in South Philly but he'd ran around here enough times growing up to know where to avoid. He was walking slowly, it was night time, the street lights were on, it was cold and the sidewalks were empty so he moved fast but didn't run, though he was anxious to call Mooney and see where the fuck he ran off to, he took out his phone and felt his stomach drop.

"Fuck me."

Apparently his phone had taken the brunt of the old gook's knife, the screen was shattered by the blade. He had to find a phone. Larry didn't know anyone in the neighborhood, not anybody he trusted at least but he was pretty sure there was still a payphone at Broad and Shunk which was only a block away. Upon arriving though he saw that it had finally been removed.

"I didn't have change anyway, didn't even get any cash from the robbery." Larry snarled as he pounded his fist into his palm. "Eddie you fat fuckin hot head."

He gasped as he heard the whoop sound of a police siren followed by flashing blue and red lights only a block or so away. Larry quickly but discreetly walked down Shunk street with row houses on his left and lines of cars parked curbside on his immediate right which made Larry feel safer for the time being. He needed to hide.

"No, I need a phone so I can find Mooney and kill him."

Okay fine but where....the whoop of a siren made his heart jump then freeze, he looked up and found himself at the cross streets of 15th and Shunk. Directly across the street from him was an Ice Cream Shop called Millie's that was closed for the night, beside him was a corner store with a modest white hanging sign bracketed over the door which said Bill's Variety, on the door itself was a sign which declared the store as open and Larry felt relief wash over him.

There was no bell over the door announcing his arrival but he hardly noticed as the soft yellow lighting from the ceiling fixtures and open space of the store made him feel easier still. The walls were fake wood panel and adorned with various panoramic pictures of Philadelphia taken from high above, one showed Lincoln Financial Field at night filled to capacity during an Eagles game, another picture was a side view of old Veterans Stadium taken during sunset. A third showed

another night time picture, this one of the Crown Lights at the PECO building with the message 'Happy Birthday McCusker Bros.' on its illuminated marquee.

There was also a variety of maps decorating the walls, a lot were of South Philly, but there were more than a few maps showing other parts of the city. The shelves lining the walls were filled evenly and neatly in general sections which had glossy, bright signs hanging over each section: house & kitchenwares, games & toys, bed & bathroom. Larry walked slowly into the store looking for a cashier or stock boy. He stood still for a moment, worried, what if this place was closed and they forgot to lock the door? They might come back any minute and think he broke in and call the cops and the...no, no the shuttered gate to cover the front door was still up and the sign on the door said open so he was covered and nobody was calling the cops on him.

"Right, right. Just relax and browse until they kick you out."

Yeah, that was the ticket. Just browse until it's time to close shop and ask if it would be okay to use their phone. Tell them it's local and you'll be on your way. Easy peasy, just browse and be cool.

"Be cool." he said to himself walking over to the games & toys shelves, making sure he wasn't bleeding and the safety of his gun was on as it sat in the pouch pocket of his hoody.

There were a dozen board games on one shelf which was 8 or 9 different versions of Monopoly. A game he hated, he loved Mouse Trap when he was a kid but his dumb ass step sister was always losing the pieces to the traps. Larry sneered, still feeling irritated about her lazy ass but it was a small irritation, she was as bored as he was growing up in that little apartment in Grays Ferry with rabbit ears on a 13 inch TV and 3 versions of Monopoly.

He did have a Game Boy though, he'd stolen it from a four eyed little faggot wearing a uniform from St Monica's who was playing it in front of Marconi Park while waiting for either a bus or a friend. Larry didn't know, all he saw was a kid with a pinched face and noodle arms who wasn't paying attention. The Game Boy was another thing of his that Carol was always begging to get her careless hands on once she was too old for Mouse Trap and too scatterbrained for Monopoly.

On occasion he'd lend it to her and most times she returned it promptly if a little ignorantly when asked. Not the worst step sister in the world, she'd never ratted him out when he replaced her old man's vodka with water or when he snuck in after curfew.

