



Rob Burton

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Dumpster

It's a cliché isn't it?

Everyone expects it to happen, but it never does.

Well, not to me anyways.

Until today.

Now I had a dilemma. Should I keep the Go Pro rolling? I mean, I was building my YouTube following and dude, this could go viral. I might get a couple of million views. Earn some serious bank man.

I start early around six, before people are up and about, and crucially the cops are changing shifts so no stray patrol car catches me at it.

The dark shadows were fading into a hazy dawn as I banged open the plastic lid. It was always a rush the first one of the day. That musty putrid stink of wet cardboard that hits the back of your throat. The streak of fur as a feral cat or raccoon headed for the highway.

The anticipation of the unknown.

What I didn't anticipate was the dead body laid out in the back of the dumpster I was planning on diving this fine morning. I stepped back and gagged a little because the usually welcoming stench of wet cardboard and cat piss filled my nose with the reek of shit and the iron tang of blood.

Lots of blood.

No one ever expects a dead body in the dumpster. My subscribers on YouTube had been teasing me about it for the two years I'd been filming. That's the cliché right? Find a dead body in the dumpster, or a hot gun used to rob the bank downtown. I'm not stupid, I'd watched enough B rated movies to know these are well known tropes.

But now I stood, gagging in the tainted air, looking at a real live dead body. And I had a dilemma. Should I call the cops right here, right now, or should I keep filming? I had a living to make; I wasn't dumpster diving for fun. There was serious cash to make, and with the right number of views of the video I could earn me mucho dinero in terms of the Google AdShare it would attract.

It was a serious moral dilemma and as I considered it I stepped forward and took a better look at the gory tableau laid out before me. It was a guy. A smart looking guy by any standards. The shiny sharkskin suit was an anachronistic nod to the 1960s—what? You think I don't know clothes? Guys, I'm a dumpster diver, an eBay, I *know* this stuff right. Not that it would do me any good, the three blood soaked holes through the back of the tailored jacket had screwed up any profit there. What I could see of his trousers didn't look good either—I think he shat himself either before the fatal shots or as he died. Nice shoes though, leather, handmade by the look of the soles.

Okay. The moral dilemma was solved; I was thinking where's the profit in this? I had to get in and check this out. That's all. Keep the camera rolling, and as a good citizen check for signs of life, and after, call the cops. My civic duty would be done, and I'd still get the film that would go viral and prove to the cops I didn't do it. It would see me right.

The dumpster was out the back of a business park behind a row of commercial properties that were rented or owned by various businesses. There was a row of about eight dumpsters which on the right day would give up their treasure trove. I collected anything and everything they threw away and had value. This is how I made my living. I was a real 21st Century boy scavenging amongst the garbage and plastic, the used Kleenex, greasy pizza boxes, damp coffee cups and rotting fruit.

What I was looking for was copper, brass, aluminum, iron and steel, precious resources once dragged from the earth and destined to return to it in the vast landfills that polluted our country now that China and India refused to handle our waste. There was gold in them thar dumpsters. Every electrical device, the old mobile phones, the broken iPads, the replaced TV's, computers and circuit breakers used gold, silver, palladium and platinum. Thrown away, dumped and disposed of.

Just like the body I was about to search, I mean, check for signs of life. I reached up and swung myself into the bin. My black Mechanix Wear leather gloves protected my hands against the sharp metal edges, glass and other sharps when I was sorting through the trash. The black bags and crushed cardboard boxes kept me out of the blood-stained water at the bottom of the bin. I also didn't want to muss up my steel toe capped Caterpillar boots I'd only had for two weeks and was still proud of.

The guy was face down, his arms tucked under his body and legs spread behind him. It looked like he'd been flung in head first. To be honest, I had second thoughts, being this close to a dead person wasn't my idea of the best start to the day. But needs must, I had to remember my subscribers.

Speak dummy I told myself because my subscribers had demanded it. I had played dumb during my first videos and attracted criticism. Give the people what they want that's what I've learnt over these past few years.

"Yeah guys, that's right. It's a dead guy. Surprise, huh? You always expected one, an' now here, live on the Danny and the Dumpster channel you get your wish."

I moved sideways down the scuffed and banged up metal side of the container. I didn't want to get too close to it... him, not right now. Just get to the head end and reach down to try for a pulse. It was a stretch I know. The three big exit wounds blasted through the mohair jacket were not bleeding and there were no signs of life I could see. I needed to ace this video, get a couple of minutes on film at least, enough to go viral and maybe sell to prime time news.

Ka-ching.

"It's err," I checked my watch, "six nineteen, Sunday 22 August, twenty eighteen. There's a guy dead in the dumpster, three holes in his back."

