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MOTEL

by Shawn Raiford

"I am a serial killer. I would kill again."

Aileen Wuornos

It had been a while since the last one; Ana felt the *hunger* returning.

She didn't know what else to call it besides a kind of *hunger*. The hunger was a black, three-dimensional cobweb that reached every part of her brain--it gnawed slowly like a Saint Bernard with a big bone. She knew that she could ignore it for a while but soon she would have to deal with it.

At the moment, all she wanted was to sleep.

Ana would not hesitate to slaughter a church full of priests if it meant she could sleep in a bed tonight.

She had traveled most of the day. Warming the right side of her face--the sun sat on the horizon to her right--sweat rolling down her back. Small rocks crunched under her feet as she walked along the side of the old Texas road.

She didn't know how long she'd been walking--it must have been a few hours because her left knee and both ankles were

getting sore.

She took off her plaid, long-sleeve shirt, a shirt that she stole a couple of weeks ago from a department store, and tied it to a strap of her backpack. The wind felt good against her slick, sweaty skin but she was tired. *Nothing would beat a shower and a soft bed* she thought.

Ana felt like she could sleep a for a week.

Last week she landed at a truck stop south of Amarillo, Texas. She couldn't find a willing trucker at the truck stop to let her crash in his truck's cabin. Most of them wanted to fuck her first, but none met the minimalists of standards.

Since she was in no hurry to get anywhere, she hung out at the truck stop for a few days and nights. Ana's days were spent in the truck stop's eating area, working a crossword puzzle she found in the bathroom, and drawing doodles on napkins.

An elderly couple--Joan and Bert--struck up conversation with Ana the second evening. She told them a sob story how her fake boyfriend left her without any money, and they bought her a cheeseburger (with mustard and pickles only), french fries, and a large fountain drink: Coke, not Pepsi. She slowly drank fountain drink, refilling twice, and savored every one of her fries. She only ate a bite of the burger--she saved it for the next day. Bert stood up, telling her that they were leaving.

Where y'all headed? she asked them. They weren't heading anywhere special. They lived in Amarillo and the only reason why they were at the truck stop was because Bert really liked the chicken basket, so she didn't ask for a ride.

While giving Joan and Bert a hug bye and telling them how grateful she was for the meal, Ana was able to swipe Bert's wallet. The wallet didn't help her much because Bert only had a five dollar bill and two credit cards. Ana never stole credit cards or used them. It wasn't because she had any moral objection to stealing or using stolen credit cards, it was just that there were too many cameras nowadays--Orwell was a right!--it would only be a matter of time before the law found her and locked her up.

Ana valued her freedom too much to be locked up. She wasn't afraid of going to jail or prison, a girl had free everything in prison: Food, water, and a bed. The only thing about being locked up in prison was that there weren't many men--besides some of the guards--in women's prison.

She'd have no one to *play* with if she were locked up.

Ana just took the five dollars out and gave Bert's wallet with the truck stop's clerk, telling him she found it near the bathroom.

The first night she slept in a car that had been left open.

Her last few nights Ana curled up with her purse and backpack behind the truck stop, angled an old pallet against the back wall and slept under it.

Early in the morning, she managed to get a lift from a beer-bellied trucker who liked to snort coke from his pinky fingernail while driving. He offered but she declined. Ana got off after a few dozen miles and walked about half an hour before she got another ride from a man who only spoke Mexican. He was dark but not that small. He managed to inform her that his name was Juan Eduardo from Veracruz. He tried to speak English but Ana grew impatient and stopped listening. The man from Veracruz dropped Ana off about an hour ago.

The temperature dropped a couple of degrees and night was fast coming. She trudged down the highway, making her way towards some lights up ahead. The lights belonged to a motel. She only had twenty bucks but she would not waste them on a room.

Ana made her way towards the manager's office.

She was hoping that she could sway the manager to let her crash out on a bed or even the floor somewhere for a blow job. If he wanted to fuck her it would be the room plus twenty bucks.

She wore a pair of blue Adidas running shoes, blue jean cutoffs, the legs cut off just under her butt cheeks. Her tan

thinnish legs showed a few scratches and a bruise on the left thigh. Her dirty blonde hair was stringy, tucked behind her ears, reached halfway down the back of her pink t-shirt.

The door was all glass and Ana peeked into the lobby but couldn't see the night manager. She opened the front door, entering the office. A bell clanked against the upper part of the metal frame of the door as she walked through. The air conditioning was cold and felt good to Ana. A woman came through a door on the back wall, stood behind the front desk, holding a small styrofoam cup. "Hello," she said, smiling, placing the cup down on the desk.