"Pillow People." Larry said with a laugh when he saw the familiar plushie with its storm cloud head and lightning bolt eyebrows, Carol had had this exact one.

"Did you find something you like?" said a voice from behind him.

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Larry almost dropped the stuffed toy as he turned and grimaced in pain and moaned quietly as he aggravated his injured stomach. The man who spoke looked alarmed and came around from the counter to assist him. The man looked older than him, probably in his sixties, he was dressed in jeans and a black button down work shirt with a white cotton T-shirt beneath, his hair was brunette and gray and cut short, his face was of deep concern.

"I'm fine," Larry said quickly then followed it up with what he hoped sounded like a genuinely embarrassed laugh . "I pulled a groin playing basketball at the park this morning."

"Oh, that sounds terrible. Would you like to sit down?"

"I'm fine. You kind of snuck up on me there. Where'd you come from?"

"Through the door to my apartment." he said pointing past the far side of the picture of Lincoln Financial Field.

There was indeed a door with a dull and varnished brass knob made of wood similar in color to the faux stained wood panels. With the light above being reflected off the glass protecting the picture and his bad eyes Larry realized how easily he missed seeing that door.

"I need fuckin glasses," Larry said with a chuckle. "but yea I found something I like er well I guess I found something my sister would like, this Pillow People plushie was her most favorite thing when she was little."

"Is that what they were called? I couldn't remember for the life of me what their names were but I remember the commercials."

"Yeah me too, my sister had this exact one when we were kids. She was always carrying it around, we didn't have Nintendo or Cable TV growing up, so this thing was like her best friend." Larry said quickly as if embarrassed.

"Hey I get it."

Larry worried about the conversation getting personal so he pivoted.

"I was really digging the picture of The Linc you got here and that one of the Vet with sun setting behind it, that's a real stunning shot."

"It was taken the day before The Vet got imploded. If you really like them, they're both for sale."

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"Nah, man too big for my place."

"Oh, well I understand. Please feel free to look around. I don't close for another ten minutes..."

The store keep stopped talking when he saw the flash of red and blue lights, he said excuse me and got up to go to the door. He passed Larry who had the sudden urge to take out his pistol and clobber the man in the back of the head, he had the gun out to do it but he resisted the urge at the last second and put his gun back. Stay cool, don't get heavy unless you have too, you still need to call Mooney or someone to come get you. Yeah, just keep bullshitting the guy, ask to use his phone and if he says no you pistol whip his ass and take it but only as a last resort.

"Something's going on around the block. I see lights flashing and the Action News van just rolled by." Bill said over his shoulder as he stood at the door.

Through the show window Larry could see all the way down to Broad street from the angle. He could see the reflection of flashing red and blue lights against the buildings lined there. The store keeper was leaning out the door of his shop looking on with eyes narrowed and brow furrowed in either disappointment or disgust, Larry guessed the latter.

Larry expected him to start complaining about how shitty Philly was and how criminals and niggers and spics had it easy and that Trump would save people like him and Larry from being taxed to death, but he didn't. Bill just sighed and went back around the counter to mind his register. The silence was heavy and Larry felt it come over him like a wet blanket and didn't feel as anxious to ask to use the phone. It was heavy in here but it would be a lot heavier out there if he couldn't get in touch with anyone and he had to walk through the neighborhood.

Eddie was dead sure but he would take the same rap as Eddie would have for murdering that old gook. Even if the chink lived they could still call it attempted murder and put him away for ten years. He missed being a kid and running to Eddie's house to hide from the cops, not that that always worked, especially when Eddie spent two years in juvenile hall in some place upstate.

"Fell off the roof and landed right in front of that pig."

"I'm sorry did you ask me something?" asked the store keeper.

"What," said Larry "no, I mean yeah, can I uh borrow your phone and call my ride? My phone broke earlier."

Larry briefly held up his phone to show its damaged screen.

"Oh well of course," the store keeper said taking a phone from his pocket and unlocking the screen before giving to him. "my name's Bill by the way."

