

LITTLE BROTHER

Written by

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INT. HOUSE OF PIES DINER - NIGHT

AARON STAAL, mid 20s, sits alone in a booth, shoulder hugging the wall. A menu barely covers his eyes. He pretends to read, but really spies on a COZY COUPLE a few booths down. Two cups of coffee and a half eaten Boston cream pie on his table.

Aaron doesn't stand out in a crowd. It looks like he cuts his own hair and some faded worn out clothes cling to the rest of him. He's not much for vanity, but his fingernails are trimmed just the right length.

He spots the person he's been waiting for through the window, a BAGMAN, mid 40s, bald, thick build, probably ex-military, but the suit's a nice touch.

He saunters in, surveys the diner. His eyes lock onto Aaron.

He treads like a machine and slides into the booth.

Aaron nudges a cup of coffee to him.

AARON

You should try the pecan. Best in town. I like Boston cream, but everybody talks about the pecan.

The Bagman stares right through him.

Aaron slides a small SD memory card across the table.

The Bagman plugs it into a

PHONE

Names and some data that look like birthdays, social security and bank account numbers.

THE BAGMAN

drops an envelope on the table.

AARON

Did you ask about Bitcoin?

Aaron rifles through the envelope.

AARON

I really wish you'd ask about Bitcoin.

BAGMAN

Tuesday, January twenty first, eight o'clock.

AARON

You want that piece of pecan? It's on me.

BAGMAN

Tuesday... January... twenty first... eight o'clock.

AARON

Yeah, I got it.

BAGMAN

Pick somewhere new next time.

AARON

I like it here. You should order something?

BAGMAN

Pick somewhere new.

AARON

I told you I can set up a private chat room for this stuff.

BAGMAN

Nothing's private. Besides, she prefers it this way.

AARON

She's old school, huh?. I can dig it, daddy-o.

Aaron turns his attention back to the Cozy Couple in between their blatant expressions of love - kissing, hand holding, hair brushing. That type.

INT. EZ CLEAN LAUNDRY MAT - NIGHT

Slumped in a chair, Aaron gazes at gyrating clothes in a dryer. He barely blinks. The dryer winds down to a stop.

A FRUMPY LADY, mid 50s, opens the dryer. One hand scrolls through a cell phone, the other hand wads panties into a laundry basket.

AARON

That's the best feeling.

FRUMPY LADY

Excuse me?

AARON  
Clothes fresh out the dryer...  
Nothing better than that.

She cringes, gathers her stuff and moves away from Aaron.

The DING-DONG from the entrance door.

A TATTOOED GIRL, about the same age as Aaron, struts in with her BOYFRIEND. Her ink runs down her neck, across her chest, and onto her arms, flattering every curve.

Aaron hides one eye behind a box of detergent, the other eye peers at the boyfriend.

It's the same guy he saw earlier at the diner, one half of the Cozy Couple. The Tattooed Girl is not the other half, but she's a great understudy.

The Boyfriend's hand gently rests on her butt.

Aaron grabs his phone. Angry thumbs strike the screen.

Tattooed Girl's phone PINGS.

THE PHONE

Message from UNKNOWN.

Pics of the Boyfriend nestled with another woman at a diner.

TATTOOED GIRL'S

eyes race around the tiny screen.

A loud SLAP quiets the room.

PEOPLE "ooh and aah" like the audience in a daytime TV show.

She shoves the phone in his face.

A shouting match ensues between them.

A YOUNG TEEN takes out his phone and records the action.

Aaron slips out the back door.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Aaron strolls along, hands in pockets, eyes toward the floor.

The faint sound of yelling. The voices swell as they near.

Tattooed Girl rushes by, the Boyfriend grovels behind.

Aaron stops at his apartment.

Tattooed Girl stops at her's. She's the girl next door.

BOYFRIEND

I'm telling you... that's not me!

TATTOOED GIRL

Don't try that shit!

BOYFRIEND

I've never seen that girl before!

Tattooed Girl grabs the Boyfriend by the hair. Hard.

His knees buckle. Her mouth inside his ear.

TATTOOED GIRL

Fuck off.

She lets go and blows a few plucked hairs from her fingers.

The Boyfriend scurries off down the hallway.

Aaron stares at her, a slight grin.

TATTOOED GIRL

What you looking at?

AARON

You.

TATTOOED GIRL

Yeah? What do you see?

AARON

A girl... A pretty girl. I mean you're mad right now, so not as pretty as you normally are, but--

TATTOOED GIRL

What the fuck's wrong with you?

AARON

What do you mean?

TATTOOED GIRL

I mean Do you collect a government check on the first?

AARON

I have a job.

TATTOOED GIRL  
Doing what? Making beaded  
bracelets?

AARON  
That's mean. I work with computers.

TATTOOED GIRL  
With computers or on computers?

