

A close-up portrait of a man with a beard and intense expression, overlaid with a cracked glass effect. The man has light-colored eyes and a serious, almost menacing look. The image is split vertically, with the left side showing a more natural skin tone and the right side appearing darker and more shadowed. The cracked glass effect is prominent, with several sharp lines running across the face and the text.

I KILLED
MY
SON-IN-LAW

SHAY MILLS

**I KILLED
MY
SON-IN-LAW!**

by Shay Mills

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Dedication

This short story is dedicated to those that support me and stand by my side as I write eclectic tales. Thank you to my wife for putting up with me. She watches those crime/murder shows. I love you!

CHAPTER ONE

Tad!

Some people have fantasies about killing someone. Yes, some do. What deters most from killing someone is their ability to feel remorse, but this story breaks that mold. I have found that little things irritate me, but I can usually, and quite simply, brush them off. I let it go. It took me years to perfect that. So, why am I fixated on death at the moment? Wait, not a true statement. I am not fixated per se, but I have a past and a dark side that itches to come forth and wreak havoc on my son-in-law.

Even though I have urges, it was a single event that had no premeditated murder conceptualized in my mind, at the time. Yes, I did want to maim or destroy my target, in hopes I would find some solace from the bullshit coming out of Tad's mouth. Serenity is fleeting, and the idea that I can control my innate animal instincts is bullshit. I had suppressed my urge to conquer, control, and squeeze the life from someone, but I had a change of heart when I met, Tad Donahue. Oh, Tad.

See, Tad was nothing but a punk ass kid, barely twenty and married to my daughter. I laughed when I heard they were thinking of wedded bliss. *What the fuck! He barely has a job*, I thought.

Tad worked at a local grocery store stocking shelves for a living. He thought he could raise a family on minimum wage and twenty-five hours of work a week. Who was he kidding? College students barely survive off that kind of pay. Minimum wage is not a career; it's a stepping stone to another job. I am not saying that hard-working people who earn minimum wage are not ambitious; far from it. I would work two minimum wage jobs if it fed my family, but this kid had opportunity after opportunity for a job earning three times the pay. So, why didn't Tad take said employment? Drug testing is why. Tad loved his weed and wouldn't give it up even if it meant providing a better life for my daughter and grandkids. I just expected my son-in-law to be an adult and face his responsibilities. When jobs allow marijuana to be equal to alcohol standards for employment, then I wouldn't care, but that little turd only irks the living shit out of me. I tried to convince Tad to go to school while working, but his lackadaisical attitude produced one of the seven deadly sins; sloth.

I lay awake at night envisioning Tad and me going camping and him never coming back. *Oh, honey, I am so sorry, the bear ate Tad*, I would say to my daughter. Maybe I would take him skydiving and incorrectly pack his parachute. No, I wouldn't want that mess on public grounds. He's not worth cleaning up.

Needless to say, Tad always knew how to get under my skin and crawl up inside my brain. His helpless and selfish attitude ate away at my thoughts and gave way to newfound physical illness; stress-induced migraines. Later, I started losing hair and developed a bad twitch in my hand that wanted to punch the little fucker every time I saw him.

My wife, bless her, would keep me sane and calm. Her loving touch and tender ways reminded me that I wasn't violent anymore. I left all that behind me the day I met Beth; I knew I had to lay down my aggressive behavior and tend to her needs. Beth and I were not broke, in the beginning, due to the money I had saved from doing, well, let's just say odd jobs. When I gave up my past life for her, things changed. I agreed to finish college, got a job as a drug addiction counselor, went back to school and earned my Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology. I guess the degree was my way of truly understanding myself and why I did the

things I used to do. Anyway, I finally finished my Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (PhD) and felt like I had reinvented myself. Not bad for a boy from Brooklyn.

After, Beth and I settled into our current existence in the lovely suburb of Coronado, California. I took a job working for the military, assisting a select group of men in need of venting. It's classified. Besides, the confidentiality agreement and privacy act would prevent me from saying a word about those therapy sessions. I did learn some interesting techniques from the men I helped. I picked up on their aggressive behavior and fed off it. I soaked up everything. It came in useful when I decided to teach Tad a lesson.

Time moved on and a few years passed. Tad was still working at the same location, but he got a raise. Ooh, a whole twenty-five-cent raise and employee of the month. For what, making sure the cans fit right on the shelf or the dates were rotated. Hell, I did that job when I was sixteen. Fuck, Tad. I tried to help the kid by encouraging him to get his diploma by attending night school at the local community college, but Tad thought he was smart enough. Yeah, smartass, that's for sure.

I gave him plenty of chances to straighten up his act and be the best husband and father he could be, but he would rather get high, play video games all day, and provide an infinity of excuses. Excuses are like assholes, and everyone has one. It was time for Tad to grow up.

I wandered through my mental forest of vindictive urges and held them at bay but only because of the love I have for my daughter. Did I love Tad? Oh, hell no! That fucker got what he deserved. Oh, I am skipping forward in this story. Sorry. We'll get to Tad and his untimely demise in a few, I promise.

Tad wondered through life like a frickin' moron. He was slow, unassuming, and unfit, and couldn't even dig his way out of a kitty litter box. I could have easily pushed him down a flight of stairs, and he wouldn't have the energy to catch his fall. What a pussy! Let me give you an example of how Tad's daily routine functioned. He would wake up at two in the afternoon, maybe take a shower, eat as much as he could, do no household chores, yell at the kids, treat my daughter like shit, work five hours, and stay up all night smoking weed and playing video games. He's twenty-five, folks.

