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## My eyes are open

Walking up to the house I know something is wrong. I can see through the window that Frank isn't sitting in his prized armchair. I never understood what was so prized about it anyway. If I spilled beer all over a seat and sat in it so much that it smelled like piss, then maybe I could have a prized chair too.

His 20-year-old TV is so loud that I can hear every word from the doorstep. If he didn't have to hide his money from everyone, then I'm sure he'd have a huge plasma TV. Everyone knows he has money anyway. He only had to fool his parole officer.

I knock a couple of times but he doesn't come to the door. "Frank, stop jerkin' it and open the door already. You knew I was coming over." Yelling at the door was more of way to make myself feel better than to actually get his attention.

When I open the door I can hear thunder booming from the TV. Frank must be watching his traditional Friday horror movie.

"F – R – A – N – K! I swear if you don't answer me I'll..."

"You'll what," Frank's voice creeps from behind me as his fist smashes into the back of my head. Hitting the floor, I hear another televised boom of thunder.

"What the fuck, you asshole?" Caressing the back of my head where he hit me I can already feel a bump starting to form. "Dude, that wasn't cool. Now my girlfriend is going to wonder where I got this. She'll be pissed if she knew I came over here."

"That's the least of your worries pal. Did you bring my money?"

Still holding the back of my head, I grab onto Frank's disgusting chair and pull myself off the ground. "Frank, you know I don't have your money. I called you two minutes ago and told you that. You know I couldn't sell it all this week."

Franks slaps me. A stinging pain crosses my face. "You should've just stayed on the ground. It would have been easier that way. You know our deal; I front you the drugs, you sell them and bring me the money at the end of the week. It's as fucking simple as that."

As I pull my hand off my throbbing face, a drop of blood falls onto my palm. "Damn it dude, you made me bleed. Was that really necessary? Like I told you two seconds ago I don't have your money." Frank reaches back. I know he wants to slap me again. I keep talking and cower back. "It's not my fault man. The kids just weren't buying this week. They're all wasting their money on spring break trips. Your weed just doesn't compare to Cancun."

While I am talking, Frank opens and closes his gigantic fingers, making a bowling ball-sized fist. Open, close. Open, close. I know those bowling balls want to go down the lane and strike me in the face.

"Do I look like a fucking travel agent? I don't care where these kids are going or what they are doing; all I care about is them getting high and spending their money. This is the third time you've been late. I can't let you do whatever-the-fuck you want to. I don't know why you have to be such a pain in my ass. You can always just cover it with your own money."

He really is an idiot. If I had so much money then why would I be selling drugs too? He just doesn't realize how hard it is to live on \$2,000 a week. It's like my parents hate me or something. How do they expect me to live on that? I talk to my father's accountant more than I talk to my father. He called before I left, screaming at me about not using the corporate credit card for shopping sprees. Something about fraud, I don't know I tuned him out.

Frank reaches back to hit me again, but I tackle him, taking him by surprise. We crash through the screen door. Glass falls down around us as we roll onto the sidewalk. Somehow Frank manages to end up on top of me. That's probably not good.

"That was a dumb move motherfucker." Frank punches me in the nose. It hurts like hell but I am more pissed the blood got on my white polo shirt. That shirt cost me \$250. I try to fight my way out from under Frank, but he's just too big.

While Frank is holding me down all I can focus on is the Swastika burnt into his skin. He always told me he got it in prison, but I never cared before. When I first saw it, I simply asked him if he was a racist and he matter-of-factly replied, "Everybody is green to me." Money, the root of everything: evil, joy, pain, happiness, and right now my ass kicking.

I spit out the blood pouring into my mouth. The only problem is that it flies into Frank's face.

"You must be a fuckin' idiot. I bet you came over here thinking 'Golly gee, I hope Frank kicks the ever-loving-shit out of me.' Well I don't want to disappoint you, now do I?"

Frank's bowling ball-sized fists feel like a train running into my face. Not just any train, but a bullet train at full-speed. I haven't been into a fight since I was in sixth grade. Well, I guess that's still true because the only fighting I am doing is fighting the blood from going into my airway. I don't think Frank is even mad at me anymore; I have unofficially become his punching bag. All his problems are now my problems. His problems really hurt.

"You want everyone to think you are Mr. Squeaky Clean College Boy. I wonder what mommy and daddy would think if they knew what you were doing? I'm sure you could probably say buh-bye to that sweet trust fund. Speaking of sweet, how's that little girlfriend of yours?"

I can no longer feel Frank hitting me. Pain is no longer a commodity that I can afford. The only thing I can think about is Sophie and how pissed she is going to be at me. She told me never to get involved with this asshole. Who would have thought she was right? She's going to be pissed about this.

"Frank I'm sorry. I'll get your money. I'll have it all by next week, I swear."

"No, it's too late for that. Don't close your eyes, you pussy. If you're gonna act like a little bitch then I'm just gonna have to treat you like a little bitch. I told you last time you were late that I was going to start using alternative payment methods."