"I'm Larry. Thanks, Bill. I'll be real quick."

"Take your time, find yourself a ride. I hate it when my phone breaks, the screens are so damn sensitive and I'm always cracking my screen, I'm addicted to Candy Crush and get carried away. But you know what, I found an electronics store around the corner that repairs phone screens. They're the best at it and they don't charge very much."

"That a fact?"

Larry barely heard Bill once he had the phone, the dial pad was on the screen but his fingers didn't move. He didn't know Mooney's number, he didn't even know Eddie's number. Who the fuck memorized phone numbers anymore. He wracked his brain for any number he could remember.

"Carol." he muttered to himself.

She'd had the same phone number since before Smart Phones and when pay phones were still plentiful. He quickly dialed and after a solitary ring there was a synthesized female voice telling him the number was not in service. He double checked the number and called again, one ring and then the AI lady.

"Fuckin Carol pay your God damn phone bill." he said.

Unless she finally did change her number, she'd been talking about it for a few years now but especially since the last election when she was getting spammed with campaign calls from both presidential candidates which reached a quarterly hour basis during the month of October. He tried to think of another number to call but he drew a blank. Then his face lit up with relief, Facebook messenger, Carol's entire social life was Facebook.

Larry backed out of the dial pad and went to the phone's home screen looking for the Facebook icon or Facebook Messenger. He didn't see either and looked over at the store keep.

"Hey Bill, are you on Facebook?"

"No, not me myself I don't have any social media accounts but I had a Facebook page for the store however my password was stolen and I've had a very difficult time starting a new account because...."

"Okay, okay I get it." Larry said, rolling his eyes with a huff.

Bill grimaced but smiled.

"I only wish my car wasn't in the shop or I'd give you a ride myself." Bill said, trying to sound upbeat.

"Thanks." Larry said sincerely as he handed back the phone.

Larry was stuck here for the moment, he expected to at least be able to leave a message with Carol but she was either delinquent on her bill or changed her number. So now what?

"Is it far?" asked Bill.

The question caught Larry off guard and he didn't know how to answer.

"Where you have to go I mean. Is it far?" asked Bill.

"Grays Ferry."

He was doing his best to keep out personal details so he said the neighborhood he grew up in, he and Carol moved out of there back in the Summer of 1995 about the time he got his first blow job and Carol got her first ear piercing.

"Oh that is a bit of a hike."

"Yeah." Larry said with a tight smile as he aggravated his cut again when he clenched the fist hiding in his hoody pouch.

"Better than two miles I think. Isn't it?"

"Yeah. I guess. I don't know." Larry said feeling a coat of sweat breakout on his forehead.

He closed his eyes as his midsection burned slightly. Larry felt anger rise, blaming his hot headed but now dead friend Eddie for his injury.

"It'll be a long walk with the cold."

"Yeah no shit!" Larry said in harsh bark, giving the man a glare.

The air was thick with Larry's anger, Bill was wide eyed and looked startled. Be cool, Larry said to himself.

"I'm sorry," Larry said quickly. "this groin pull has me worked up cause my sister was supposed to pick me up. I don't know if you ever pulled a groin but it makes walking painful."

"Oh geez no wonder you're upset," Bill said with a face that was crimson with embarrassment. "you said about the groin pull and having to walk. I mean look at you, you're sweating and I was about to ask if you want the heat turned down but it's because you're in pain. Come on and sit, I'm calling you a cab."

Larry was alarmed, most taxi drivers had police scanners in their cabs and in this neighborhood they would either extort you or turn you in to the police or worse yet they turn you in to the mob like the Letuzzi crime family. if you held up one of their joints. Eddie assured him that gook phone store wasn't protected but even now Larry still had his doubts, if nothing else the old gook was a tough bastard.

"No man, it's cool."

"Why not? You're drenched in sweat and you've barely moved. Do you really think you can walk?" Bill asked.

"It's just that..." Larry said in a high voice.