Damn it!

Ana shook her head slightly. *Hope she's a lesbo.*

She smiled, still hopeful. Ana turned to the left, noticed the coffee pot and styrofoam cups on a small table against the adjacent wall. There were small containers with sugar and creamer. Ana's mouth watered a little.

She turned back to face the woman. "Howdy," said Ana, inching her way to the desk. The office was a bit dated but clean and helped make the office feel a little cozy. A computer monitor, keyboard, and mouse sat on top of the desk. They were accompanied by a plant with dark reddish leaves. The woman was shorter than Ana. She was white and around forty with shoulder-

length brownish straight hair. Ana could tell that she was no lesbian. Lesbians always looked at Ana like they wanted to have her for supper on the spot. She figured her odds at being able to sleep here were low, but Ana would try anyway.

"My name is Ana," she said, sticking her hand out, stretching across the desk.

The woman accepted Ana's hand and shook it. "My name is Gracie, how do you do, Ana?" she said, letting go of her hand.

"It's funny you ask, Gracie. I am not doing so well. Down on my luck." Ana exhaled. "Long story short, my boyfriend left me high and dry in Amarillo and I'm trying to get back to Houston," she said.

Gracie's facial expression went from that of a welcoming shopkeep to that of an irritated mother-in-law upset with her daughter-in-law.

"And you need some money? Is that it, Honey?" she said, folding her arms.

Ana shook her head slowly. "No, ma'am, I was hoping you had a small section of floor somewhere or an unused bed I could sleep in for a few hours, then I'll be on my way." She winced. "I've slept outside for the last few nights and I'd like to sleep inside tonight if possible."

Gracie grabbed her cup from the desk, took another sip of

her what Ana thought was coffee and sat it back down. She walked to the side of the desk, pushed open the swing door that was attached at the end of the desk. It rubbed against the wall slightly, over time, leaving the spot streaked and discolored. Gracie stopped, letting the swing door swing behind her. She was bare foot, sliding her feet into a pair of house slippers that Ana hadn't notice before.

"Well, Ana, I'm sorry but you got to get the fuck out of here!" Gracie said, opening the door Ana just came through--the bell clanked against the door.

Ana felt her face heat up a little.

Gracie pointed out the door with her other hand.

She cussed me.

Ana wanted to grab the box cutter from her back pocket, cut up this bitch's face, open up her belly. She pulled in a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

She wouldn't kill her--Ana never killed women.

She wanted to tell this woman that she'd do some work around the motel in exchange for a room but Ana knew that she wouldn't agree to that. No, she wouldn't kill Gracie but Ana wouldn't--*she couldn't*--let it go.

She cussed me!

She gained energy with every breath. Glancing back at the

desk, she saw Gracie's cup. Her mouth watered. It made her want coffee.

"Go on! Get the hell out of here, or do I need to call the sheriff, Ana? I call him and he'll be here in five minutes," Gracie said impatiently.

Five minutes? Gracie, in five minutes I could be playing in a pool of your blood. She smiled, holding up a hand. "No ma'am, I'm leaving, sorry to have disturbed you."

#

Wanting to let the *hunger* loose, Ana walked down the sidewalk towards the motel's rooms.

She walked a few feet down the sidewalk, checking to see if Gracie was watching her. She wasn't. Ana walked and found the small laundry room and dropped backpack on a dryer.

There were standard residential washing machines and dryers, with coin slots inhabiting the laundry room. She saw that it was fifty cents a wash. She had some change and thought about throwing some of her stuff in but didn't because she had to hold on to all the money she could. One washing machine and two dryers were on. She sat on top of one of the dryers; the shaking felt good. Her feet and ankles thanked her for resting. She sat and jiggled for ten minutes before jumping off.

She peeked outside the door, looked down the sidewalk, into

a passageway. She saw what looked like an ice machine. She looked--there weren't many cars in the parking lot--three in all. Remembering the coffee pot, she went back to the door and peeked in the lobby, watching Gracie type something into the computer. Ana waited a couple of minutes, watching as Gracie exited through a back door, leaving the front desk unattended. She grabbed the door bell as she slowly opened the door, entering the lobby. She eased over to the coffee pot, grabbing a styrofoam cup, pouring herself a full cup of coffee. She put a stirrer in the coffee, pocketing several packets of sugar and dry creamer.

