

## FISHGIRL

Free sex and money. Hur hur. Now I've got your attention I'm going to tell you about why I had to kill my brother.

"Hur hur" is me laughing, just a normal laugh. When you read "Hur hur" just put in the sound of your own laugh.

I'm not going to tell you when or where all this happened. It could have been fifty years ago, it could have been last week. I'm not stupid.

It was when we went back to a big fire we'd lit a few months ago that B found Fishgirl. Normally you'd leave it longer than that, to be safe, but for some reason we didn't. We always like to go back, even if it's out of our way, but usually you'd leave a big one like that for six months or more. It's great to go back, look around, sniff the result. With our fires the roof nearly always comes down so after a while you get that great smell of the ash mud. We both love that smell of old smoke and ash, rain and mould.

The reason we lit the fire in the first place was because the Name-Caller said we were Poofs. That's when this story really begins.

One evening we decide to stay in a pub in some country town. Sometimes we stay in the Ambulance but I like to sleep in a real room, with a Shower and clean sheets. I like Motels best. They're very American, private, anonymous. It's best if we don't mix too much with people, it usually doesn't work out very well.

B gives our name as Grimm, for a joke, because we're brothers and the bloke behind the bar must have told his mates because they start to pull our leg. But they don't get the real joke because they call us the "Grim Brothers" instead of the other way round. I was ready to laugh and say all the right things. We're both good at winning people over, we have to be sometimes, but B wasn't in to it this night I'm talking about, so there was some bother and I had to drag him up to bed.

That's how it generally goes, I drag B out of a fight and he pretends to want to get stuck in again but really he's glad to get away. It's the European way.

But as we go up the stairs one of the blokes says "Fucking Poofs." and some of them laugh. B freezes and I think "Here we go." He turns and looks his Death Look at the bloke. I'm standing on the stairs, one step below, waiting. I know there's no point hurrying him, he's got to go through the routine. And I'm wondering what we we're going to do to this one. The bloke's gone all nervous and he's half shouting "What you fuckin' looking at?" but B doesn't say a word. The bloke's looking at me but I'm just wondering what he's got coming so I'm not really looking at him. I'm seeing him, but I'm not looking at him, like he's a picture. Then B goes up the stairs and I follow him. He goes straight to his Filofax and starts scribbling. I look over his shoulder but I can't read his writing. "We'll be back" I say in my Arnie Terminator voice, but he just grunts. We go to bed but I can't sleep because I'm thinking how we were going to go North for a Holiday but B's not going to want to go anywhere too far now.

The next day we leave town early and B's fine. He lets me put on any station I like and he stays up front with me while he looks through his maps. I always drive. B was too neat to drive, he'd be in the back, making things, coming up with ideas, tidying up, he was very bright. I like the chaos of driving, the near-misses, the mess, the way so many people, especially old people, don't drive between the lines, don't see what's going on. They get in their cars and set off wherever they're going and don't notice anything until they get out at the other end. I love driving right up their arse, doing the same speed, getting as close as I can without them seeing, sticking right on them. It's difficult to do, you try it. Then if they take too long I give them a little knock, just touching. I love that look when they finally see me - though you'd be amazed how many don't, or pretend they don't - they look in their mirrors and there's this old Ambulance filling up the whole of their back window - we've got an F One Hundred Mark Four. Most of them tense right up, like they're going to brake, but then they realise they can't. So they have a little think, trying to work out what's going on, trying to suss me out. In the daytime I usually keep a straight face, like they're not there, I look at my watch, look out at the scenery, all the time keeping right on them. I always wear sunnies so they can't really see me. After a bit they floor it and I'll keep right with them until they're really scared. Then I slowly drop back and as soon as they're out of sight I turn off the road and go on a detour for a while.

In the night I do it a little different, I keep a normal distance for a while then I suddenly bump 'em, not too hard, just wake 'em up a bit. Then I put this blue light, just like a police light on the roof, it's magnetic, I got it years ago, it wasn't very expensive, then I ram 'em a bit harder. Then I shine this torch up into my face, do some horrors and ram 'em again, hard, straight on. Then, if I can, I turn everything off and disappear. But it's fairly dangerous to do that, so most of the time I just wait till a corner's coming up, hit the brakes and disappear that way.

Once B used to love all that, at night he used to pretend to jerk off and every time I rammed 'em he'd do a thrust like he was Fuckingham from behind. He even rigged up a light on the dash. But one day he just stopped, took the light away, didn't say why. And I never asked him.

One really good time was in broad daylight, on a good stretch south of Sydney. I'd been right up the arse of this old man in a shiny Commodore for five minutes. He was moving his head side to side to some music. Suddenly he saw me, his eyes went really wide and then he twisted right round to have a proper look. He drove straight off the road, up a little bank and then took off and crashed down into a little river. There was no-one about so I went back to the bridge for a look. The car was on its roof in the river, the water was flowing around it, petrol was coming out making all those colours, it looked good. B came out and wanted to light it but I wouldn't let him. We don't have to burn everything.

Anyway, we get some breakfast, a local paper and some stores and set off again, B pointing the way, until we get to this camping ground. "We'll stay here for a few days, OK?" B says. "Sure" I say. I nearly always say "Sure" and if I don't, then we don't do the thing I don't say "Sure" about. B knows not to fight me when I put my foot down.