"If it's the money don't worry."

"No it's not that..."

It was that, and the fact calling a taxi would be a one way ticket to jail or to the bottom of the Delaware River. Plus grinding down his ever dwindling patience was Bill trying to force the issue of calling a cab. Larry's hand found the grip of his pistol and squeezed it as Bill started up again.

"Well look at least let me call and see..."

"Look, just forget about the cab alright." Larry said in a tight but civil voice.

Before Bill could respond a police siren suddenly whooped which made Larry gasp and crouch. Bill gave him a suspicious look that made Larry pull out his pistol. He put his hands up calmly and watched the pistol closely.

"I guess they're looking for you."

"Just shut the fuck up. I'll beat you half to death and shoot you in the dick before I let the cops take me in. Got it?"

"Okay."

"I'm not here to rob you, I just need a place to hide out until the heat dies down. So we're gonna sit tight right here until those red and blue lights I see over them roofs stop flashing, then I'll be Audi 5000 like they used to say when I was a kid."

"You won't kill me as long as I don't move or call the police?" asked Bill with a pained expression.

"I'm no killer," said Larry holding the pistol with a solid and steady hand. "don't make me have to kill ya. Okay, Bill?"

"Can I sit?" Bill asked, pointing to the chair.

"Go ahead, gimme your phone and if you get up without askin I'll put one right in your fuckin skull."

Bill handed over his phone and sat down with his hands folded on the counter and a neutral expression. Larry glanced around the store, looking at the corners and on either side of the entrance to the store.

"You do good business?" asked Larry.

"Uh, I suppose." Bill said cautiously, making Larry laugh.

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"I told ya Bill I'm not here to rob ya. I'm just a curious guy by nature. Seriously, I bet you get a lot of assholes in here shopping. Spending lots of green."

Bill could only shrug.

"I dunno Bill. You seem nice, maybe a little gullible but I don't think you're an idiot. You don't have any cameras in here or mirrors at the far corners there, you don't even have an alarm for this place. You have a roll down gate for the front door but not for the big ass show windows. I see all this and I know I need to ask you, where is it?"

"Where's what?" asked Bill.

"Don't act dumb Bill."

Bill's expression was bewilderment. Larry pulled the hammer on his pistol.

"Where's the gun? Anybody who runs a store in this neighborhood has mirrors, alarms, cameras and shutters on every fuckin window if you ain't got that then that means you're packing heat."

"I don't have a license..."

"Yeah neither do I dickhead."

"I just meant I don't have a gun or cameras for the store because this building is owned by people that take care of security."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Larry asked.

Bill grimaced like he bit a lemon and smiled an awkward smile.

"Well it's a family business, a family that on occasion has its members and associates on the front page of The Daily News."

"The Letuzzi Family owns this building?" Larry asked as the world around him lost color.

"Not officially of course but I'm sure you get what I mean."

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Larry felt his stomach burn like it had been scalded with hot water, he glimpsed his stomach again and was relieved to see the cut was no longer bleeding. Larry closed his eyes and leaned against the wall, forgetting about the last fifteen minutes and wishing he was dead. Of all the stores he had to hide in, he picked one under the thumb of the Italian mafia.

"Look Larry you said you weren't going to rob me right? So just sit tight until you get a ride or the cops leave the neighborhood."

"Why are you helping me? I pulled a gun on ya and threatened to shoot ya in the dick."

"Well you said you're no killer, I imagine if I called the police that would probably change real quick and if I were to tell anybody in the 'family' about you being here like this well that wouldn't end well for either of us."

"Did they have a piece of that gook phone store down the block? The Letuzzi's I mean."

"Is that who you robbed?"

Larry responded with a snarl and raised his pistol, Bill held up his hands sounding alarmed and shaken as he answered.

"No, they didn't, they didn't care for the old man who owns the place, I've heard people in the neighborhood say he's a little crazy. He carries a big knife with him everywhere he goes."