As she turned to leave Ana noticed Gracie's lipsticked-stained cup still on the front desk and an idea came to her. She grabbed another styrofoam cup and extended two fingers--an upside-down peace sign--inside Gracie's cup. Lifting it, Ana placed Gracie's cup inside the new cup. Ana dumped the inch of coffee at the bottom of Gracie's cup into a trash can next to the table, placing her coffee cup inside, Gracie's cup was now the middle cup. She turned to leave once more and stopped, looking down at Gracie's slippers standing guard outside the swinging door like little watchdogs. She grabbed them. She held the bell while leaving the lobby.

She put Gracie's slippers in her backpack, placing them

next to a small purse. With the cup of coffee in hand and backpack hanging from a shoulder, Ana moseyed to the nearest street corner. The street light was out which allowed her to hangout fairly close to the motel without being seen easily.

Ana found an old milk crate under an old Oak tree. She used it to sit on a few yards from the street corner. There was a cluster of trees about fifty yards away and she thought that would be the worst of her choices of places to sleep tonight. Under the small purse and slippers, inside her backpack, she found the honeybun and Pringles, the last of the food she stole from a convenient store two days ago. She put the Pringles back, thinking that the salty taste wouldn't go well with the coffee. She enjoyed the warm liquid trickling down her throat and the sugary sweetness of the honeybun. When you didn't eat much--life on the road--food tasted incredible when you finally ate something.

She ate the honeybun slowly, making it last, savoring every morsel. Ana sat there on the milk crate for another hour before Gracie had her next customers: a black family, mom and dad, and son. They got a room on the right side of the motel, opposite side of where she sat.

Then one of the original cars in the parking lot had left. Another hour passed, more clients. One man in a suit, probably a

businessman. The other was a young Hispanic man with his girlfriend, she might have been a prostitute. Ana wasn't sure. He was dressed like a cowboy and she was dressed in a short skirt with hooker heels.

Will the businessman be the lucky one? Or will the Mexican have a three-way?

Ana decided to wait--it wasn't that late. She dug in the purse and found a half eaten Slim Jim. She yelped out in excitement. Slim Jim was her favorite food group. She ate it a half inch at a time and enjoyed every bit of it. Twenty minutes later an old blue Ford truck pulled into a parking spot in front of the lobby. A white man got out of the truck.

He'd be the lucky one.

#

When Ana saw the Mexican leave with his companion, she looked at an old Timex watch affixed to a side pouch of her backpack: Fifty-two minutes after entering the room.

The Mexican's vehicle came alive, growling like a wild beast. He and the hooker drove off.

Ana took what she needed from the backpack and grabbed the purse, leaving the backpack one block up the road, next to a big oak tree. She would come back later to get it.

Ana walked on the edge of the motel's parking lot incase

Gracie came out, Ana could duck down out of sight quickly. It was dark--hard to see anything.

Gracie didn't come out of the lobby and Ana made it to the Mr. Ford truck's door. She combed hair with her fingers before knocking.

The door swung open. Mr. Ford truck driver stood in the doorway, shirtless. Ana noted the salt and pepper covering his head and his belly was flat.

Oh yeah, I'm gonna have some fun.

He smiled. She knew by the way he didn't shy away from being shirtless, he was used to getting attention from the opposite sex. "Well, it must be my birthday," he said, taking a pull from a beer can.

She showed her teeth in a smile. "It could be, Handsome," she said, biting her bottom lip.

He looked to the right and then to the left. He looked at Ana, licking his lips, grabbing his crotch. "What's your name, darling?"

"Candy."

He smiled again. "I bet that's your name," he said. "And I bet you're as sweet as candy."

Feeling welcome, she stepped closer. "I was wondering if you wanted some company, Handsome" she said, twirling a strand

of hair.

"Don't you know it's dangerous to be doing what you're doing, Candy?"

She shrugged. "Are you dangerous, Handsome?"

He shook his head, rubbed his chin. "I don't know. I was going to have a couple of beers and hit the hay."

"Come on Handsome, it won't take that long--unless you want it too," she said, grinning sinfully.

"How much is your company gonna cost me?"

She looked past him and noticed the beer sitting on a small writing table near the door. "Since, you're good looking and all, how about twenty bucks and a beer or two?" Ana said, jutting her chin towards the beer.

He looked back at the beer then back at Ana and said, "Okay, come on in."

She moved passed him, entering his room. He grabbed a handful of her ass, she didn't flinch. Ana liked a little foreplay before *playtime*.