I turned my head, pointing the Go Pro at the bloody wounds. Swallowing was difficult as my mouth had become as arid as the desert outside town, and in other news, I needed to piss, I mean, what the fuck? Having never been this close to a dead person freaked me out.

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“I’m goin’,” my voice rasped in my throat, I spat into a dark corner but that didn’t help, but I tried again. “Gotta’ check if he’s alive, then I’m gonna’ call the cops.” As I reached towards his neck, I leant forward.

“Shit.” I still had my gloves on, I couldn’t check a pulse with my fingers covered. Using my teeth, I pulled my right-hand glove off and then shoved it in my jeans pocket. Leaning forward I placed two fingers on the cold flesh behind the guy’s right ear.

Nothing.

“I can’t feel anything guys.”

Pause.

“He’s gone,” I tried to sound professional, like a coroner in a cop show on TV.

“His skin is cold; it’s been a while.”

I shivered, gooseflesh ran up my arms and down my back as if death had infected me. I wanted to get out of the dumpster away from the corpse. As I stepped back the rotting, damp, cardboard and bulging black bags gave away under my feet and I stumbled backwards, banging my back against the steel walls. They boomed and reverberated like the drums of hell.

Okay, I’m becoming dramatic, but guys, it wasn’t a cool situation. As I jiggled my feet in the wet slime, the dead guy slid down the rotting slope flipping over onto his back. His dead eyes stared accusingly up at me. I ballerina’d backwards trying to keep my boots out of the bloody slush and my camera lens on the drama before me.

“Yike’s” I said for the benefit of my future viewers.

“A close call there. I thought for a moment there was some walking dead action going on.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” my nervous laugh echoed around the metal box. I could edit that out later.

Now laid on his back the whole horror show of his front was on display. His white shirt saturated with blood clung to his body. His jacket splayed out showing off the red silk lining. I looked closer. Yeah, there were black dragons woven in to the fabric. It was then I noticed that he was Asian. Black hair, almond eyes, dark pupils staring at me accusingly as if I had personally shot him three times in the chest. Chinese, maybe Japanese, or Korean, could be Vietnamese, what the fuck do I know? Asian okay?

As he had rolled his left arm had flopped across his body in that rag doll way dead bodies move, or at least how they move in the movies. Remember, this was the first stiff I had ever come across. But I wasn't so dumb as not to notice the fuck off shiny Rolex strapped to his left wrist.

Double dilemma.

I'd turned my head away before the lens could focus on that diamond in the rough because as you might have noticed I set my moral compass at zero. That's a mixed metaphor I know but fuck it, a guy's gotta' bring home the bacon.

"Okay, folks I'm now making my way out of the dumpster to call 911 and get the cops here. I've done my civic duty and checked the poor guy for signs of life and he's a goner, y'all saw that right?"

I was laying the foundations for my future alibi.

Outside, I waved my fingers in front of the camera lens in my signature sign off ritual. Thumb up against the lightening sky as the new day dawned.

"So guys, that's all the excitement for today, this is Danny the Dumpster signing off, don't forget to subscribe to my channel and check out my eBay page for the goodies you have seen scavenged in my past shows. The links are all here below the video. Have a good one folks."

I am nothing but the consummate professional with my YouTube work.

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I switched off my Go Pro satisfied that I had a viral hit on my hands and the possibility of a big payday just as soon as I got back into the dumpster. It didn't take but a few moments. I scored the Rolex and the guys wallet. As I walked them to a hidey hole I knew I called 911 and reported the dead body.

I won't bore you with the police drama as no doubt you've seen it done eleventy billion times on TV. They told me to wait on the scene and by the time I had wandered back empty-handed I could hear the sirens echoing across the rooftops. I checked my watch, it was close to six forty-five, the good people of the local town were getting an early morning wake up this bright Sunday morning.

Two squad cars came barreling through the business park tires squealing on the concrete hardtop. Followed a few minutes later by an ambulance all flashing lights and wailing sirens. By the time I had shown the cops the body, and explained how I came to find it, and shown them the video twice, the detectives showed up. They ruined my Sunday from then on. Downtown, I got bawled at for getting into the dumpster, bawled at for not calling 911 immediately, and then I got bawled at for having my Go Pro on, and in their words "doing a fuckin' show". Let me tell you it was like being in a 1970s cop show without the racism although I got the feeling they wanted to go there. Plus, they fucked up my whole day, I didn't earn a penny.

Later that evening, I stretched out on my sofa and watched the local news on the large flat-screen I'd dragged out of a dumpster outside a two-bit hotel that was being revamped into a three-bit hotel. In fact, most of the fixtures and fittings in my two-room apartment had come into my possession via my dumpster diving activities. The artefacts I pulled from the trash and sold online covered most of my living expenses. The rest of my income came from my YouTube channel and a few shifts I pulled at the local Walmart, the biggest employer. Hell, even some of my vitals came out of a dumpster, the rest I swiped from my employer, or paid the staff discount. I sighed, as I cracked another micro brewery beer, two days past its best before date. I took a swig; it tasted all right, and I had another two dozen in my cupboard.