I met Tad's parents, and they were not any different. Kelly, Tad's dad, was a pot farmer up in Humboldt County and everyone knew he wasn't entirely legit. Kathy, Tad's mother, was the mouthiest woman I had ever met. She swore so much that she put sailors to shame. They allowed their child to be a sloth. They enabled his neediness and lazy attitude to flourish. In fact, they adopted the mantra, 'Work for Weed' which is ridiculous. Let me get one thing straight; I am not against marijuana, but I do not endorse abuse just like any other drug. You wouldn't want your school bus driver drunk off his fucking ass, would you? Be responsible. That is the old drug counselor talking.

So, I hatched a plan. I had to do something. Get rid of Tad, hurt Tad, or somehow frighten him to get his shit together because talking to him did not work. I had thought about scaring the daylight out of him, but that wimp would have called the cops, so I dropped that idea. No, I had to eliminate the issue, and that meant teaching Tad the most valuable lesson of all. Don't fuck with Vick! Do you want to know more?

SM

It was a Tuesday, nothing out of the ordinary but a sunny sixty-five-degree Fahrenheit day with clouds billowing up like towers. I sat on the park bench, watching my granddaughter

Haley (age four) enjoying her day at the playground. She was so happy and full of joy. I mean, no care in the world. Her face was rosy red, her eyes bright blue, and her blond hair blowing in the wind. My daughter, Trish, was attentive to Haley's requests to play since most of the kids were in school. Haley couldn't wait to turn five. She wanted to go to elementary school like her older sister, Dottie. As I watched her, I realized how precious life was and that piece of shit, Tad, was breathing my air. *Why, yes, I said it?* Life is precious, but some life needs assisted suicide.

Haley was adorable, cute, and smart; very smart. To spend the day with her was magical. I loved watching her eyes fill with joy when a butterfly landed on my hand.

"Grandpa, is that a butterfly?" Haley asked, wide-eyed.

"Yes, honey. Shh, be quiet though or we might scare it away."

Just as I said that the butterfly fluttered from my hand over to Haley's head. She laughed as the butterfly flew to the heavens.

Life was beautiful if I didn't think about that garbage of a human being, Tad. I spent as much time with my granddaughters as possible trying to shelter them from the sloth-like nature of their father. Beth and I would teach the kids about science, math, and nature. They enjoyed the extracurricular activities we had in place for the summer months when they weren't in school. Of course, Tad would downplay their hard work and tell them to shut up about how the glaciers were melting or how manatees kept getting run over by boats in their natural habitat. The kids were smarter than Tad. Now that is funny.

After I spent the day at the park with Haley, I picked up Dottie from school to have quality time with her until Tad came to collect her. He was always rude and forceful with the children. I wouldn't allow him to hurt them, but we will get to that soon.

Trish was working part-time, going to school, and taking care of the house. Tad didn't lift a finger unless you consider playing video games and drinking mass amounts of energy drinks taking care of business. No, he didn't clean shit, nor did he care to validate my daughter's needs. He did cook sometimes but the hurricane of a mess that was left behind only irritated Trish. Her kind heart couldn't let her stand up to him, so she cleaned it herself. I witnessed this and confronted the little turd.

"So, Tad, I see you like to cook. Why is my daughter cleaning up your mess?"

"Uh, well, see. I cooked, so she cleans." Tad had a sandwich in his mouth.

I couldn't help it, so I helped him eat it. No, I didn't, but I should have. Wait though; it gets better. I came home from work; what a fucked-up day it was when Tad showed up to pick up Haley. Grandma, my wife Beth, was watching Haley for the afternoon and Trish was at school. Dottie was arriving by school bus soon, so Tad had to hurry.

"Hurry up, Haley. Stop fucking around," Tad bellowed.

"What did you say, son?" I questioned sternly.

Tad gave me a look like I killed someone. I was about to when he flung out a few disrespectful remarks.

"She won't listen, you guys probably don't discipline her, and Trish doesn't do her job at home." Tad was still fucking with Haley's coat. She didn't need a coat; it was hot outside.

My wife grabbed my shoulder immediately in hopes I would understand to stay calm. I heard her loud and clear, and out of respect for my wife I bit my tongue. I glared him down to the melting point of lead. He got the hint and vacated the premises in due haste. As he exited my home, it infuriated me because Tad slammed the door. I wanted to take a butter knife and cut out that sharp tongue or repeatedly invite the door to smash his face in.

I bet you are wondering why I am so mad?! It gets worse. There was a rumor that Tad was abusive, and I had no evidence except the bruises that kept showing up on the kids. There were finger marks, like the tip of a finger, on my granddaughters' arms. Trish never confessed to any wrongdoing on Tad's part, but I knew the truth.

I knew what I had to do. I reported Tad to the authorities. He moved out to a friend's house, and the children were taken away. I didn't mean for that to happen. The court system got involved, and the child protective services did their investigation. They found nothing. I couldn't fucking believe it. What the fuck! So, Tad moved back in. Trish never came forth about the truth, so my hands were tied behind my back. That fucker was allowed to mingle with my family.

Imagine a meal, a family barbecue, with Tad joking and laughing while stuffing his face. For a dumb kid, he was smart enough not to let on that he was abusing the kids. He never yelled at the kids in public but his foul mouth, I guess like mine is now, was shining brightly for all to hear.