Frank turns me over without any sign of effort. In fact, his workout on my face has barely made him break a sweat. Frank grabs my wallet from the back of my pocket, but I know he'll be disappointed with what he finds.

"What the fuck? You don't even have \$20 in cash? All you have are credit cards." If Frank were in the listening mood I would tell him that cash is an outdated currency; nobody uses it. Even the kids at school pay me electronically. Setting up a Paypal account was the best thing I ever did for my business. I know Frank's not in the listening mood, so I'll just skip the explanation.

I hear the metallic click of a knife opening and feel Frank tugging on the back of my jeans. Frank's knife starts sawing at my belt. Looking up I see one of Frank's neighbors peeking out behind his blinds. Frank must have seen it too.

"You think my neighbors give a fuck about what's going on? If you do then you are dead wrong. Ha, dead wrong, that might be more accurate than you want to know. You and my neighbors do have something in common though; you're all scared of me. Something I didn't explain when we first started our little partnership was payment methods. You can pay me every week by cash, you can use your mouth for more than just talking, I can take it out on your ass, or I can break your fucking fingers. Today I'll give you the Frank sampler."

All right, I can't let this happen. I start feeling around for anything that might get Frank off of me – a rock, a beer bottle, Christ even a stick might work. My keys! That should work. They've stabbed me in the leg enough times; maybe they could hurt someone else for a change.

"I'm not gay; it's just all about respect. One thing I learned in prison was how to get respect. You pay me one way or the other. It's all about respect. You are my bitch, you work for me."

Frank finishes cutting through my belt by the time I finally reach my keys. I must do something now. I can feel my keys – the key to my Beamer, the key to Sophie’s place, the key to my dorm room, and the key to my parents’ house in Malibu. Four little pieces of metal have never felt so sweet in my hand.

All I can see is the dark gray pavement of the sidewalk that my face has become so accustomed to. I hear a car honk its horn as it drives past. The perfect opportunity. Frank stops pulling at my pants for a split second while his knife lifts off my back. I have just enough room to roll around. I pull out my keys and jab Frank in the neck.

It felt like somebody hit the slow motion on their DVD player, but it really must have happened instantaneously. The shiny key to my Beamer gleams in the light of the mid-day sun, while my parent’s house key is draining blood from Frank’s neck.

The last time I saw that much blood was when I looked down at my polo shirt, my damn \$250 polo that is now ruined. Frank jolts off the ground, spins around, and starts clamoring into the street – all while my keys are sticking out of his neck, sparkling in the sunshine. I hear one last gasp of breath and Frank hits the ground.

Frank’s outstretched body looks humungous on the street. He is lying next to a Cadillac and is damn near as long. I pull my pants up and try to get the hell out of there, but I don’t even make it up before my eyes close.

I’m trying as hard as I can to avoid the yelling and shaking, but I can’t seem to get rid of the light. Even with my eyes closed I can see the light, well I can see the light through the blood vessels of my eyelids. I can’t ignore this anymore. I have to open my eyes. I’m trying so hard; my right eye barely opens. It opens enough to see a paramedic standing over me. His flashlight burns the little bit of my eye I managed to open.

“Come on man, open your eyes,” the paramedic coaxes me. His voice is rather soothing among the chaos.

*Look dude, my eyes are fucking open* – I try to tell him but all I can feel is blood coating my throat. Trying to clear my throat, I can feel the warm blood slowly dribble out of my mouth.

“He’s unresponsive. We need to get him to the hospital now.” I can tell by the soothing tone that it’s the paramedic’s voice, but I don’t have a clue who he’s talking to.

“This kid did something and we need to know what. There’s a dead drug-dealing-Nazi lying in the middle of the street who I’ve been trying to bust for months. Now my hard work and effort is all for nothing. This kid looks like he’s been beaten to hell and back, he must be involved. We aren’t going anywhere until we get some answers.” He must have been talking to a cop – only cops talk like that.

I feel a slight kick in the ribs and hear something crack. The pain is unbearable. It feels like my side is on fire. Every part of my body hurts. I can barely move anything, if I’m even moving at all. I’m trying to concentrate on anything but the pain, my polo shirt, Sophie, my BMW, my father’s accountant, anything.

*Well if you think my fucking eyes are closed anyway then I might as well just keep them closed.*

The next time I open my right eye I must be in the back of the ambulance. The paramedic must have noticed because he starts asking me all sorts of stupid questions.

“Son what’s your name?”

My only response is a gurgle of blood.

“Who did this to you?”

Again my only response is a gurgle of blood.

“While you were passed out, you’re phone rang. I only answered it so somebody could meet you at the hospital. The man said he was your father’s accountant and he sounded pissed. He wasn’t happy about going to the hospital either. He said something about corporate spending accounts and hospital bills.” My lack of gurgling must have concerned him. He

looked at me with sympathy, like a puppy that had just been kicked. “Son, look at me. How many fingers am I holding up?”

*You silly bastard, I feel like I just got jackknifed by a semi-truck, my father's accountant, not my father, is meeting me at the hospital, and all you care about is your fingers. Fuck this. I would rather keep my eyes closed.*