A shot of the dumpster flashed onto the screen, I sat up and took notice. The cops still had my Go Pro and memory stick so I wasn't expecting my Warhol moment right then. The voice over

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was the usual blah blah blah, and then cut to a live feed. A blonde reporter breathlessly explained what was going on as figures in blue forensic suits climbed in and out of the green box.

A guy I recognized joined the young reporter, he was all twinkly eyes and broad grins. It was the asshole detective with the bad breath who had been bawling at me all morning. He couldn't decide who to maintain eye contact with, the chick or the camera, his libido won out, and he focused his twinkly blue eyes at Blondie, his Irish accent becoming increasingly pronounced. Dick.

All I found out was this was a probable mob hit. The body found by a passer-by and the victim shot three times and certified dead on-site by the coroner. I could've supplied three out of the four conclusions for free. But hmmm, a mob hit? What mob? There's no mob in my little town in the middle of nowhere, USA. There wasn't even an Italian restaurant, not counting Pete's Pizza on Albany Avenue. Pete was like a hundred years old, and been spinning pizzas since the 'Nam, anyways that's what he's told me a million times as I waited for my pepperoni.

Pete, the local Don? Nah, forget it.

Dick, the detective, was still trying to climb into Blondie's pants live on TV and was giving away far too much information. He was bragging about the Chinese connection.

"Yeah, Tiffany you're so roight. The Chinese connection is sumtin' we will be lookin' in to, darlin'"

Tiffany had the good grace to blush as she pulled her head back from his toxic breath. She flicked her blond tresses away from her face as she faced the camera.

"Thank you Detective and now back to the studio."

So, the dude was a Chink? What was he doing here? It made little sense. As I thought about it, I surfed the TV channels until I found some shit that would make the rest of the evening bearable—something called 'BrainDead', go figure.

I stayed away from the stashed Rolex and wallet for the best part of the week. I went about my business of dumpster diving during the early hours and in the evening after close of business. Later, I uploaded new ‘treasures’ to eBay. I also spend a good portion of my time bagging and shipping sold items across the world. The bottom line is I’m a recycler. The stuff we throw away is remarkable and marketable. I often find brand new items still bagged and tagged in the trash. Electronics that work, but replaced by newer models. Expensive sneakers barely worn before they’re unfashionable and trashed. And food.

The amount of food I find in the bins that is still edible is a disgrace. Even in my dirt hole town some people can only eat if they have access to food banks. Food banks here in the good ole USA, yay the American Dream. *If you cain’t feed yoself die motherfucker.* I take time out of my busy schedule of scouring dumpsters to take any food I consider safe and edible down to the food bank. I have little time for the God Squad who run the bank but props to them for keepin’ people alive. An’ whatever my opinion of them is, they always got a friendly word of thanks when I turn up with the back of my truck loaded with cans, boxes, fruit and veggies that ain’t gone all mushy and shit. The good stuff, like the beer, I keep for myself, I ain’t no fool.

Okay, okay, enough, the Rolex, you wanna’ know about the Rolex, right? I hit my stash around 5:30 in the a.m. the next Sunday. I even checked to see if there’d been episode 2 of the Murder in the Dumpster. No luck, just the usual damp cardboard and stinking black bags. They had cleaned the crime scene up and the business park was nice, quiet and still dark.

Sitting in the cab on my truck I had a good look at the watch. What a score. It was a Rolex Oyster Perpetual. I fired up my iPhone and Googled prices.

“Wow,” I said to my reflection, “over 12,000 bucks retail, nice watch.”

I turned to my favorite website, eBay, punched in the details and let out a long whistle. Similar watches from 2016 were being listed for anything upwards of \$24,000. I hung the heavy metal machine on my wrist. It looked good.

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“That looks goooood, man.” I watched myself in the dark glass as I rattled my wrist around, the bracelet winking light back at me.

I turned my attention to the wallet. It was leather and looked expensive. The bloodstain spoiled the image a little, but I had no mind as it was going into a dumpster the other side of town before the day was out. It was fuckin’ loaded. I counted ten one hundred-dollar bills. Crisp, new, straight from the ATM. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d seen a C note let alone held ten of the darlin’s in my hand.

In the window pocket was a driving license issued by New York State. The address was New York City, Pell Street, where ever the fuck that was. New York City could’ve been in another universe as far as it concerned me. I knew it was out there but I could never be fucked to get up and go there, just like Mars. Why would I want to go to fuckin’ NYC when I already got the hat? The guys name was Sonny Hai-ching, but fuck him, he’s dead.