AARON  
Same difference really. You know in  
less than a decade AI's gonna be so  
advanced that our computers, phones--  
- any kind of tech really-- they'll  
be able to communicate with us. And  
not like Siri, but actually have  
real conversations with us about...  
well, anything really. I think  
that'd be cool. Have a real  
conversation with someone or  
'something' beyond our own  
comprehension, without preconceived  
judgements... Don't you think so?

TATTOOED GIRL  
You're fuckin' weird, man.

AARON  
Weird is a relative term.

TATTOOED GIRL  
You my neighbor?

AARON  
Yep. Aaron...

He sticks out his hand for a shake. She doesn't.

TATTOOED GIRL  
How long?

AARON  
Couple years.

TATTOOED GIRL  
No shit? I thought some old lady--

AARON  
That was my grandma. She died.

TATTOOED GIRL  
My bad. She seemed--

AARON  
It's cool. People die.

TATTOOED GIRL  
Yeah, I guess so--

AARON  
Do you like pie?

TATTOOED GIRL  
What?

AARON  
There's this place around the corner. They got the best pecan pie. I like the Boston cream, but everybody talks about the pecan.

TATTOOED GIRL  
Pie's okay...

AARON  
If you're free sometime maybe we--

TATTOOED GIRL  
Are you serious right now?

AARON  
What?

TATTOOED GIRL  
Un-fucking-believable!

AARON  
What?

TATTOOED GIRL  
You guys are all the same. Jesus! I hate when I sound cliché, but it's true, Man, even the weird ones--

AARON  
I'm not like your boyfriend. I would never do that to you.

She lunges toward him, her fingers hungry for more hair.

TATTOOED GIRL  
Do what?

Aaron takes a step back.

AARON  
Nothing.

Aaron turns away, unlocks his door.

AARON

I'm sorry I offended you. I just thought... never mind.

Aaron slithers into his apartment.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's just how his grandma most likely left it. Old, antique furniture, pictures of relatives on every shelf and knickknacks on every inch of empty counter space.

A single lamp illuminates the entire place. He sits on the floor, head resting on the sofa seat cushion. He reads from George Orwell's 1984.

An alarm clock beeps: 2:30 AM.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Aaron sneaks around, backpack slung over his shoulder. He whips out a small "remote" looking electronic device.

A beige Toyota Camry passes through the gate, haphazardly parks in an empty space.

A SLOVENLY GUY stumbles out, clicks the keyless remote.

Aaron does the same with his "remote."

CHIRP-CHIRP - The Camry locks.

Slovenly Guy turns the corner.

Aaron points his "remote" at the Camry.

CHIRP-CHIRP - the Camry unlocks.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

The headlights of the Camry shine down the street of a posh neighborhood. Each house competes with the one next to it.

INT. BEIGE TOYOTA CAMRY - NIGHT

Aaron behind the wheel. His backpack in the passenger seat. A cup of coffee in the center console. He examines each house like it's a candidate.



He stops in front of a two-story Mediterranean style, grabs a laptop and a WI-FI antenna from the backpack.

He sets up and his fingers are off to the races.

THE SCREEN

Fills with data: account numbers, social security numbers, driver's license numbers. Line after line of numbers.

AARON

takes a sip of coffee. His phone BUZZES. He answers.

AARON

Yeah... Now? It's late... She wants to see ME? What for?... I'm just asking... Okay, okay! Where?... Alright, I'm on my way... yes, now!

He starts the Camry.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

The Camry pulls into the driveway of some high-rise apartments halfway through construction.

Aaron steps out and spots a perfectly simonized Mercedes-Maybach parked across the lot.

He treads carefully, not even ten paces -

The Bagman slips out of the car.

AARON

What's going--

The Bagman points a revolver at Aaron's chest.

Aaron's feet dig into the asphalt. His fingers reach for the sky.

The Bagman pats him down, collects his phone.

INT. MAYBACH - NIGHT

Aaron takes a seat across from -

MS. GREEN, early 50s, poised. Her attire accompanies her taste in luxury cars. A pair of piercing green eyes matches an emerald necklace that tries to cover a long scar running down her cleavage.

The Bagman settles next to his boss, sights still aimed at Aaron's chest.

MS. GREEN

How are you doing, Mr. Staal?

He looks at the gun.

AARON

I've been better.

MS. GREEN

My name is Evelyn Green, but I'm sure you've known that for quite some time. It's nice to finally meet you in person. We've been using your services for so long, it's a shame we haven't met sooner.

She pours 30 year old scotch into a snifter, savors a sip.

MS. GREEN

My doctors would not approve, but it's the little things in life that make it worth living. Would you agree?

AARON

Sure.

MS. GREEN

How old are you, Mr. Staal?

AARON

Twenty four.

MS. GREEN

That's a great age. You're in the prime of your life. Married?

AARON

No.

MS. GREEN

Girlfriend? Kids?

Aaron shakes his head, a slight twinge of embarrassment.

MS. GREEN

A bachelor. Nice and easy. I remember those days. Living without a care in the world. Free to go about and do as you please with no attachments.

She takes a moment to study Aaron's unkempt nature.