"Yep, I fucking have over three thousand hours on Battlefield One." Tad was trying to impress my second cousin, Willy, but the look on Willy's face was 'Get this fucker away from me', which was hilarious. I made sure his hamburger had extra seasoning from the feces my dog left in the yard. A butter knife, a beef patty, and swipe, swipe did the trick. He ate it, and I died laughing. I told Willy what I did, and he gave me a high five. Too funny. Others at the party thought he was annoying and avoided talking to him when he came by. I think it might have been the foul odor coming from his unhygienic body. Moses parted the Red Sea just as Tad parted the barbecue party wherever he passed on by.

I cornered Tad near the back entrance to the kitchen of my house.

"Tad, buddy, I need help in the basement."

"What? But I am busy, man. Don't tread on me." Tad wiped his snot on his shirt sleeve.

I shook my head in disgust and chose to ignore his bad habits since I had something in store for his feeble mind.

"Tread?" I questioned. "I have something cool for you. Do you like old video games?"

"Hell, yes! Like Zelda on Nintendo?"

"The one and only," I lied.

Tad followed me into the house, down the stairs that led to the cluttered basement, and into my weapons room.

"Hey, I don't see any video games in here," Tad said, like a six-year-old boy.

"Tad, listen. I lured you down here to talk."

"Fuck this!" Tad began to leave.

I fucking hit him so hard, in my dreams, then I snapped back to reality.

"Tad, just listen. I have a solution to your money problems."

"Yeah, it's not sucking cock or anything is it?" Tad laughed like a hyena.

"Uh, no. I want you to help me finish the basement and fix up my weapons room." I pointed at my guns.

"Well, I am not cheap," he said with a grin.

Yes, you are, I thought, but I kept my composure.

"I'll pay you fifteen dollars an hour to help out."

I didn't want to pay the little shit a damn dime. I wanted to cement him into the unfinished walls, piece by piece.

"No way. I know contractors make way more money. I have a friend who knows a guy who does this shit for thirty dollars an hour." Tad began to walk away again.

Oh, I wanted to break his neck. Again, I suffered in silence and said, "Tad, no more than twenty an hour."

He stopped dead in his tracks and turned back around. I only wanted to help him out, so he would, maybe, provide for his family.

"That's more like it, but I don't do the heavy lifting. I have to keep my hands ready to take down the terrorists in Siege."

"Siege?" I questioned. Then I realized he was talking about a video game.

"Yeah, man. I'm gonna be a pro gamer. You should see me play Counter-Strike."

Every word coming out of his mouth sounded like blah, blah, blah. I pretended to listen and smiled when his voice went up an octave.

"Tad, yes or no?"

"For you, Pops, yes, but I get paid in advance."

Now I was beyond irritated. I saw my garden hoe on the wall behind Tad. I wanted the Force to bring it to me like a light saber, but my will alone could never bend the laws of physics.

"Fine, then no hourly pay. You get paid by the job. I will pay you four hundred for a three-day job, and that is it. You get half now and the other half when it's finished. Are we clear?"

"Like Donkey Kong."

I wanted to correct him and say, 'Like crystal' but I bit my tongue again.

"Are we done?" Tad gestured toward the stairs and raised his eyebrows to me like I was the dumb one.

Honestly, I did have a thought of taking him down there and have one of my weapons go off accidentally. Sure, a stray bullet pierced his skull, with brain matter and blood spilling on my basement floor. As I said before, I held that side of me in a tightly contained mental box. Since I wouldn't allow my urges to control me, Tad went unscathed up the stairs and out into the party to annoy more of my family and friends. I, on the other hand, drank a beer alone in the kitchen to calm down. Out the kitchen window, Tad was rambling on and on and getting drunk on my beer while I was trying to find my Zen. Didn't work, but as Beth does, she came in at the right time and blessed me with a caress that melted my evil heart. I let Tad go.

CHAPTER TWO

Torture 101

Tad showed up to work, at my house, that I paid him half of the money, but did he work? Yes and no. He worked for one day and then he didn't come over for a week, not even to pick up Haley. Beth had to take Haley home because if I did, I was going to kill that kid, for real.

Anyways, where was I? Oh, yeah. Since the court system didn't take care of ridding me of the rodent, I took matters into my own hands. I was going to confront him again, but this time a threat was in order. Tad had time off from his job after he slammed his hand between a pallet and a pallet jack. Leave it up to him to stick his fingers where they don't belong. A cloud of emptiness filled my mind as I picked up my phone and dialed Tad.

"Yo, dime, spill it." Tad's vernacular was that of a hood rat, yet he was raised as a hippie.

"Tad, it's Vick."

"I know who dis is. Damn, I'm not stupid."

Yes, you are, I thought. I almost laughed at his punk behavior. I didn't have to point out that he was stupid. He did that all by himself. Self-sabotage, I guess.

"Son, when you speak to me, show some respect, communicate with proper English, and stop slouching." I couldn't see him of course, but he always slouched.

"All right, Sir. How's this for proper English. May I be of service to you?" Tad said, sarcastically.

His flippant attitude was more than enough for me to reach through the phone and choke him to death. I was spun up so fast that I lost sight of why I called.

"Listen, Tad. I don't need your condescending attitude or disrespect. I called to tell you that I have a dresser to replace yours since you destroyed your last one."