There was a little zippy pocket that held a couple of sim cards and a SanDisk Extreme Plus 128 gig micro SD card. Interesting, but not as immediate as the cash so I zipped them back up. The guy didn’t have a phone on him, everyone carries a smartphone nowadays, except my old man who rocks a seventeen-year-old Nokia. I guessed it was a drug thing that went bad. Dealers have multiple phones and sim cards; I don’t have time for that and as per exhibit A, it’s too fuckin’ dangerous.

I stuffed the Benjamins in my back pocket and put the wallet on the passenger seat to be sure I wouldn’t forget to deep six it later on. I checked the time on my new Rolex. 6 a.m. the sky was lightening, and Rosie’s all day diner would be hot and stuffy right about now. I felt I owed it to myself to go get myself a celebratory coffee and a greasy breakfast. And that’s just what I did friends.

Now if it all didn’t go to shit I wouldn’t be telling you this here story, would I? The shit hit the fan. That’s my life right there.

I woke up with someone poking a sharp fingernail in my shoulder. I opened my eyes to the gloomy gray morning light that filters thorough the gap in the curtains. It makes you pull the

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quilt back up around your ears as you block out thoughts about getting up and resisting the calls for relief your bladder is making to your brain.

The sharp poking to my shoulder intensified as I squeezed my eyes shut and wondered just who the fuck it was in my bedroom waking me up at stupid o'fuckin' clock. Did some random chick come over last night? I don't think so. The poking became a punch backed up with some strange verbal sounds.

“Eee, Uhh, Uhh”

Whut the fug?

I rolled over and cracked an eyelid.

It was some fucked up looking Asian chick.

Oh oh.

This is when it got bad as if you hadn't put two and two together and joined the dots.

But I hadn't quite realized that then. I was too busy wondering just who the fuck this chick was and did I owe her money? Maybe I had got so wasted last night I'd picked up this Chink ho and now she wanted cashing up.

“Yeah, Yeah, one minute. Stop punching me. Fuck, I'll get ya the cash.”

I rolled over towards my bedside cupboard. Not only did I keep cash there I also kept the Glock 26 recovered from a dumpster a couple of years ago—so much for the movie tropes, huh? The nine mil was loaded with ten rounds and one up the spout.

As I rolled, my brain cleared, and as my neural pathways became palpable, neurons vibrated, synapses sparked, I joined all the dots. Danger, Danger, Danger, an alarm blared in my head. I reached for the piece.

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A scream of anger and I was being straddled by the bitch, and not in a good way. Dudes, I ain't no wimp. I work out. I have muscles. I'm no sofa slut. But this dragon lady had me clamped between her thighs and rained solid fists at my head. I struggled and writhed, trying to keep my guard up, but I was a dope on a ropey old mattress, atop an aged wooden bedstead.

A loud crack heralded my escape. The bed collapsed to one side, and as we rolled off her scream all but cracked the mirror, smashed the wine glasses and threatened to bring on a raging migraine as it pierced my ear drums and ricocheted around my brain.

“Get the fuck off me you crazy bitch, who the fuck...?” I was kicking at the sheets tangled around my legs

I didn't need to ask did I? I'd found the dead Asian guy in the dumpster. Getting cozy with one Chinese in this white bread town might be a coincidence, meeting another is downright dangerous. Even in *China Dream* the take-away down town I'd never met as many Chinese, the cooks were all Korean dudes, the owner Vietnamese—I love my country.

I squirmed outta the sheet and wrapped the chick up tangling her so I could grab at the baseball bat I kept behind the door. As I grasped at the cool aluminum I glanced through into the lounge to make sure she had not come mobbed up.

Clear.

The bat was a genuine Hello Kitty twenty-four inch, fourteen-ounce aluminum bat in what I suppose was Kitty pink. Yeah, I know, but I dived it, that's what I do.

She unrolled herself from the bedding and rose to her feet. She glared at me. I took a step back. That crimson hue around her eyes, my God, was it a natural color? I felt a shiver down in my soul. For a moment I couldn't breathe. Red makeup swirled around her eye sockets extenuating the almond slash of her lids and the black voids of her irises. Her sleek ebony hair was cut in that modern way, all straight lines and angles. The perfect line of her fringe hid any eyebrows she might have been rocking. Her black painted lips were parted in a grimace of anger showing off perfect white teeth.

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‘Who the fuck are you?’ I asked.

She stepped towards me, I raised Hello Kitty.

“Where is it?”

It surprised me she spoke perfect ‘merican, no hint of an accent, blowing away my racist stereotype outta the room.

“Where’s what?”

“You know.” She stepped again.

