

IT WAS A NIGHT

PART ONE

'The Hitman'

Written by

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EXT. HIGHWAY. EVENING.

Snow is coming down hard on the highway, cars barely visible as they navigate the growing dark.

RADIO (V.O.)
Whistling

Headlights appear and then disappear just as fast in the thick white while dark shapes that might be trees or might be monsters loom at the passing vehicles.

INT. CARMEN'S VAN. CONTINUOUS.

An old '70s Mercedes Campervan, all white and blue. Behind the wheel a fiery red-bearded man, CARMEN (41, speaks with a noticeable baritone Alabaman accent), squints against the contrast of white snow and darkening sky.

RADIO
*My life's a bit more colder,
Dead wife is what I told her,
Brass knife sinks into my shoulder,
Oh babe, don't know what I'm gonna
do.*

Through the windscreen a sign becomes momentarily visible. It reads: *Welcome to Reydel, Michigan*. Someone has tied some tinsel to the sign in a half bow that the wind is slowly teasing loose.

The snow continues to increase in ferocity, coaxing a few more creases out of Carmen's hearty frown. Leaning forward he twists through the radio, catching snatches of a report:

RADIO (CONT'D)
*Snowfall...storm...not safe...stay
home...avoid the...black
ice...worst in ten years.*

Carmen sighs and flicks back to the previous station before running a tired hand over his face and shaking himself back to consciousness.

RADIO (CONT'D)
*It didn't hurt, flirt,
Blood squirt, stuffed shirt,
Hang me on a tree.*

Suddenly, a light appears, emerging from within the dark and catching Carmen's attention. A large service station sits on the horizon like a bright glowing beacon.

RADIO (CONT'D)

*After I count down,
Three rounds,
In hell I'll be in good company.*

EXT. SERVICE STATION. EVENING.

Carmen's campervan slowly pulls into the service station, navigating the snow already beginning to pile heavily around the gas pumps. It comes to a gentle rest just out of reach of the storm.

INT. CARMEN'S VAN. CONTINUOUS.

Carmen kills the engine and removes the keys, looking over to the warm light of a building proudly announcing itself as *Aunty Ruth's Pie Shop*. Shadows of other human beings are visible against the steamy diner windows. The adjoined service station store is dark and evidently not in action.

Carmen sighs and then begins to pat himself down, double checking his pockets and reassuring himself of a packet of cigarettes. Then, preceded by another sigh, he exits his van, shutting the door behind him.

FLASHBACK #1

INT. MOTEL APARTMENT. AFTERNOON.

Carmen, hands efficiently gloved, opens the door to a motel apartment, stepping through into a sparse but clean lounge room and kitchen. A newspaper and a half-eaten takeout container sit on the kitchen bench and the buzz of something electric can be heard humming down the hall.

Carmen turns down the hall, evident thought put into the placement of his steps as he moves silently across the carpet. The second last room has its door open. Carmen pauses, watching as a shadow moves across the floor. Slowly, Carmen reaches his hand towards...

An expensive looking loafer steps out into the hall, followed swiftly by a MAN (mid-40s) in the midst of shaving his face. Some shaving cream is still sitting along his cheek. One look at Carmen and the man sprints back into his room.

Carmen springs into instant action, running after the man, who slams the door in his face. Carmen, silent and emotionless, begins to ram the door with his shoulder.

EXT. SERVICE STATION. EVENING.

Carmen is forced to forge his own path through the thick snow, all designated walkways buried deep in a heavy white blanket. All the while the wind is growing and gaining in momentum. It's as if it is becoming more agitated with every new step Carmen takes towards the direction of the pie shop. It whips through his hair and whispers in his ear, so much so that for a moment it brings Carmen to a dead stop. But when he turns around there isn't anyone, or anything, there. Turning back towards the pie shop with a dismissive shrug, Carmen continues on.

Behind him, the lights above the gas pumps flicker.

INT. AUNTY RUTH'S PIE SHOP. CONTINUOUS.

Ding-a-ling! Carmen pushes open the door to Aunty Ruth's Pie Shop, finding it decently occupied considering the current weather conditions. Overhead a cheesy Christmas pop song is playing softly through hidden speakers.

In one booth to Carmen's left there is an old woman (DOROTHY, 74, a sweetened New York accent) knitting. Another on the far right holds a young couple: a girl with dyed orangey-red hair (RED HAIREED GIRL, 25, Australian) and another girl eating a slice of what looks like Cherry Pie (CHERRY PIE GIRL, 24, Australian). Finally, slumped to one side is a young man (AUSTIN, 23, Australian) fast asleep.

Forcing the door shut against the raging storm under the watchful eyes of the (awake) diners, Carmen turns around to see a second young man (21, a Michigander) with a name tag reading 'LUCIFER' come running out from the back with an intense expression of hope. However, it falls instantly upon taking in Carmen's appearance.

Unperturbed by his audience, Carmen approaches the counter.

CARMEN

Evening.