"No shit" Larry said while he grimaced in pain. "fuck my gut hurts. Okay well since neither of us wants trouble we hang out for a little and we don't tell anybody nothing. Got it?"

He held up the gun again, Bill nodded with cautious wide eyes. Larry sat on a display table that was mostly bare and allowed him a direct view of the window. He sat looking out the window but making sure to stay out of view himself, he would take occasional glimpses at Bill who was twiddling his thumbs patiently.

After what felt like an hour Larry looked at Bill's phone but saw less than ten minutes has passed, Larry looked out the window grinding his teeth as he waited, Bill had stopped twiddling his thumbs and was resting his head on his hand while playing with a neon green fidget spinner in the other.

"Fuckin pigs, don't they have other shit to do?" Larry said, stomping away to the back of the store, ignoring the burn in his midsection.

He turned sharply back but Bill sat quietly though he watched cautiously. Larry found himself less worried about Bill and more worried about the cops while minding the cut on his stomach. Fuck time always stands still when you're in hurry.

Like that night during the Summer of 94 when he and Eddie tried to break into a storage shed in the Girard Estates part of South Philly where the upper class people lived if they weren't ready for New Jersey. On a dead end street in a backyard they found a shed with a narrow window that showed a couple of brand new Huffy bikes hanging on a wall. Eddie was working the lock when they saw a cop car rolling down the street fast but with no lights or sirens.

"Fuck man it's the five oh!" said Eddie.

"Scale the wall, get on the roof."

The shed was about six feet tall and they were still just teenagers so they had to help each other get on the roof which they discovered much to their horror was made of tin and created a loud and horrendous noise when stepped on. And the walls were made of cinder blocks that looked to be crumbling but they risked it and stood on the edge teetering on the wall. They crouched which was easy for Larry who was skinny but Eddie had a big gut even then and struggled to sit on his haunches.

By the time the pig got out of his patrol car to oink around, Eddie was having leg cramps and panting like a beaten dog. Eventually he lost his balance and fell off and almost right on top of the pig, at that point Larry used the distraction to leap off to the other side unseen and escape. Larry chuckled and Bill looked over at him worriedly.

"It's nothing," he said with a wave of his hand. "I was thinking about old times. I hated being a kid but I miss it too. I could hide at Ed....uh my friend's place if the cops were lookin for us, his mom didn't take shit from the five oh. But he got busted red handed robbing some rich asshole and got sent to juvie so I'd have to run to mom's and hide but she didn't like that too much."

That pissed him off to still think about it. On occasion though Mom would begrudgingly allow him to hide at her apartment on East Passyunk, years later he'd help take care of her during her last few months living there as she slowly died from emphysema. The landlord gave Carol mom's apartment which was fine by him, he didn't wanna sleep in the same room his mom died in, that was too fuckin weird for him.

"Moms are tough like that." Bill said.

"Yeah, she was tough when it came to emphysema."

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"She was a fighter?"

"Yeah." Larry said, looking away for a moment.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah." Larry said irritably.

He looked at the phone again and felt his irritation increase. Barely fifteen minutes since he'd come in here, the cops would be oinking around the neighborhood for at least a couple of hours. His stomach knotted at the thought of being stuck here half the night.

"Fuck!" he said aiming the pistol at the ceiling as he bit down on his fist.

"Please Larry just relax," Bill said, plaintively holding up his hands. "we can sit however long you need. You can't get yourself worked up."

"Whatever Bill." Larry said, gripping his pistol until his fingers hurt.

"I'm serious if you get yourself worked up and stressed out you're gonna hurt yourself or me. I understand the cops are after you but you're working yourself into a paranoid frenzy. Every sound you hear is gonna be a police siren that'll make you jump and every shadow you see is gonna be a cop that'll make you shoot and kill one of us, so please take a chill pill as the kids back in your day said."