I cocked Kitty over my shoulder. I’d played Little League as a kid and I could bust this chick’s head open like a soft boiled egg.

“Stay back,” I warned. “Know what? I know fuck all, except it’s damn early in the morning, and you be riling me up, cos, I don’t know how the fuck you got in here or what the fuck you want. Now you better be clear with me, and we can sort this out before someone gets hurt or I call the cops.”

I smacked Kitty into my palm.

She stepped forward again, raising her arms in some kung fu style. I gulped and stepped back. Her colorful silk cheongsam caressed the contours of her lithe body. I’d already felt the strength of those slim and shapely legs holding me down on the bed.

“You know wha’ I wan’. You too’ it from my brudder,”

The accent confirmed my base stereotyping although her mentioning her ‘brudder’ was a bigger clue. The Chinese guy in the dumpster, it was coming back to bite me in the ass. I looked at my wrist. It was empty, the Rolex was history. Fenced to a guy I knew in the next shit hole town down the road, he knew a guy who knew a guy who would pay good money. At that moment all I had was an IOU on some tatty script for around a third of the retail in the back

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pocket of my Levis. That worked out at about 8k but I wasn't holding my breath. I'd be lucky to get 5. Shit, 5K would keep me in pizza and beer for a few good months, I could probably afford to get the truck fixed up too, it needed a new exhaust.

Fuck, I shouldn't have glanced at my wrist because next moment Ms. Kung Fu had somehow taken off and knocked me on my ass with a Jackie Chan kick to the jaw. She sat on my chest her hard bottom restricting my breathing. I had trouble focusing on her face as the room was spinning and the pain in my face was shooting jagged daggers of bright light into my brain.

'Where, where, where?' her voice rose into another headache inducing shriek.

"Uh Huh Ugh uhhhhh," I drooled, my mouth wasn't working, the dislocated joint grating bone against bone

Well, until she placed her cool slender fingers onto my jawbone and wrenched it back into place.

"Ahhhhhhhhfuuuuuckkkkk." It was working again.

"Now mudder frucker, tell me where is frucking wallet." She jiggled my jawbone again.

The pain made me gasp, tears tumbled down my cheek.

"Okay, okay," I was beat, but not enough to be grateful that she was only asking after the shitty leather wallet. I hadn't binned it. How could I? Look at my joint and all the shit on the shelves and under the table. I'm a keeper not a dumper. Maybe I'm some hoarder freak but I can't throw things away, if it has some value and a nice Saint Lauren wallet has some value over and above the thousand bucks it had held.

But why did this red-eyed devil want it?

An image of the sim cards and SD memory flashed into my brain.

Oh

She poked my cheek with a sharp nail, threatening to send me writhing with more spasms of exquisite pain. I turned the other cheek. It hurt. She poke, poke, poked until I yelled out.

“Okay, Okay, enough already, I got it stashed, it’s safe, I can get it for you if you stop with the torture routine.”

She giggled.

“You fuckin’ funny man, yeah? You don’ fuck me aroun’ huh?”

“No, no, I can get it.” My head shaking quicker than one of those nodding things people keep on their dashboards. I went for a puppy dog look, wide eyes and appealing. Chicks told me I was good at it—usually after the event, and they were in that period of regret when they realized it was probably a one off and they were never, ever, going to see me again.

She sat upright. Her weight was constricting my chest, and I had to struggle to breathe, her legs still locked tight on my torso. The only upside was her silk dress had ridden up her thighs, and I was getting a free view of the sheer panties she was wearing. Okay, yes, it hurt when I cricked my neck down to get a better look. My jaw still aching from the very recent dislocation, but the pain of that recent attach was mitigated by the fact that Ms. Beijing was no stranger to the lady razor.

In fact, as I looked up past her small, but perfectly formed breasts, she was almost attractive. Considering the shocking make up choices she probably cleaned up rather well. I know I’m fantasizing, my cock doing my thinking for me. I was in a pickle and no doubt about it.

“I stand up, you stay there,” she warned.

I nodded.

She stood. A smartphone appeared in her hand. Where the fuck it was I had no idea. She was wearing a skin tight silk dress, and I’d had a recent view of her nether regions. She said

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something into the phone, in a foreign language. I guess it was Chinese, but it could have just as easily been Double Dutch or Martian, I didn't have a clue.

I heard my apartment door, not so much open, as explode into the room. Had she locked us in or got into my apartment some other way? Strange. I heard heavy footprints and had the impression of something towering over me. I looked up.

I didn't realize Chinese guys could get so big. I thought they were all skinny fuckers like Bruce Lee or a short ass like Jackie. Yeah, I watch too many movies—but I told ya, this is a shit for brains, one horse town, nothing much goes on here.