LUCIFER

Okay, look, first I need tuh ask,
even though it seems stupid, but
you're not with any sort of service
that'll get us the hell outta here?

CARMEN

No, and I'd reckon' you're in for a
long night of waiting if that's
what you're a hoping for, kid.

Lucifer's hope visibly deflates like a pierced balloon, accompanied by a long drawn out groan.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Not a single soul risking it on the
roads in this mess.

LUCIFER
(pointedly)
You did.

CARMEN
Unintentionally so.

Lucifer nods his head in understanding, sidestepping towards the register with a sigh to rival Carmen's.

LUCIFER
Seems tuh be the way for most.
Snuck up on all of us when we
weren't looking, hey.

CARMEN
Mother Nature'll do that to ya.

LUCIFER
Ain't that the truth. Now, can I
get you like a coffee or something?

CARMEN
Coffee will do.
(Scanning menu)
And the waffles?

LUCIFER
Sure, why not. Give me something
tuh do.

Carmen hands over the money and retreats to a corner booth. On the way he looks out the window towards the direction of his van, now lost in the foggy windows. A new, even cheesier Christmas pop song comes on.

FLASHBACK #2

INT. MOTEL APARTMENT. AFTERNOON.

Carmen is pressed up against the bedroom door, attempting to force his way in.

MAN (O.C.)
*Please, I'm begging you. Not today.
Please, not today. I...I...it's
Christmas!*

No recognition of the holiday appears across Carmen's face.

INT. AUNTY RUTH'S PIE SHOP. EVENING.

Lucifer is navigating the floor, humming along to the Christmas song under his breath. He first drops off four plates of four different pies at the table belonging to Red Haired Girl and Cherry Pie Girl, and then approaches Carmen. Upon arrival he presents Carmen with a steaming mug and a plate of waffles.

CARMEN
This normal? This kind of weather?

Lucifer pauses, hand on hip in contemplation.

LUCIFER
Yeah, occasionally, I guess.

Carmen nods his head in acceptance, taking a long draw from his coffee.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
Although, I will say that this one definitely came out of the blue. No warning, no nothing. Even the weather reports didn't catch it. Weird.

CARMEN
Weird...Is this everyone?

LUCIFER
Pardon?

CARMEN
Everyone here, this is it?

LUCIFER
Oh. Yeah, this is it until the phones come back and I can get Emergency Services or a snowplough or something tuh come out here and save us all.

Lucifer laughs at his own dramatisation. Carmen doesn't join in, taking another long sip from his coffee.

LUCIFER (CONT'D)
So, where you off tuh on a night
like this?

CARMEN
I-

CHERRY PIE GIRL (O.C.)
Excuse me.

Carmen and Lucifer both turn towards the interruption. Cherry Pie Girl has partially raised her hand to draw their attention.

CHERRY PIE GIRL (CONT'D)
Sorry to interrupt, but do you
smell something burning?

As fast as a Jackrabbit, Lucifer is gone, racing into the kitchen. Unfazed, Carmen returns to his coffee. Things settle once more...until Dorothy swivels in her seat to fix Carmen with an enthusiastic and welcoming smile. It is not returned.

DOROTHY
Hello, honey. You're not from
around here are you?

CARMEN
Neither are you.

Dorothy chuckles.

DOROTHY
No. Seems we are all but strangers
in passing, stranded on an island
in the middle of a violent sea.

CARMEN
Very poetic.

Dorothy shrugs, her pleasure with Carmen's compliment visible in her soft smile that she directs towards the yarn in her lap. She hasn't stopped knitting since Carmen entered, and she is yet to drop a stitch.

DOROTHY
So, what is someone like yourself
doing out this neck of the woods?

CARMEN
Someone like me?

DOROTHY
Just a figure of speech, darling.

Carmen pauses, taking the time to mask his thinking by indulging in his waffles.

CARMEN

Sales.

DOROTHY

Sales?

CARMEN

Door-to-door.

DOROTHY

And I imagine that must keep you quite busy. Lots of travelling I presume?

Carmen nods silently in response. Dorothy raises an eyebrow, but holds back from questioning Carmen any further.

CARMEN

What have you got going on there?

DOROTHY

Oh, this?

(lifting up her knitting)

A Christmas present for an old friend. No better time than the present to try and get it finished, hey.

Carmen nods his head in agreeance.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I'll admit I'd already hoped to have it finished by now, but, you know. Life. It has a habit of getting in the way, like this storm for example. It was a good thing you stopped when you did.

CARMEN

I was doing alright.

DOROTHY

That's what they all think and then it's too late.

Carmen looks a little confused at the dark turn in their conversation but Dorothy doesn't stop, pushing on.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

They say the snow makes you see things.

CARMEN
What sorts of things?

Dorothy looks up from her knitting, something in her expression suggestive of...something.

However, before Carmen can press Dorothy for an answer Lucifer walks past with another four slices of pie balanced precariously along his long arms for the young couple. Carmen's attention is momentarily arrested by the sight, and by the time he returns to the conversation at hand, Dorothy has turned around in her seat, only the click-click-click of her needles left in the empty air between them.