"I didn't wreck that dresser. It fell apart. Give me a break, dude."

I wanted to tell him that I knew he had dropped the dresser over the balcony of his apartment, while drunk and arguing with Trish. Trish was asking if he could move some clothes out of her side of the dresser when he went ballistic and lost his temper. It's shit like that, that pisses me off. It's shit like that, that creates a volcano inside of me ready to erupt.

"Tad, I don't give a rats...", I paused, then collected my thoughts. "Do you want the dresser or not?"

"Free, right?"

I couldn't believe how stupid he was. So, I answered as simple as I could.

"Yes."

"Right, I be by tomorrow then at noon."

"That won't work," I interjected. I wanted to cuss him out. "Make it four o'clock."

"Cool." Tad hung up.

This was going to be on my terms. This wasn't my first rodeo, and he was no bronco. I was about to tame the wild donkey! I sent Trish and my wife to dinner and a movie while I paid for a babysitter to watch my grandkids. I had this itch deep down inside my gut. It was like being hungry, but my sustenance was eradicating Tad. I planned to have a big meal.

When Tad arrived, I was in the garage. I am not a small guy by any means. I stand over six feet tall, and I am muscular. I lift weights in my garage every day and this time I made sure I had a muscle shirt on. I wanted to show him I could break his neck if he mouthed off again.

Tad's rust bucket, a 2000 Ford Ranger that he didn't take care of, pulled up in front of my house. The music and bass coming from his vehicle were so loud the neighbors came out to see if there was thunder on a perfect sunny day. As he exited the vehicle, I almost died laughing. Tad's pants fell to the ground. *He should have worn a belt*, I thought. I don't think Tad's ass could hold those jeans up anyway. His body was so weak, I wasn't sure if he even could pull his pants up, but he managed.

"Where's the dresser?" Tad was jingling his keys while walking up the driveway and holding his pants up with his left hand.

"In the house, but we need to talk."

I put the barbell back on the bench and sat up to see Tad spit his gum onto my driveway.

"About what? This isn't one of those father to son talks, is it, because I have a dad?"

I snapped, "Well, he didn't do anyone a favor by spawning you."

"What you say?" Tad was defensive.

"Never mind. Let's get the dresser."

I had an ulterior motive, and Tad was none the wiser. As we entered the house, I steered Tad to the back bedroom. He noticed, immediately, that I had plastic on the floor.

"What's this?" he asked, while pointing to the ground.

"Nothing, I am going to paint in here. Do you want to help?"

"Hell no. I ain't good at painting."

Just another excuse is all I heard. Tad couldn't lift a finger unless it included money in his pocket. Even then he would do a shitty job or bail on me like he did with the basement.

"Go ahead and look. It's empty," I said, as I pointed to the dresser.

He didn't suspect a thing. *Bam!* I hit Tad in the back of the skull with my trusty Louisville Slugger. Down he went. Some blood escaped the scalp but other than that he was out cold. I checked his pulse, and sure enough, the dirt-bag was breathing. I know, you think I am just as bad as him. I'm worse. I am all for setting life on the right track, and life did not need Tad. If you remember, I mentioned that I was another guy before I got married. That guy would have slit his throat and been done with it. I'm an educated man, father, husband, and respected member of the community, yet, I felt compelled to teach Tad a lesson. Cutting his throat would only take away my enjoyment of the situation.

I duct-taped Tad's legs then his arms behind his back. I proceeded to stuff one of my dirty socks into his mouth and duct-taped that too. He deserved to suck on that stink. I had only four hours to do the deed. The easy part, of subduing my prey, was done but now I had to carry his skinny ass to my garage. I wrapped him up in the plastic when his phone rang. I ignored it. Then my phone rang a minute later. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and answered under labored breath.

"Hello," I said without looking at who the caller was.

"Hey, honey. Do you want me to bring you home some food?" Beth asked.

I love that about my wife. Even when I am selfish, she thinks of my needs instead of hers.

"No, I can make a sandwich or something." I began to drag the plastic burrito toward the garage as I held the phone between my shoulder and my jaw.

"You okay, you're breathing heavy?"

Man, I had to think quickly, but then it hit me. "I'm working out, dear."

"Has Tad showed up yet?"

"Yep, he's looking at the dresser."

"Okay. Wait. What, Trish?" My wife was talking to my daughter. "Trish wants to know if you could put Tad on the phone. He's not answering his."

"Uh, wait a minute." I muted the phone. "Shit!"

I had to come up with something, but as usual, I pulled the idea right out of my ass. I waited thirty seconds and unmuted the phone.

"He's in the bathroom. He said his phone is dead."

"Huh, that's weird. Trish said it rang and rang, but he didn't answer."

"I don't know. Honey, it's Tad."

"You're right. Okay, well, have a good evening and don't fill up on beer. God knows you get gassy, and I don't want to deal with that tonight in bed."

"No worries, honey. I won't drink them. Have a wonderful time at the movies. I love you."

"I love you too," she responded, then the phone disconnected.

Dragging Tad was easy, but I was in a hurry, so I flung Tad over my shoulder; he moaned, so I banged his head hard against the bedroom door as I exited.

SM

The garage door was still open, and I'd forgotten about it. *Fuck*, I thought, but I remembered the switch was on the wall by the kitchen door. As the garage door closed, I placed Tad on a chair, wrapped a thick rope around him several times to keep him from falling over, and proceeded to set up a barrage of tools that would accompany me on my endeavor. I have you interested now, don't I?