She put her purse down on the night stand, took off Gracie's slippers and flung them under the bed nearest the entrance. She laid on top of the bed. The bed was soft, felt good to lie down, stretch out like a kitten.

"My name is Gary," he said, walking passed her, grabbing a

couple of beers.

Ana sat up in the bed and he handed one to her. The beer can was cool in her hand. Just a few moments ago, she was in the street, not many choices in life. Now she was inside, sitting on a soft bed, with a beer in hand about to take Gary's money and *more*.

Life is good.

She popped the top and filled her mouth. Beer was not her favorite but it tasted great.

"If you want something with a little more kick, I have this too," said Gary, showing her a pint of Jack Daniels.

She giggled. "Oh, my, Gary! Thank you! Yes, I would like some of that," she said grinning like a horny schoolgirl.

He took off the wrapper that covered the cap, unscrewed it and handed it to Ana. She took a pull and relished the burning down her throat. She handed it back to Gary and he took a swig.

He held the bottle, looking at it. "I'm a beer guy but every now and then I like to drink the hard stuff."

"I'm the opposite. I only drink beer if it's the only thing but I prefer the hard stuff."

He looked around and asked, "You know what? I haven't eaten yet. Are you hungry? I was thinking of ordering a pizza. What do you think?"

I think that I want to use my box cutter to scalp you--wear your hair like a wig.

Ana threw him a playful smile. "Okay, but don't tell that lady, the night manager I'm here, she told the get the fuck out of her motel, earlier."

He pointed in the general direction of the lobby. "You mean Gracie?"

Her forehead crinkled. "You know her?"

Gary shrugged. "Yeah, I've been coming here for a few months now, my work takes me up to Amarillo and sometimes up to Oklahoma. Gracie's not bad, just going through a bad divorce. She's got a couple of kids, her husband has custody of them."

She had no interest in *his work* so she didn't ask. *This is good* she thought.

"Wow, you know a lot about a motel night manager in the middle of nowhere, Gary."

"Well, she and I, you know..." he stopped, taking a swig of beer.

She smiled. "You dog, you fucked her, didn't you?"

He grinned like a little boy who was being bad. "Just a few times, nothing serious. She told me to call her later but it looks like I don't have to now."

"I'm nobody to judge. If you promise not to tell her that

I'm here, yes, I would like some pizza." She couldn't believe it! She was going to have some pizza!

He got up. "There's pizza place about ten miles up the road. I forget the name of it at the moment but I've ordered pizza from there before. The number's in my phone, I'll call them." He grabbed his phone. Ana noticed that he did not enter a security code.

She nodded, standing up. "I need to freshen up would it be okay if I used your bathroom?" she asked, giving him doe eyes.

He waved towards the bathroom. "Yeah, of course, help yourself," he said, taking another swig.

She walked passed him, making sure to touch his leg, near his crotch. She turned to face him at the door of the bathroom. "It'd be nice if you put the money on the dresser, next to the TV."

He nodded, reaching for his wallet. "Alright, no problem."

She grinned, putting her hand in her back pocket, touching the old style metallic box cutter. "Go ahead, and get comfortable, shouldn't take me long."

He swallowed, grinning. "All right."

#

Ana smelled herself when she took off her shorts and panties.

Closing her eyes, her head went back, turning slightly as if the smell punched her in the face. "Damn girl, it's been too long!" she said aloud to the mirror.

Ana sat down on the toilet and did her business not bothering to wipe or clean herself. She turned on the shower. It took a minute but the water got very hot. It felt great to scrub off a week's worth of muck, grime, and stink. She didn't wash her hair, saving that for her next shower a little later on tonight. She washed her bra and panties in the shower and left them hanging on the shower rod. After spending ten minutes under the hot water, she got out. She dried her body off and looked at the mirror. It was fogged up. She wiped it with the towel and could see herself, thought she looked a little better than before. She put her hair up in a ponytail, and found Gary's shaving cream and a bag of disposable razors, ten count, on the bathroom counter. It was the cheap plastic kind of razors that any grocery or convenient store offered.

Being a part-time giver of sex after accepting money, Ana kept a razor in her backpack and would use gas-station-bathroom soap to as shaving cream. She normally kept her legs and nether region smooth but she hadn't taken care of those particular areas in about a week, so she took a few minutes to shave. When she was done, Ana hopped back into the shower and washed off

shaving cream residue. She then found Gary's tooth paste and toothbrush and brushed her teeth. Ana grabbed her towel from the floor and wrapped it around her delicates.