Apart from my kidnapping of course.

The man mountain, or Oddjob as I came to think of him, trussed me up with those long thin plastic cable ties. They were fuckers to get out of. I blame the cop shows on TV as even the real cops were using them. Handcuffs were a piece of cake to unlock if you had a handy paperclip or a thin piece of wire on your person.

My feet bounced off every steel step of the fire escape as they dragged me down to the ground floor. The dragon lady reminding me how fortunate I was it wasn't my head. I was just glad I lived on the first floor and not the fifth. Before they shut the trunk of the 1980s Plymouth Gran Fury, they stuffed me into Ms. Barely No Panties started with the poking again.

Poke, poke, poke.

“Ow, ow, ow. What? Stop with the poking. I said I'd help.” I wriggled on to my back.

“Where we go, huh?”

Oddjob loomed behind her. His round head reflecting light from the street lamps like a planet escaping the Sun's gravitational pull. He stank of garlic, cigarettes and some vicious alcoholic spirit that had rimmed his eyes red and bloomed a red blush across his cheeks. Give the guy his dues though, he was nothing but the total professional. I could barely move.

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She poked me again.

“Okay, take me down past the old McGregor place, y’all know it?”

Her hair looked like a dark wave as she shook her head.

“You say...” She pointed her sharpened nail at me.

“Take this road for about half a mile, then take a left.”

I was giving directions with my chin, ignoring the spasms of pain from my jaw. I cocked my head.

“Then go right at the T junction.” I nodded up and down.

“Go straight past the schoolhouse and you’ll see the McGregor place, It’s an old derelict house. My stash is near there.”

“You sure, no fuck with me?”

“No fuck with you, promise.”

I had a thought. It wasn’t a good thought.

“Hey can I ask you something?”

I looked up into the empty black pupils of her eyes, the crimson smear dark in the early morning light. Her hand was up on the trunk lid, muscles flexed as she pulled down.

“Are you going to kill me?”

She hesitated. A smile flickered across her black lips, the lid slammed down, and I was in a black hell all of my own.

In the movies the kidnapee usually finds away to escape. They cut their bonds on some bit of jagged metal, then using a tail light they send a Morse code message to the cars behind. The drivers naturally are Morse code experts who immediately realizes that dot dot dot, dash dash dash means someone's in trouble, and it's not just a faulty wire that's making the light flash intermittently. They call the cops, who happen to be in the location, they shoot the bad guys dead, and they rescue the victim. He/she can run into the arms of their loved ones/husband/wife/children who also happen to be in the locality, despite the kidnappers driving across three States, in breach of Federal Law by the way, and as the sunsets, life returns to normal, and all's well that ends well.

It was only about a mile or two in the back of that car, but within minutes I was rolling around in puke. This thing swayed like a motherfucker on its fucked up springs, and I'm a martyr to severe motion sickness. I don't go on fairground rides, I can't watch some movies, don't get me started on *The Blair Witch Project* (I hurled after about twenty-five minutes in), and even sitting in a rowing boat on a calm lake brings on anxiety sweats.

Chink and Chong were not impressed when the vehicle finally stopped and they raised the trunk lid. Dragon lady retched and turned her head away which bought a grin to my face. She stepped away raising her hand to her nose gesticulating to Oddjob to do the honors. He grasped me by the neck and dragged me out of the trunk depositing me on the sidewalk. Did I mention I was only wearing shorts? After falling out of bed and getting intimate with missy, they had not allowed me the courtesy of getting dressed. Vomit slicked I lay on my face kissing the concrete slab.

She kneeled down next to me, not as close as before, I doubted I'd be getting a free view of her... well, did you know in the early days of exploration foreign sailors came back to the West claiming Chinese women's vulvas were east to west affairs rather than the 'normal' north to south arraignments on Western women. I could, hand on heart, now put that myth to bed.

"Ow." My cheek twitched as she poked it again. If I ever got out of this my face would be a riot of pock marks, I'd look like a wall outside a Mexican prison.

"Where is it mudder fuck?"

“I’ll take you, help me up.”

“Get up yourself. You stinky puke man, eww.”

She fanned her turned-up nose, if I was going to be picky I’d even suggest it was piggy, too much nostril and not enough nose, if you know what I mean. I kept my mouth shut though.

I managed, with little dignity, or help from Oddjob, to get to my feet. I inhaled the cool morning air. It was light now. I glanced around, but the place was empty. Exactly the reason I had hidden my stash around here. This area used to be busy, just down the road the rows of what were once neat houses stood back from the overgrown front lawns. Once the steel mill had shut the local economy had collapsed, and the workers had moved out. Most of the houses lay dilapidated and deserted. Trashed by punk rockers and meth heads, graffiti up the walls and shit under the stairs.