"Wake up, buddy!"

Tad rolled his head a little, and it took five minutes for him to come to. When he did, my god you could see the confusion on his face and the realization that I was about to fuck his world up. Tad tried to say something, but I ignored him, and I grabbed my roofing hammer without saying a word. I brandished the hammer like a gun and grinned at Tad as he begged for mercy. Of course, I was making that assumption based on his facial expression and how hard he was trying to speak. The muffled noise coming through the sock and duct tape made it almost impossible for me to understand him. I looked deep into his eyes and placed my hammer on his right knee. I pulled back and repeated the process three times, slowly, to ensure I was accurate on the first swing.

I swung so hard you could hear his kneecap shatter. Tad was loud, so I turned on the music to mask the noise. Most of my neighbors know that I play music as I work out in my garage, so it did the trick. *Whack!* There went the other knee. I wasn't squeamish, and I didn't give a shit about his inner turmoil of his pain. This was the beginning of a two-hour love affair. I bet you're wondering how I was going to explain this to my wife and Trish. Don't worry; I had this all planned out. As I mentioned before, I never intended this to be premeditated, at first, but the day before I had a change of heart.

"You fucked up, buddy. I gave you so many chances, and you just keep fucking it up. The knees are for treating my daughter like shit. Do you want to see what I will do for hurting my granddaughters?"

He shook his head no, in pain. I didn't hesitate and used my blow torch to fry off all his hair. The smell of burning flesh was horrible. I made sure he was alive. I ran into the kitchen and placed two trays of ice in a pitcher and filled it up with water. When I returned with the

water, shock almost ruined my fun. I doused his head, but it did nothing but wake the bastard up from his induced coma. His scalp was blistered, and in some spots, you could see flesh. The layer of skin and tissue that covers the human skull is thin. I reached down and smeared my fingers through a gooey mess and wiped it on Tad's face. I don't know why I did that, but maybe I wanted him to smell my devastation. I think he was pleading with me, but I couldn't tell through the duct tape, so I told him to speak up.

"Tad, buddy. I bet you're wondering how I can do this?! Simple, I had another life when I was your age. I honed my craft so well that I never got caught. I can love but I, son, have no remorse. I, son, have killed before. I, son, will torture you for my pleasure."

Tad's eyes were so wide and dilated he looked like Gollum from *The Lord of the Rings*. Again, he tried to beg for his life, but I wasn't having any of it. I wanted to ram a funnel down his throat and pour turpentine into his gullet, but instead, I held my urges in. After all, I didn't want him to expire; not yet.

The music streaming, at the time, was 'You Dropped a Bomb on Me' by The Gap Band. Not my first choice for a romantic whoop-ass, but it did give me some pep in my step. I danced a little and sang with the tune as I pulled Tad's fingernails from his hands one at a time with a pair of needle nose pliers. Again, Tad was a pussy and passed out. *Ammonia*, I thought.

"Sorry, buddy, but I will be right back."

Ammonia was strong enough to wake someone up, but hydrogen peroxide was even better. I fetch what I needed from the hall closet. My wife kept all our cold medicine, band aids and other medical goodies in a plastic tub.

"You're in luck! I found something useful for you."

I proceeded to pour the whole bottle onto his crispy second and third-degree burned scalp. Oh, he woke up quick. The tears began to flow. I mean, mine out of joy. No, he cried too. I don't know why I decided to let him say one last thing before I punished him some more. I removed the tape from his face and mouth, pulled the sock out, and let him say his last words.

"Please, God, please. I beg you. I won't hurt the kids or Trish anymore. Please don't kill me."

I smirked and let out an evil laugh. The sock found its home and this time I duct taped his head except for his eyes and his nose. I had to let him breathe, right? I couldn't have him dying on me, yet. 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' began to play on my phone. I answered it.

"Yes, honey. Oh, you ate first. Okay. How about the movie?" Tad moaned some, so I kicked him. "Good, so you guys are going? Okay. Yes, I can pick up the kids, but I am a little busy right now. With Tad, yes. No, she can't speak to him. Why? He's tied up at the moment. Okay, I'll tell him. Bye. Oh, I love you."

That was a relief. I thought for sure the ladies would be coming back and I hadn't finished my handiwork.

"Trish said, pick up some milk on the way home and don't worry about the kids. They are staying the night at my house. So, we need to hurry this up."

I realized I was making a huge mess, so I got out the shop-vac and cleaned up. Tad passed out again, so I took the time to lay some plastic on the ground, moved my weight bench on top of the plastic, and moved my prize into position. I took the duct tape off his wrists, and as I did, he woke up and fought back until I smashed my fist into his broken kneecaps. How many times was this boy going to take a nap? Tad passed out. With his hands safely tied to the weight bench, on each side, I knew what I had to do. I cleaned up my fold-out chair that Tad was sitting on, and finished using the shop-vac to suck up the hairy remnants.

I hunted around my shop for something that would give me a thrill. Sure, busting kneecaps and singeing his scalp was fine and dandy but there had to be more. I looked at my screwdriver, my pliers, and my torch but nothing stood out until I saw the circular saw.

"This will do," I said, with a shrill in my voice.

Tad's eyes were so huge that I don't think he blinked. The saw cut swiftly through his right wrist, and the blood was pouring out so fast I was worried about my newly cemented garage floor.

"Hang on, buddy."