She exited the humid bathroom, the rest of the room felt cool. "That shower felt so good," she said, standing next to the nearest bed. She glanced over at the TV, two twenties lying on the dresser.

Extra? Good boy.

Gary was in the bed nearest the bathroom. The bedcover concealed his body up to his waist. She couldn't tell if he had a hard on or not.

He looked at her and smiled.

She let her towel drop to the floor, revealing her now-clean body.

Gary's mouth dropped slightly.

She took a deeper than normal breathe. "Wow! I feel so much better..."

There was a knock at the door.

Gary looked at the door and then at Ana. "It's the pizza."

She jumped into bed as Gary got out, wearing his boxers. Ana pulled the bedcover up over her head. The sheets felt cool and clean against her backside.

She heard the door open.

"Hello, again sir!" Ana could tell the person who was delivering the pizza was a man. He sounded young.

"How much is it again?"

The pizza delivery guy told him the amount. "Okay, hang on let me get my wallet."

Several seconds went by without either man speaking. Ana remained still, covered up.

"Here you go, keep the change," said Gary.

She heard, "Thank you sir!" before the door closed all the way. She peeked out from under the covers.

He held up the pizza box. "You hungry?" he asked, smiling. "Nothing better than beer and pizza!"

She smiled, keeping eye contact with him. "How about you get some dessert before that pizza?" Ana asked, throwing the bed cover off of her, spreading her legs.

His eye brows shot up. "Uh, okay, I can do that," he said, putting the pizza box down on the dresser. He went over to the bed and laid on top of Ana.

He kissed her; she embraced him.

She caressed his ass, feeling the hairs between her fingers. She breathed in his musk. It felt good to have him between her legs, so close to her and her *box cutter*.

She shoved her tongue into his mouth, he did the same. He

kissed her neck and then sucked her nipples. She was so wet, grabbing his salt and pepper, pushing his head downward. He moved down and Ana reacted with an electric shock all over her body when his fingers found the right spot.

He spent a few minutes down there until she yelled out, coming. He got up off the bed, standing up. She watched as he took off his boxers. He was hard. She was impressed by the size. He stood by the side of the bed while she grabbed it, placing it in her mouth, making him moan.

He pushed her down onto the bed, mounting her, aiming it at the prize. She held him up. "Hang on, Handsome, before you put that big thing inside me, it needs to be covered up, okay?" she said.

He let her up. "Yeah, that's cool," he said.

She went into the bathroom, grabbing her purse.

Ana sat down on the edge of the bed, found out a condom and her trusted box cutter. She put her purse down on the floor, slipping her left hand under her pillow, leaving the box cutter, giving Gary a kiss. "Okay, let me put this on you," she said, showing him the condom.

She moved down, grabbing him, stroking it for a few seconds before putting the condom on. She laid down, as Gary got on top, entering her. She moved her hips, trying to find his rhythm,

reaching under her pillow, finger tips finding the box cutter.

"Oh, Candy, this is so good," he moaned.

Ana grabbed the box cutter's handle, pushing the bottom against the bed, revealing the razor's edge.

"Come on big boy, fuck me hard!" she demanded.

Gary grunted, grinding his hips into her hips.

Her free hand grabbed a hand full of hair. "Fuck me like my daddy used to!"

The grinding came to a halt.

Those words had worked before on past boys she played with. They worked this time.

His face glistened. Gary looked into her eyes. "What did you say?" Feeling his weight on her, she smelled the alcohol in his breathe, reminding her of twenty years in the past.

Don't Daddy!

His eyebrows came together like two caterpillars fighting.

Ana's hand moved quickly, the razor's blade finding the side of his neck. She pressed hard, feeling the blade rake across the cartilage of his Adam's Apple. Before he reacted Ana place the blade higher up on his neck, closer to his ear, bringing the blade down, slicing open the side of his throat.

Blood rained. It was beautiful.

His eyes bulged. Gary's hand shot up to cover up the

leaking gashes. A gurgle escaped his half-opened beak as blood covered Ana's face and breasts.

Feeling the warmth of the blood, she smeared it with her free hand all over her body.

Gary fell to the right of the bed, lying on his back, both hands now trying to stop the bleeding.

Ana spun up, now on all fours, looking down at her victim. Blood pooled around the left side of his head. She looked down and cut his thigh, then she cut his belly open like he were a fish.

More blood seeped out of his body.

Ana grinned, looking at Gary but not seeing him. "Look Daddy! I'm strong too! I'm in control now!" she yelled, cutting Gary on other places of this body. She giggled when he tried to scream.