Yeah, the tech companies and small business that provided my bread and butter moved in because of the cheap rents and cheaper labor force but this part of town had been forgotten and unloved for many a year. No one was going to pass by and come to my aid.

I was a dead man walking.

That’s what was going through my brain. They couldn’t let me go could they? I could plead and swear on my mother’s life I wouldn’t say a word if they let me go. We all know how that pans out don’t we?

I had one hope. A small hope. A tiny flicker of a flame in my brain hope. There was a .45 on top of my stash. It’s no wonder there’s so much gun crime when folks are just tossing them in the nearest dumpster. If I could get my hands free and convince them I could reach in to get that wallet, then I could grab the pistol and blow the mother fuckers away.

I stopped walking.

“Hey, I need a piss.” I arched my back and lifted my hands still bound behind my back

“Piss yo self, go.”

“Aw, come on, no. I really need to go, you got me up, it’s my first piss of the day, man”

“You stinky man, it don’ matter, you piss you pant, I not watch.” She turned away.

Another dilemma. If I didn’t take a piss, they would know it was a play and it would go against me, so I pissed myself. It was the first of the day, so it was long, cloudy and cascaded down my legs in a vivid stream of yellow stink. I was actually ashamed. Oddjob watched me impassively. He didn’t blink. Not a muscle moved in his face as piss pooled warmly around my bare feet.

“Sigh,” *I was fucked.*

My stash was in a lock up behind one of the derelict houses. It was basically a concrete box with a steel roller door I kept padlocked and secure against the local opioid junkies.

“Where key?” She frowned, checking me out in case I had it hung around my neck, dangling down my naked chest. She jiggled the heavy duty padlock and turned her face to me, those crimson tinged eyes scarier in the daylight.

I shrugged my shoulders Frenchie style. Pouting my lips. “You didn’t ask.”

Her head moved. My head boomed to one side as Oddjob sideswiped me with his massive paw. I didn’t go down, but I took two or three steps to one side to remain upright.

“Where key or else I get angry. You no wan’ see me angry. I go ape shit, fuck you up ree good.”

“Okay, free my hands and I’ll get the key for you, I stashed it.” I turned and lifted my hands again. Hope flared in my brain.

“No, you trell us we get key.”

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“You can’t. It’s in a really difficult place and if you mess it up we will lose the key. It’s sort of booby trapped.” I lied.

“Booby trap, you mean like bomb, boom boom?”

“Yeah, like that, boom boom,” I emphasized.

“You think I’m frucking irriot?” The padlock clanged against the steel door as she dropped it.

“I fruck you up, you unnerstan’, don’ fruck wi me.”

I put on my serious, trust me face.

“I’m not fru.. fuckin’ with you honest. Look I know I’m in a jam, and I want to help you, so maybe you won’t do bad things to me after. Let me get you the wallet and then this can be over right?”

I sent a pleading look at Oddjob. “Right?”

His poker-faced stare didn’t fill me with confidence.

A minute passed. She didn’t move just stood looking at me. Another minute. A breeze was getting up which was good because I had stopped smelling the stink hanging around me. Another small nod, and as if from nowhere a blade appeared in Oddjob’s meaty hand, he spun me around and sliced through the plastic ties.

I shook my hands out in front of me gasping at the exquisite pain as the blood rushed back into my fingers. The tips had actually turned blue, and the ties had left dark bruised indentations in my wrist. Oddjob’s sausage-like fingers wrapped around my throat.

“Move.” It spoke. A low rumble that occurred somewhere down in his throat. I don’t think he opened his mouth, and not unlike a bullfrog, the word emanated as sound waves that formed the words in thin air.

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I'm stupid, so the key was under a pile of bricks around the back of the garage. I was Oddjob's bitch the whole way there and the whole way back, he never let go once. At the door I held the key up in my finger and thumb, I plastered a look of triumph across my face.

"Found it. It's was around the back. Under some stones. No boom boom. Ha ha ha."

She didn't smile.

"Open door, chop chop, quickly, quickly."

'What's so special about this bloody wallet anyway?' I grumbled as I bent to the lock.

The key turned easily, and the lock popped open with a satisfying click.

"Not you business." The frigid reply. "Open door."

The steel shutter rolled up with a clatter and a shrieking of steel on steel. I went to reach in but a claw like grip held me back.

"Lights." I choked.

The grip relaxed, and I leaned in, my fingers touching the cold plastic as I flicked the switch. The bright neon chased away the dark shadows, bouncing off the bright white walls, the tube epileptically flickering until with a barely audible pop it lit the empty room.