I lit the torch again and cauterized the wound. Hair smells terrible but so does burning human flesh. I left the torch on and positioned it on the rack, so I didn't burn my house down.

"Nice to meet you, Tad," I said, as I pretended to shake hands with him. He didn't find that amusing.

"Come on, that was funny."

I put the appendage in a white fifteen-gallon bucket I kept in my garage for loose tools I didn't find a home for.

"What to do next?" I noticed Tad was dozing off again. "Goochie, goochie, goo."

Tickling his feet didn't work, so I cut off one of his big toes with my wife's garden sheers. He woke up. Man, I was on fire and creative. *Move over Vincent Van Gogh; I'm the artist tonight.*

"Stay with me now."

Into the house I went again but this time for the meat grinder. Thank God my wife ordered the industrial one that grinds up a whole roast with no issue. I wondered how it would do with bone. Wouldn't it be interesting to see him squirm if I ground up one finger at a time from his left hand? When I picked the thing up, I felt my stomach rumble. *Shit, I am hungry*, I thought. So, I made myself a sandwich and gulped it down. I riffled through the fridge for a soda, but there was none. *Fuck it*, I thought. I took a beer. Back to the garage I went.

"Alright, Tad, it seems hamburger is on the menu tonight, so I hope you are hungry. You seem a little bony to me, buddy."

Tad didn't reply. How could he? He had passed out again. I finished my beer and wanted another one.

"Be right back. Don't sit up for me. Do you want something?" I was facetious.

When I arrived back to the garage, Tad was awake again and had his eyes open staring at the meat grinder. I started smiling.

"Looks awesome, doesn't it?"

I then realized that his hand might not fit into the damn thing. So, I improvised. Tad's hand was surprising sweaty, but it was still flesh and bone. *The vice*, I thought. I couldn't figure out how I was going to do it, so I said, "Fuck the vice."

I smashed his left hand with a ball-peen hammer. Man, that tool was useful. *Oh my God*, he tried to scream. Surprisingly, he didn't go night-night again. At that point, I was anxious to use the machine to grind his whole body up, but the meat grinder wasn't big enough.

Tad tried to squirm as I placed the grinder on a footstool next to him. I plugged the thing into an extension cord and ground up some T-bone steaks to make sure it was working. It worked wonderfully, like a Pitbull devouring a bone. The machine completely decimated the steaks. Tad was beyond panic. Slowly, I took the mangled hand and squished it to fit into the grinder. Tad was louder than usual, and I hadn't even done the dirty deed.

"Shut up!" I bellowed.

At first, the meat grinder was spitting juices up into the air, so I used my other hand to cover the debris from escaping. I had never done this before, and I kinda liked it. I was overzealous when I realized I was grinding past his wrist. Tad disappeared into slumber land from shock again. Like I had done with the right hand, the left hand was torched to stop the bleeding. I wasn't sure if he was waking up from this endeavor, but I wasn't done.

Like most killers, I was thinking about keeping a souvenir. The thought wandered through my mind when a car pulled up in my driveway. I ran to the front door to see who it was. It was nobody. The car was pulling in to back out and turn the other way. *Whew*, I thought. That was a close call. I had never been caught before, and I wasn't going to get caught this time either.

Tad was pretty much done, but he had some life in him yet. I thought about quitting, but I didn't get caught before, and I wasn't going to go to jail for this piece of shit. I grabbed my trusty ball-peen hammer again and proceeded to annihilate his nether region. That did the trick. Tad woke up in a hurry. He was in so much pain he was barely conscious. I cut open the duct tape covering his mouth, pulled the sock out, and let him gasp out an indistinguishable sentence.

"Speak up, buddy. I can't hear you."

"Fuck you," Tad said, with a gurgled whisper.

"That a boy! Be a man. You don't have a fucking prayer right now but good for you. You piece of shit!"

The music changed to some god-awful country shit that my wife shares on the Pandora shuffle setting I was listening to. I couldn't let him die listening to that crap, so I changed the Pandora radio station to seventies funk and got my groove on. I proceeded to dance again, and at that moment I remembered a trick I learned from therapy with my military friends.

Car batteries have an incredible power when you wrap a sponge on both the negative and positive cables. I doused him with water and let it rip. As soon as the battery cables made contact with the wet skin of his scalp, he twitched like a madman. I was enjoying this one. I think I did it too long because he stopped breathing. *Damn it*, I thought. *I have to do CPR*. Just as I was about to start the compressions a miracle happened. God answered my prayers. Tad began to breathe on his own. Unbelievable. Someone wanted me to continue.

I waited for a few minutes to see if he would come to, but truth be told, he was already gone.

"Say goodnight, Gracie!"

CHAPTER THREE

Expiration of Tad

I didn't want any more blood spilling onto the plastic. There was potential for the blood to flow, like a river, onto my new garage floor. Instead of slitting his throat I merely strangled him. It was gross seeing his eyes pop out of his skull. At first, blood pooled in the corner of his eyes. Then his eyes turned bloodshot, his lips turned blue, and the buggers popped out. I was freaked out. Sure, I have done some horrific things, but eyes. That was gruesome.

I dismembered Tad, carefully, to ensure I didn't make a mess. Then the next step was to wrap Tad's body parts in plastic, duct tape them, and garbage-bag them. I looked around my garage and realized I had a mess. Into the laundry room I went, to retrieve the bleach and another bucket. It wasn't going to be difficult but time-consuming.