Gary stared up at the ceiling, eyes emptying. She grabbed his cock, using the box cutter to cut it off, left the boys though.

A dying gurgle escaped Gary's mouth. There was nothing he could do to help himself. He stopped moving--his body was lifeless meat.

Ana laid next to him for several minutes. The blood felt warm against her skin. The smell of copper almost made her high.

She finally got up, placing Gary's dick in a small wash cloth from the bathroom and placed it on the dresser next to the two twenties.

Her body was covered in blood, dripped from her hands. She flung the blood from her hand onto the white walls of the motel room. She cupped more of the blood from the bed. Speckling the entire room. Ana looked all around the room and said gleefully, "It looks better this way."

Just above the bed board, Ana wrote: "*Why Gracie?*"

#

Ana was fully dressed, peering out the window.

She wanted to make sure no one was walking around before she left the room. She already wiped the room of her fingerprints, and checked the bed and shower for her hairs. She clutched her purse in one hand, Gary's cell phone in the other. She went through Gary's wallet and found another hundred and twenty dollars. She smeared a little blood on the bills he left next to the TV, without leaving any prints.

Gary had pictures of him, a woman, and two small boys. *This is his family.*

She took the picture of him and his wife out of the wallet. She used a pen from her purse to mark out his wife's face.

She left Gary's room when she saw no one was outside. She

walked and felt ten feet tall. The night air was cold and refreshing against her face and legs.

Ana went around to the other side of the motel and found a spot to stand. It was the middle of the night and everybody was sound asleep, except for Ana and Gracie.

She was looking in Gary's phone, searching at his contacts. She found Gracie's cell phone number. She sent Gracie a text about meeting up.

Meeting up with Gary.

Half a minute later Gracie replied, accepting his offer but she needed a few minutes.

Ana sat quietly--some distance from the office--waiting patiently.

Gracie exited the front door to the lobby about five minutes after texting. Ana got up and approached the door to the lobby. She opened it when she thought Gracie was far enough away. She grabbed the bell, closing the door. Ana pushed through the swing door, looking under the front desk, not finding Gracie's purse. She went through the back door, entered what Ana believed to be Gracie's living area. It was a living room with a small kitchenette off in the corner. She glanced around until she saw it. Gracie's purse was on the coffee table.

Ana moved over to the coffee table, taking the small wash

cloth out of her purse, placing it inside Gracie's purse. She pulled out something wrapped in toilet paper: the bloody box cutter and two bloody twenty dollar bills. She unwrapped them, and dropping them into Gracie's purse.

Then she moved to the kitchen, found a plate from the cupboard and put it on the counter. She pulled out something else that was wrapped in toilet paper from her purse: three slices of pizza. She unwrapped the slices onto the plate, keeping one, and left it out on a counter. She wadded up the toilet paper and put it in her purse.

Ana then walked into the next room, Gracie's bedroom. She sat down on the edge of the bed and pulled Gary's picture from her back pocket. Ana put the picture--with Gary's wife's face marked out with pen--in a small drawer of the night stand, using her pinky to open the drawer.

Ana stood up, looking around the bedroom, noting the dresser of drawers. She found the drawer where Gracie kept her bra and panties. Ana looked at Gary's phone and turned the ringer on. She wiped it off, placing it under the panties. She looked up when she heard something.

Ana moved to the door. There was screaming in the lobby.
Gracie's back.

She heard Gracie speaking, loudly. Ana stayed next to the

door, reaching in her purse for the other box cutter, a backup. She had a small box of them in her backpack. The box wasn't full anymore, she had maybe three or four box cutters left. Last year a john helped her order some off the internet. From his room and the motel's free wi-fi Ana ordered a box of box cutters from Amazon. The john had paid for the room for an entire week up front. She stayed with him for a few days. She had poured him a bath after slipping him a couple of Xanax. She slit his throat an hour after the package of box cutters was delivered by UPS. Ana had to leave after the body started to stink.

She heard Gracie tell someone, probably a 911 operator, about Gary.

"There's so much blood! Please hurry! God, I think he's dead!"

Ana stayed put for about three or four minutes. She peeked through the door when she heard the bell clank against the door. The police must have arrived.

She saw the flashing red and blue lights through the front door as she moved towards the exit. Ana stopped at the swing door. She saw something shiny out the corner of her eye. She looked down and noticed the keys to the motel's rooms. She thought it over for a second or two and grabbed one. She was content with sleeping outside next to a tree but a soft bed was

a soft bed. Ana went back to the coffee table and put a twenty, making sure not to leave prints on it, inside Gracie's purse so she could tell the cops that she paid for the room.