Oddjob shoved a hard hand into my back and I stumbled forward, my feet chilled on the concrete floor. I turned and faced my tormentors. Ms. Beijing looked confused. Oddjob looked, well, like he always looked in the short time I had known him—inscrutable—is that a racist stereotype? To be fair, if it is, at that moment I didn't give a fuck. My life was in the balance.

"Empety, why this place empety? Where my brudder's wallet eh? EH? You wan' me to fuck you up right? I will fuck you up, laowai, fuck you real goo." Her almond eyes were dark slits in the crimson hue that swam across her face

She waved her hands towards me as if she was flicking water off them. Oddjob took this as his cue to step towards me. Something in his brain pinged sending electrons surging into his frontal cortex which caused a micro expression to flick across his face. His lips twitched, and a light shone behind his black eyes.

“Wait, wait.” I backed off a step. “It’s here I promise. It’s just hidden.”

Oddjob paused. The lights in his eyes dimmed.

I turned and bent down. Hidden in the white floor was a small trapdoor. In the bright blinding light of the neon bouncing off the white walls it was invisible. It was a simple visual illusion, but enough to convince a meth head out for a quick score there was nothing here, should the door get forced open.

I pressed my hand down, and there was a low click. My mouth became a bone-dry desert and my hand shook as my heart raced, pumping adrenaline around my body. Once the foot square lid lifted the .45 would be within my reach. It was loaded, and the safety was off. Underneath was the Saint Lauren wallet all this fuss was about.

Another dilemma.

Give them the wallet and probably get murdered most horribly by the big guy.

or

See who was fastest on the draw, cowboy style.

I hesitated.

Something Jessie James would never do.

It was pitch black when I came to. I was cold, wet and still stank of vomit and piss. My urine soaked shorts clung to my clammy skin like a love-struck squid. I took a breath. Wet cardboard and cat piss, familiar territory for me. Being alive was a bonus too. My head hurt and as I

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passed my hand through my hair, I felt the large knot of a bump on the back of my head. I presumed Oddjob had a hand in that.

I knew where I was; it was a familiar feeling. I was in a dumpster but the steel doors were shut tight. Raising my hand to my face, I could barely see it—a fission of fear iced its way down my back. I crawled across the garbage hearing the familiar crackle of black plastic bags, the mush of stinking fruit swishing through my fingers until I reached one of the steel sides. I made a fist and banged on the wall. The drumbeat roll boomed around the enclosed space making my ears ring. Then I stopped and waited, listening for any sound. There was nothing but the sound of my breathing and the beating of my heart in my ears.

I edged along the steel wall, walking the fingers of my left hand across the scars and dents, my right hand held as an early warning system should something large and painful be in my way. Concerned about my bare feet I tiptoed along, minesweeping my big toes left and right hoping no shards of glass or nails were waiting to ambush me.

It was a big dumpster. I had a nagging worry in my brain that caused beads of sweat to drop into my eyes. There were only a few large dumpsters in my dirt hole town and the one I knew best was at the back of Walmart. A couple of more steps, my heart pounding in my chest. I felt nauseous and wanted to puke again. I ran my hands over the large, scarred steel plate I had arrived at. That confirmed my worst fears. I was in the Model 373X self-contained hydraulic compactor. How did I know this?

Just cos' it was the motherfucker I ran on my work shifts, that's how.

How fucked up is that?

I spent a good five minutes banging on the steel panels until my fists ached and my ears were ringing from the hollow booming that rolled around the dumpster. I lay back on a bed of stinking plastic bags and tried to control my panic. What day was it? Maybe Wednesday?

Wednesday was a fuckin' bad day to be stuck in a Model 373X. Because Wednesday was the day someone pushed a button which caused the system pressure to reach 1850 psi which

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retracted the cylinders, which pushed the big fuck off steel plate that waited in the dark not one foot off my right shoulder, from one end of the dumpster to the other.

Squashing the trash as flat as a proverbial pancake, and if I didn't get out of this motherfucker, me too.

It takes just 36 seconds from one end to the other.

If I didn't turn up for my shift they'd give it to Chul, also known as 'Fat Boy' because of his uncanny likeness to the Korean dictator Kim Jong Un and because he was Korean and fat—if it's good enough for Donald, it's good enough for us. If Fat Boy was in charge of that big red button today then my chances of survival were about the same as a homosexual, evangelical, Yankee preacher at a North Korean National Day parade in Pyongyang.

Terminally addicted to video games on his smartphone Fat Boy's eyes would never leave the screen. He wouldn't be checking the infra-red camera that scanned inside the dumpster he'd sit there, with his stupid haircut, zapping zombies or whatever and come 3pm he'd press the button and amble off for his break.

I'd be toast, no not toast, more like puree, squashed like a June bug on the windscreen of my truck.

Maybe I had a few hours yet. I don't know how long I was unconscious.

It could be minutes.

I waited in the dark...