The tricks of my trade helped me out even though it had been years since I was involved in the cleanup. I knew the ultraviolet flashlight would only detect other fluids but not blood. The only way for me to do that was with the naked eye. I wiped everything in the garage down with bleach water, and that included the ceiling, garage doors, and every piece of loose equipment I had. The weight bench had to be destroyed, so I wrapped it up in plastic for my buddy Tony to take care of it. I double checked to ensure I cleaned everything up.

I placed Tad conveniently into two old suitcases, also lined with more plastic. Now the question was whether to bury him or drop his ass out to sea. I did have a boat.

I bet you're curious as to whether there were witnesses. Nope, I have a three-car garage. I had already double lined my car trunk with more plastic and duct tape to keep it in place. Yes, the bucket hitched a ride too. I miss that bucket.

I looked around the garage and realized I did a great clean-up job. All I had left to do was to clean the shop-vac. Into the house I went naked, after I put my clothes and shoes in plastic bags. I needed a shower. The last thing I did was clean up the bathroom. I left no trace of Tad.

Shit! I screamed to myself. He spit gum on my driveway. I collected that too, wiped up the spot where his saliva was dried to the concrete. A neighbor watched me, but I smiled and said, "My granddaughter spit gum on my driveway."

Tad's truck was an issue. The clock was ticking, and my wife and daughter were going to be back in a couple of hours. I called Tony. Oh, I didn't explain who he was. Okay, Tony was an old friend, still in the business, and he owed me.

I left the keys in the truck for him to take care of the vehicle and some cash, in an envelope, under the driver's side seat. Tony even checked for blood splatter in the garage just like the blood analysts do that you see on TV. I know, crime scene shit, but it he was great at it. Whatever I missed, Tony would take care of. He just had to be out of the house by nine.

I hung up with Tony and headed out. He was to be over in fifteen minutes and I didn't want to be anywhere near the crime scene when he arrived.

The street lamps were dimly lit in my neighborhood, and that was to my advantage. Some kids were playing capture the flag across the street, in a field. I stopped to get Billy's attention.

"Billy, don't forget to mow my lawn tomorrow."

"I won't, Mr. Burrows."

"Good, son. Be here at two."

"Cool, will do."

As I pulled away, a patrol car ventured toward me. It was Officer Jensen, my wife's best friend. She pulled up next to my car and rolled her window down.

"Where you headed to, Vick?"

I wanted to drive away, knowing that the house wasn't completely clear of possible traces of Tad.

"Eh, just heading out for a night drive. I might go see the stars out by the bay."

"Taking the boat?"

"Yeah, great idea, Janine." I was heading that way, anyway.

"Is Beth home?" she asked.

"Nope, she and Trish are at a movie."

"Ah, I see, why are you heading out? A little R&R?"

"You could say that," I responded.

"Hey, can I bother you to get my yoga mat and DVD? I have a class tomorrow, and I would like to use the video to get some of the lazy officers to try yoga."

I didn't have time for this, but I knew if I didn't comply she would be curious as to why. *Man, this sucks! I better hurry her ass up and get her on her way. Tony will be here soon, I thought.*

"Sure," I replied.

I pulled into another driveway and turned around as Janine parked her patrol car in front of my house. I forgot to close the garage door! I fumbled for the clicker, but it wasn't in the car. *I bet Beth has it, I thought.*

Janine met me in the driveway. I didn't want to rush to close the door, so I pretended like nothing happened. As I led her into the garage, in hopes she would follow me to into the house, she noticed my shop-vac.

"Cool, you have a shop-vac. Can I borrow that? Also, why does it smell like bleach in here?"

"I butchered a deer in here, and no, the shop-vac won't work after I sucked up the blood," I said convincingly.

She looked curious and scanned the garage.

"When did you go hunting?" she said, with a look like I was lying.

Fuck! I didn't know what to say; then it came to me.

"I was supposed to go up to my friend's private land last weekend but couldn't make it. I'm the butcher." I chuckled inside because I was a butcher, of Tad.

"Okay, so you cut the deer up for your friend. I get it. I bet you get some steaks out of that, huh? I might have to crash your barbecue for that."

"Sounds good to me. I'll have Beth call you when we barbecue." I crossed my arms and thought, *I better get some venison.*

"It sucks, pardon the pun, that my shop-vac quit."

"My boyfriend has one, I think, but he is stingy. So, I have never asked him for it."

"Nah," I said. "I will fix it, but for now I need a break from all the blood and guts."

"I bet that stinks? Do you throw the stuff in the garbage?"

"Oh, hell no. That would stink up my neighborhood." I leaned in closer to Janine. "I shouldn't tell a cop this, but I dump the stuff in the harbor."

"Fish food, right?" she said with a smile.

"Yep."

I was going to dispose of Tad's bloody mess in the ocean, about twelve miles offshore, in hopes the current would take care of the mess for me.

As we entered the house, I noticed a drop of blood on the kitchen linoleum floor. I stepped on it.

"I think Beth keeps the yoga stuff in the spare bedroom," I said convincingly.

"I know, silly. I come over to work out with her. You know that. Are you sure there is nothing wrong? You're sweating."

I wiped my forehead and smiled.

"Nope, it's warm to me."

"It's almost winter and sixty degrees outside."

"I know but I had the garage door shut while butchering the deer, and I guess my body is still on the cool down mode."