She went out the front door, holding the bell again. She watched as Gracie walked towards flashing lights, outside Gary's room.

Ana went to the other side of the motel and found the room the key opened. She went inside and started the water in the shower. She entered the shower when the bathroom was all steamy. She took a long shower, making sure she washed her hair and finger nails.

She got out of the shower, dried off and ate a slice of cold pizza and sipped some Jack Daniels. She turned on the TV and got under the bedcover. She watched the news for almost five minutes before falling asleep.

#

Ana popped up from the bed--momentarily forgetting where she was.

The TV was on.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Knock at the door. She looked at the digital clock on the night stand. It had been almost two hours since she fell asleep. Her brain hurt. It needed more sleep.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

She got out of bed. "Okay! Okay, I'm coming!" she yelled at the door. Whoever was knocking probably saw the light, and sound, from the TV and thought she was awake. She unlocked the lock, keeping security chain fastened, and opened the door a few inches. She only had her bra and panties on. Her other clothes were hanging up in the closet.

A cop or sheriff stood at the door. He was red headed and XL around the mid section. He wore a hat.

He tipped it at her.

"Ma'am, I am sorry to wake you. I heard the TV on and thought you were awake."

"That's okay officer." He didn't correct her so she kept going. "What's going on?"

"There's been a bit of trouble here at the motel and I need to go around and ask questions?" he said.

Ana knew that she could refuse to answer any of his questions, it was still a free country, right? But she was curious. She rarely had a chance to speak to law enforcement, *afterwards.*

The cop blinked.

She squinted. *I'd prefer to use my box cutter on you, open up your big gut and play with your innards.*

"Okay, but we need to do it in here, come on in," she said,

unfastening the security chain. She opened the door. She grabbed her t-shirt--one of Gary's--and put it on and laid back down in bed. "Sorry, I am very tired, officer."

He smiled like any other cop. "That's okay ma'am," said the officer, entering the room, leaving the door half open.

He pulled out a notepad from his back pocket. "What is your name? You have any ID?"

"I only have ID if I'm being accused of something." She had a valid Texas driver's license but he didn't need to see it.

"Oh no ma'am, no need to be alarmed. I'm sorry, standard question. Can I get at least first name?"

He must've seen the *how-long-is-this-going-to-take* look on her face. "I'll be out of here in a couple of minutes then you can get back to sleeping."

She looked at the officer thinking how much fun it would be to play with him.

"So, your name is--"

My real one is Ana Raleigh Key.

"I'm sorry, my name is Candice Reynolds." She gave him the name on the ID she had in her purse anyway. She took it off a Candice a few weeks ago in Dallas. Ana met her in a bar. She and Candice looked close enough alike so she took Candice's purse when the bar got packed.

Ana always had someone's ID on her. It had been a long time since she had her own ID. She would be throwing *Candice Lyn Reynolds's* ID away very soon.

The officer wrote her name down in his notepad.

"Miss Reynolds, there was somebody killed," he pointed to the floor, "in one of the rooms on the other side of the motel."

She opened her mouth, bringing the bedcover up to her neck "Oh, no! Is it not safe here?" she asked, pulling up the bed cover to her chin.

He put his hand up, palm out. "Now, don't go worrying about anything Miss Reynolds. Everything is going to be okay. We believe that we have found the guilty party and me being here, asking you questions, is just to gather more information. It's very standard, no need to worry about anything, really."

"Okay."

"I am here going around to the motel's occupants to see if they saw or heard anything earlier."

She shook her head. "No, my boyfriend left me in Amarillo with barely any money. I asked the lady that works here at the motel to give me a break on the room and she let me have the room for twenty bucks," she said.

"She gave you the room for twenty bucks cash?"

"Yes, I don't have any credit cards."

He wrote on his noted pad. "Anything strange about her behavior, Miss Reynolds?"

She tilted her head slightly, as if thinking. "Who the lady that works here?"

He nodded.

Ana made a face but kept on talking. "Now that I think about it, she did seem a bit nervous or something, said something about a boyfriend or something. I was so tired, I didn't pay much attention to her. I came straight to this room and took a shower and went to bed."

He wrote in the small notepad.

"Who do you guys think killed that man?"

He looked up from the notebook. "I can't divulge any information from an ongoing investigations, ma'am."

"Really, I won't be here tomorrow, I won't tell, I promise," said Ana, grinning.