Larry closed his eyes and gently rubbed the tender area of his stomach with a grimace. He just wanted to be home in his apartment on Tree street stealing his neighbors WiFi and watching Netflix. Just be cool, remember? The cops would leave, he'd use the side streets when walking as he slowly worked his way northward and by midnight at the latest he'd be laying on his sofa nursing his cut by eating a pint of Ben & Jerry's Chunky Monkey with rainbow jimmies and having a Stranger Things marathon.

"I..." Larry gasped and stood up off the table and held the pistol loosely in Bill's direction.

"What is it?" asked Bill who put his hands up.

"The door?!"

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The door to his apartment had moved. When Bill pointed it out to him it was on the far side of the Lincoln Financial Field picture, it was now on the other side, sitting between that and the sunset picture of Veteran's Stadium. Bill looked to his right without hesitation at the door then back at Larry looking nervous.

"What? It's the door to my apartment I told you that a few moments ago." Bill said timidly.

"I know that you mother fucker why did it move!? How did...why...how the shit did the door move?"

Bill went from looking nervous to constipated. He held his hands high but didn't budge from his chair as Larry held his pistol on him.

"Larry just relax okay, can't you put the gun away?"

"Fuck you."

"Come on Larry I won't move from the chair just put the gun in your pocket, I'd have to get around the counter if I wanted to come at you and I sure as heck aren't jumping over the counter at my age."

Larry looked at the door. It was over on the far left wasn't it? Then again if it was what did that mean, that the door was moving or was it like Bill said a moment ago? He was working himself into a paranoid frenzy waiting for the cops to split as each minute seemed to last an hour while his stomach began to itch and burn from healing.

He took another glimpse to see if the cut was infected, it was gummy and dribbling at the ends, he'd been cut less than twenty minutes ago. Would there be signs of an infection that soon? He saw bits of cut material from the hoody and shirt were stuck in some areas of his serrated flesh, the sight sickened him and he lowered his hoody as he was struck by another burning in his midsection. Well he had an aloe plant at home that Carol gave him, he could put some fresh aloe on the cut once he cleaned out the lint from the wound.

"Yeah you're right, fuckin shit I'm losing my mind." Larry said putting the gun in his hoody pouch and burying his face in the palms of his damp and sweaty hands.

He felt his heart race to the point it hurt his chest and he suddenly wished he could talk to Carol. Sure she was his little sister and a step sister at that but despite her poor choice in men and horrible eating habits which resulted in her weighing nearly 200 pounds and suffering from type 2 diabetes, she was always there to pick up the phone and try to help him out.

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"Why don't you try and call your sister again." said Bill.

Larry took the phone out but put it back in his pocket.

"No, she changed her number and forgot to tell me."

That upset him a little since he just saw her last Sunday and she didn't say anything. Larry knew though that Carol was always an airhead, mom sometimes called her a dizzbang, when her dad was in a foul mood he called her a bimbo, the old grease ball that lived in the apartment next door to them growing up would call her a stoonad. Airhead or not, she was an anchor in his life.

She had a steady, legit job and paid all her bills and rent on time. No drama with men, never married, no kids out of wedlock despite one bad and very long engagement. She had a Siamese cat named Richard Nixon and that was the only man she wanted in her life according to her last post on Facebook. It was stupid but it made Larry laugh, Bill watched him worriedly.

"I'm alright I'm just thinking about my sister and this cat thing she posted on Facebook, it's...uh, I don't know."

"You two are close?"

"Yeah, we're only eighteen months apart in age and our parents weren't always around so we had to watch out for each other a lot of the time."

"I'm sorry about that."

"Not as sorry as me and Carol. She made mistakes to but she learned from them, that was something I could never do. I'd get away with some crazy shit like I did tonight but how long will that shit last? I wish I could be responsible like Carol."

"You don't think you can be?"

"I don't know, I want to be. I grew up the same way in the same place she did. Ya know like I said?"

"Yes, I remember you said no cable, no Nintendo, just a Game Boy." said Bill.

Larry was about to continue but felt the words stop behind his lips as his heart stuttered for a few seconds as a wave of confusion flooded him.