FLASHBACK #3

INT. BEDROOM. MOTEL APARTMENT. AFTERNOON.

The click-click-click of the needles momentarily becomes the click-click-click of a handgun held tightly in Carmen's hands as he stalks towards the man now cowering upon the bed, holding his arm. Behind Carmen the wood around the lock on the door is cracked and splintered.

INT. AUNTY RUTH'S PIE SHOP. EVENING.

A little put out, Carmen continues on with his waffles, taking note of the young couple revelling in their most recent pie haul when Red Haired Girl makes a loud noise of pleasure that Cherry Pie Girl attempts to smother.

Carmen's face first portrays an expression of being deeply impressed by the amount of food they're downing, but as the two girls cuddle up to one another and laugh and continue to evidently have the time of their lives despite the storm, Carmen's expression becomes something almost wistful...Carmen blinks rapidly, taking in another mouthful of waffle. No longer watching the young couple, Carmen has turned his attention to the storm outside where the snow is coming down in absolute droves. So much so, Carmen is forced to use his sleeve to wipe away the creeping condensation threatening to block his view and then suddenly...something catches his eye.

Carmen puts down his fork and leans forward.

A shape. Something small and dark and shadowlike is standing by his van.

Carmen narrows his eyes.

The shape moves just as the wind agitates a flurry of snow.

DOROTHY (V.O.)
They say the snow makes you see
things.

Carmen shakes his head and stands up.

Over by the counter Lucifer is playing on his phone, the
little bleeps and bloops loud against the hushed silence of
the diner.

CARMEN
Hey, kid.

Lucifer's phone makes one last pitiful trill of bleeps before
he puts it down to look after Carmen.

LUCIFER
Round two?

CARMEN
If you can spare the time.

Lucifer picks up his phone.

LUCIFER
This is just boredom ad nauseum.
Same as before?

CARMEN
Yes, please. Just leave it on the
table will you.

LUCIFER
Shure.

Carmen turns around and everyone watches as he exits the
building.

EXT. PETROL STATION. NIGHT.

Outside, Carmen has to struggle through the howling wind and
snow, fistfuls of the stuff being thrown at him from every
which way as if some sort of intellectual intent is behind
it. All the while, he keeps peering off into the dark,
looking, searching, trying to find something.

Finally, Carmen reaches his van.

There's no one there.

EXT./INT. CARMEN'S VAN. NIGHT.

Carmen pushes on around to the back of van.

Again, no one.

Leaning causally to the side, Carmen looks back towards the diner. The windows are fogged beyond belief. Appeased, Carmen pulls open the back doors to reveal the van's dark, cold interior.

And something long and substantial upon the floor, wrapped extensively in what appears to be garbage bags.

And the expensive looking loafer evidently still attached to the foot of the poor unfortunate wrapped in the garbage bags.

INT. CARMEN'S VAN. NIGHT.

In the back end of his van, Carmen is rummaging through the kitchenette drawers. In one rattles the odd bit of cutlery. Another holds some 'ancient grains' type muesli bars and a packet of Hot Cheetos. Another holds a gun, and another is full of cling wrap and stationary and duct tape.

Carmen removes the tape and swiftly secures the offending shoe back in with the rest of the body.

BANG!

Something solid slams against the side of the van. Without a second for thought, the gun is in Carmen's hand. Standing dead still, alert and ready, Carmen watches the doors at the back of the van.

Nothing.

EXT. CARMEN'S VAN. NIGHT.

Jumping out the back of his van, Carmen pockets the gun, looking around suspiciously.

Nothing.

Nothing along the side of the van either, and nothing near the front and, finishing the rotation, once more at that back of the campervan...

A pair of child-sized footprints in the snow facing directly towards the van.

FLASHBACK #4

INT. BEDROOM. MOTEL APARTMENT. AFTERNOON.

Carmen is kneeling on the floor, whatever he's hovering over not visible. Behind him the weak afternoon light filtering in through the nearby window catches something on the bedside table. Turning, Carmen finds a photo of a family, a splatter of blood now smeared against the glass.

Carmen stands up, moving towards the family photo on the bedside table. Now visible behind him, the man is spread across the carpet, a safety layer of garbage bags laid out beneath him as a deep red stain slowly spreads through his shirt.

CLOSE UP <FAMILY PHOTO>

A little girl with red hair and wearing a yellow dress stands in between her parents. She is sporting a very large, very happy smile.

INT. CARMEN'S VAN. NIGHT.

Carmen throws himself into the driver's seat, turning the keys so hard he risks breakage.

The car refuses to budge.

Carmen tries again.

Whether from the snow, or the cold, or...something else, the car simply won't go. Carmen throws his keys onto the dashboard in frustration. Outside the wind howls, coaxing Carmen to look back towards the warm, welcoming light of Auntie Ruth's Pie Shop.

Overhead, the lights flicker.

THE END OF PART ONE...