He shrugged. "Sorry ma'am, I can't but I can tell you that it ain't pretty."

#

She tried, but Ana couldn't sleep after the fat cop left.

She got dressed and left the motel. She thought that she could probably stay in her room another night but she did not

want to push her luck. Ana stayed out of prison this long because she was always cautious. She left the room key on the front desk and walked out to the road. She walked passed the cops. She didn't see the cop that asked her questions.

Ana wasn't sure what would happened to Gracie, but she knew that Gracie would have problems explaining the bloody message on the wall in his room. And she'd have to explain the bloody money and severed penis in her purse. Not to mention the small things like Gracie's slippers under Gary's bed, the pizza on her counter, and his phone under her undies.

Gracie should have been nice to me.

Her backpack was right where she had left it. She went through it and found what she was looking for--a bundle of cards. It was mostly business cards but there were a couple of ID's in there too. She looked through the bundle and found her last stolen ID: *Sheryl LeAnn Meyers*.

She held it out in front of her and said, "I'm Sherrie, now." She threw the *Candy* ID away and stuck the Sherrie ID in her purse.

Ana threw on her backpack, walked down the road, stuck her thumb out every time she heard a vehicle coming her way.

She'd lost count of the number of cars that passed her on the road. Cars had passed her--trucks too. She even counted a

couple of passing motorcycles. She'd walked most of the day; night was coming fast; she decided to keep trying for another twenty minutes before she would find a spot to lie down and rest and probably sleep for a couple of hours.

Not even five minutes later, a dark blue Honda Civic sedan pulled over in front of her. She wanted to grin but she was too tired. Ana walked up to the passenger's side. The window was down, she rested her forearm on the door, peeking inside. She did manage to find enough strength to smile and twirl a strand of hair.

She saw a white pudgy man, mid forties. He parted his brown, thin hair to the right and wore black, thick-framed glasses.

He is perfect. He will be fun.

The driver of the Honda Civic pushed his glasses up on his nose, using his middle finger. "Where you headed young lady?" he asked.

She wiped her forehead. "Well, I'm headed south to Houston, Handsome," said Ana, giving him her best smile.

He waved. "Jump on in, I'll take you as far as I can," he said.

She threw her backpack in the back and got in the front seat. He put it in drive, they drove off.

He used his middle finger to push his glasses up on his nose again.

His nose must be greasy. Heavy men tend to sweat and get greasy.

"My name is Joel," he said, offering her his hand. She grabbed it and shook it.

Ana looked at Joel, touching his right leg. "My name is Sherrie, nice to meet you Joel," said Ana, leaving her hand on his leg.

Joel smiled and did nothing to remove her hand.

They drove down the road for a minute before Joel said something. "So, what's pretty girl like you doing out here by yourself, Sherrie?"

She showed him a woeful face. "My boyfriend left me in Amarillo and took all of our money, so I'm headed back to Houston."

Joel looked into the rearview mirror. "Ah hell, that ain't cool. What kind of man leaves a pretty thing like you to fend for herself?"

This is going to be so much fun. "With no money," she said, crying into her hands.

"Hey, so I might be able to help out with that Sherrie," said Joel, grinning.

She looked up, gave him a grin. "Really, I would do anything, Joel," she said, touching his leg again, inching closer to his crotch. "I slept outside last night and I want to sleep on a bed tonight and I wouldn't mind a little company."

He smiled, pushing up his glasses again. "Okay, I know where we can go," he said, looking at her, smiling, showing stained teeth.

She returned his smile. "Really, where are we going?"

"There's a motel a few miles up the road."

Ana reached up and pulled down passenger side's sun visor. It had a small mirror. She looked at her face. She noticed Joel stealing a glimpse of her. She smiled, wondering if he had a laptop so he could order her some more box cutters from Amazon.

"I haven't eaten. Maybe we could get something to eat too, would that be okay?"

Joel grinned, nodded. "Yes, Sherrie we can," he said, Ana noted his voice cracking a bit. "I think there is a burger place near the motel."

She nodded. "How big is the motel we're staying in?"

"Oh, it's a small place off the highway. It's real nice and small. It's very quiet there."

Ana's *hunger* had been satiated with Gary but she couldn't turn down this opportunity, literally staring her in the face.

Ana patted the box cutter in her front pocket.

I'm going to have so much fun.

She turned to look at Joel. Leaning back in the seat, closing her eyes, she said, "That's exactly what we need, a small quiet motel off the highway for some peace and quiet."

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