MS. GREEN

Mr. Staal, have you ever loved anything more than you love yourself?

His eyes, blank.

MS. GREEN

Ah! That's a no. It's okay, you're still young. You have a lifetime of heartache ahead of you. When you get to be my age you'll appreciate the ones who came into your life and made a complete mess of it.

She pulls out the small SD memory card Aaron gave the Bagman earlier from her pocket and holds it up for Aaron to see.

MS. GREEN

Numbers, on the other hand, shouldn't be so messy. How long have you worked for me?

AARON

I don't know? Couple years?

MS. GREEN

Long time, "couple years". And in that time have you ever used your, let's call them talents, against me or my employees?

Aaron catches another glint from the revolver.

AARON

No. Never.

MS. GREEN

What about my family?

AARON

Family?

MS. GREEN

Yes, Mr. Staal... MY FAMILY!

She BANGS the snifter HARD on the console. It shatters.

AARON

I don't know your family!

MS. GREEN

Then tell me why my daughter's name  
and social security number are on  
this fucking thing!

AARON

I don't know... I--

MS. GREEN

Do you know where she is?

AARON

What?

MS. GREEN

Have you seen her? You have ten  
seconds to tell me where she is!

AARON

Wait!

MS. GREEN

WHERE IS SHE? Ten, nine, eight...

The Bagman's finger tightens on the trigger.

AARON

Hold on a second! You're counting  
too fast--

MS. GREEN

Six, five--

AARON

I don't know where she is!

MS. GREEN

How did you get this information?

AARON

I don't know!

She snatches the revolver, puts the barrel to Aaron's head.

MS. GREEN

Say "I don't know" one more time!

AARON

It's in the air!

MS. GREEN

What?

AARON

It's all in the air. The numbers.  
They're just in the air. I drive  
around, stop at a few houses,  
apartment complexes... That's how I  
get them. I swear to God I don't  
know where your daughter is!

Ms. Green has a violent coughing spell.

The Bagman pulls a prescription bottle from his pocket.

She slumps back in the seat. The revolver falls to her side.

The Bagman places a small pill on her lip.

She takes a deep breath, barely has the energy to swallow.

Aaron's eyes race over the scene.

Ms. Green composes herself.

MS. GREEN

My daughter has been missing for  
close to three years. She was here  
one day and then gone the next.  
It's a terrible thing to lose a  
child. It kills me to think she  
could be out there alone,  
suffering. A daughter will always  
need her mother, but I wouldn't  
expect you to understand. She's a  
little older than you, but she'll  
always be a child in my eyes.

She nods to her bagman.

He pulls out a picture, hands it to Aaron.

MS. GREEN

She's a beautiful thing.

She is a beautiful thing. Olive skin, dark brown hair, the  
same piercing green eyes as her mother.

MS. GREEN

Do you recognize her?

Aaron shakes his head.

MS. GREEN

Positive?

Another shake of the head.

MS. GREEN

Speak up!

AARON

No, ma'am. I've never seen her before.

Aaron can't take his eyes off the photograph. He flips it.

THE BACK OF THE PHOTO

shows her birthday, social security number and name -

Laura Finch.

MS. GREEN

finishes the scotch.

MS. GREEN

I can't go to the police for obvious reasons as you are aware. I've used some people from the private sector, but they've turned up nothing in two years' time. They say it becomes almost impossible to find a missing person after the first 48 hours. This card you gave Jonathan earlier is the first spec of evidence in years. This little card has given me hope that she could be out there somewhere.

Her fingers caress the revolver by her side.

MS. GREEN

Are you telling me the truth about how you acquired these numbers?

AARON

Yes, ma'am.

MS. GREEN

Then I need a favor from you. Well, maybe not so much a favor as another one of our transactions. Find out where you got these numbers and I'm sure you'll find my daughter. It seems after all these years I should have come to you first.

The bagman hands Aaron an envelope.

AARON

Ma'am... I don't know--

MS. GREEN

What did I say about "I don't know", Mr. Staal? That's ten thousand dollars in your hand. Find my daughter alive and well and I'll make that look like petty cash.

AARON

I can't make any promises. I mean, chances are she's already--

MS. GREEN

Don't finish that sentence.

Ms. Green grabs Aaron's hand. She holds on tightly.

MS. GREEN

Just do your job, Mr. Staal. You're good at what you do. And this time you'll be reuniting a mother with the one thing she loves most on this godforsaken planet. Understand?

Aaron nods and attempts to hand back the photograph.

MS. GREEN

Keep it. For inspiration.

The Bagman opens the car door and hands Aaron his phone.

Aaron steps out. The Maybach disappears in the fog.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Camry pulls into a parking space. Aaron creeps out, his eyes search for bodies. All clear. He points his "remote."

CHIRP-CHIRP. The Camry locks.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The tiny room's decor matches the rest of the apartment. Aaron staggers in, throws his backpack on the bed and lies down face up next to it.

A loud thump on the wall from the apartment next door.

A scream, but not one of fright.