I didn't think she was going to buy my explanation, but to my surprise, she just smiled. Janine ventured into the bedroom and grabbed what she needed. I wiped my shoe off and the floor with a Clorox bleach wipe. When she returned with her items, I escorted her to her patrol car and said goodnight. *Whew, that was close*, I thought.

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Tony arrived as I was ready to leave. He promptly did his magic as I headed to the marina. I told him he had thirty minutes and he assured me he would be out in that amount of time. This was going to be close.

The night sky was sprinkled with twinkling lights that shone down upon the harbor waters. Frederick, or Freddy, was manning the gate and of course, he was eating a hoagie sandwich and no doubt watching wrestling on TV. I pulled up and he came out of his shack and greeted me.

"Hey, Mr. Burrows. How's your night going?" There were breadcrumbs all over the overweight man's chest, and his onion breath could be detected for miles.

"Just heading out for a night of stargazing. Out at sea, I get to view the stars without the city lights."

"Isn't it hard to use a telescope on the ocean?"

I laughed some and replied, "No, Freddy. I just need an escape. My two eyes are just fine to stare up at the night sky."

"Oh, yeah. Okay, Mr. Burrows. Have a great night!" Freddy said, as he opened the gate.

I drove on through and parked my car. My boat was on the last pier, but there were cameras. I wasn't worried. Freddy never paid attention when food and wrestling occupied his attention.

Tad, what a fuck wad. I was so elated I couldn't stop shaking as I carried both suitcases to my boat. The marina was unusually quiet and devoid of local boaters. I did see Danny Foster, a self-made millionaire, tending to his mistress, sipping wine, on the stern of his boat. He didn't see me.

I set Tad down on the deck of my 2004 Meridian 459 Motor Yacht that I usually used for company and deep-sea fishing. This was going to be easy. My wife called and said she was on her way home. I texted Tony to get out. He didn't respond. I got nervous, but there was nothing I could do. I prepared my boat for launch when something else happened.

"Hey, Vick," a familiar voice rang out.

I turned around to see Tony coming my way. I was worried something went wrong. Why was he here? Did he not clean up? It had only been forty minutes since I left the house.

"What are you doing here and how did you get in?"

"That doofus at the gate said you were on your boat and let me in. Besides, I'm done with the chore, but we have a problem."

"What?" I asked hoping it wasn't an issue.

"The truck wouldn't start." Tony made his way to my boat.

"The what! Fuck me!"

"Yes, and it was something stupid though. Mattie came over and found the battery cable was loose. He took the truck to his junkyard and disposed of it."

"Did anyone see you guys?"

"Some kids but they were more interested playing some game."

"So no one else?"

"Nope. You did most of the cleanup, bro. Your garage is spotless."

"Okay, so why are you here?"

"I figured you could use some company. I haven't seen you in a while, man. Chill."

"We shouldn't be seen together just in case someone saw you at my house."

"Dude, we should be seen together. It makes perfect sense that you and I went out together. I'm your alibi."

"Fuck it," I muttered. "Get on the boat."

'Don't Worry, Be Happy' rang on my phone. It was my wife.

"Hello."

"Hey, honey, I dropped off Trish, but Tad isn't home. Is he still with you?"

"Nope, he left the dresser and acted all high and mighty about how the dresser was old. I told him that was the appeal."

"Really? What an ungrateful asshole."

"I know, right?"

"Well, he didn't come home, and he still isn't answering his phone."

I knew why; I had his phone. I had taken the SIM card out and smashed it. It was in a plastic bag, with holes in the bag, ready for disposal out in the ocean blue.

"Honey, it's Tad. He might have gone to get weed and is now stoned off his ass at a friend's house. Don't worry about it."

"Where are you at?" My wife sounded curious.

"I am at the marina. I'm going out for a bit to relax. Tad got me all stirred up inside. I'll be home just after midnight."

I regularly went out fishing or stargazing, so this wasn't out of the norm. She sounded okay with it and said, "Okay, I'll pick up the kids. I love you."

"Was that Beth?" Tony asked a dumb question.

I responded with, "Duh."

"Grab the lines, Tony."

Tony set the mooring lines free, and we headed out to sea.

Tad never showed up at home; surprise, surprise. Trish freaked out and called the police. Janine was the first to arrive at the house, and she gave me the stink eye as if I was guilty. She even questioned me about how much I hated the bastard; something about a motive. I knew they couldn't pin it on me. Nothing came of it but Billy, the kid who cut my grass, told the cops I left at eight-fifteen in the evening in my sedan. Janine came to my rescue and confirmed that was where I was going. No one mentioned the truck. Tad was settling in on the ocean floor in two suitcases that I poked holes in so it would sink. Even with the weight of the suitcase, I was sure his body would find a deeper part of the ocean. The California current runs south and onto the middle of the Pacific.

A funny thing happened. One suitcase made it to Hawaii by summer of the next year. It was all over the news. I was lucky; his head wasn't in that suitcase. The only evidence the police had was a torso, and appendages. For some reason, I kept his right hand and put it in the freezer at a secret storage location. Shh, I can't tell. Maybe it was a prize, or perhaps it was a reminder of what to show other suitors that fucked with my daughter. The only thing more useful would be a taxidermy version of Tad's head on my wall.

It had been years of inactivity that enabled me to be a rational human being, a good husband, and a good father. I was an upstanding citizen, a pillar of my community, a volunteer at the local food bank, and a deacon at my church, but inside I was, and always will be, a contract killer.



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