So we stay there for a few days. In the day I fish and read and get plenty of rest and B does his experiments, cooks and looks through the paper for a good spot to do the bloke. In the evenings we drink and fuck about. On the third night B is very pleased with himself, he's made some pills or capsules which you swallow and they catch fire inside you. He tries to show me on a koala but something goes wrong and the fire comes out of its mouth and it screams. B kills it quick, he's not cruel when it comes to animals. Except cats, he hates cats. I don't mind them, but they're stupid, they always keep well away from me and go straight to him.

I can tell that this Fire-Inside Pill is what he's going to do to the bloke that called him a Poof, poor bastard.

I don't like it when B makes stuff like that, if something goes wrong it's easy to trace. And it's not natural.

On the fourth day we pack up and head back. I'm not in the mood, but what can you do?

We get into town, park a few blocks off and wander over. There's nowhere to wait in front of the pub, so B looks around then we split up, me down one street and B down another.

I hardly ever like the waiting, it can be exciting, like a movie, but mostly it's just hanging around, trying not to fall asleep. It's a warm night, there's no-one about. I've got a couple of beers with me but they soon go. A few people come my way but not the Name-Caller. No-one sees me. No-one ever sees us. Soon it's all quiet and after an hour or so I wander up the street to have a look. The pub's shut, no lights, I go back to my spot.

At 3am the phone goes. "Let's go." We go to a spot half an hour away, have a quick drink then hit the hay.

The next morning we sleep in and hang around. That night we're back on the job. At 12.30 B rings. "I got him," he says. "I'm behind the Chicken Shop, back towards the car." I don't like it when he calls it a "car".

We carry him, making out he's a drunk mate, but no-one's about. We put him in the back, B shows me where we're going and gets in with him. We set off.

It takes five hours to get there, an old farm, no-one for miles, a good spot. It would take a bit of work but you could have some chickens, some sheep, it'd be okay. The sun's coming up, the birds are singing, the bloke's wriggling, still trying to yell. We have breakfast.

B's usually very fidgety by now, but he's just chewing away, looking at the bloke. "What's up?" I say. He doesn't answer straight away. "I want the others" he says. "What others?" I say. "He had two mates" he says. Now that's true, he did, but they didn't say a word. "But they laughed" B says, reading my mind. "What if they're not there?" B has a think. "They were with him last night, they're mates, I had to follow them 'till they split up." I say "So maybe they won't be there tonight, maybe they've gone away somewhere and what about him?" meaning the Name-Caller. "He'll keep. But anyway, they'll be there."

And they were. We waited near where B saw the three of them split up. To be honest I prefer waiting on my own. I can fiddle around, pick my nose, do what I want. But with B I have to behave.

The two finally arrive at about one. They're pissed so it's easy. We meet some old man walking his dog when we're carrying the second one along and he looks a bit suspicious so I have to catch him and punch him out too. The dog starts yapping so I give it a kick and it pisses off. I look for somewhere safe to put the oldie and B gets all irritated. But he knows better than to say anything - except "about fucken time" when I'd finished.

On the way back to the farm I get lost and stop to look at the map. B pops his head through and says "What?", he sees what I'm doing, grabs the map and says "Where are we?" Then we both look at each other and burst out laughing. He's fidgety now. I figure out where I went wrong and off we go. By the time we get back we're too tired to do anything so we just go to sleep.

Those plastic ties are great. Once you do someone up, they stay done. The police use them. You have to cut them.

That afternoon when I wake up B's playing with the blokes and I leave him to it. I make some tea and toast. While the tea's brewing I have a piss. I love pissing in the open air. I take B a cup of coffee, he only drinks Decaf, I hate Decaf. He's doing his evil maniac grinning, he's a real performer. "It's nearly time." he says. We drink our drinks and watch them. B's got them all sitting on this old big round kitchen table, all tied together back to back, legs dangling. They're not too bad but they're all shitting themselves. Which is no surprise. I wouldn't want to be caught by us.

I try to imagine what B's being saying to them so that they'll swallow the Fire-Inside pills. But I can't, he's the expert in that area.

It turns out he hasn't said a word.

We keep on watching them. One of them starts crying and whimpering and soon they all are. You can't blame them, but it looks stupid, three grown men crying away.

Then B says "Fancy a drink?" to one of the blokes. They all stop crying and watch B as he opens this big bottle of mineral water. "You can all have a bit if you don't yell out" he says. They just look at him. He takes a swig himself then takes the tape off one of the mates. He tilts their head back and pours some in. I watch their adams apple go gulp, gulp, gulp. I don't catch the Pill going in but it does. B puts the tape back on and does the other mate. The Name-Caller is going to be last, of course. B waits a little while, has another swig, then gives him a drink.

I do want to watch and I don't. After a few minutes I decide to go but then the Pills start to work so I stick around. It's amazing what happens.

When they're all dead we set the farm up to burn on a timer. We both want to watch but you can't have everything. B is very pleased with himself. Without asking, I head North.

And that's the first beginning.

We have a holiday, come to the end of the Tip Top money, do a job on Jenny Craig which works out okay, but not as good as Tip Top. Before I killed him B was working on a Coca Cola job that would have kept us going forever. It was a good idea, not poison this time but something that gave you the runs so bad that you had to go to hospital. They would have paid up for sure. I don't know how far he got with it, he didn't tell me much. I don't mind, it's good for us to do our own things. I said he should do all the Americans, Pepsi, Macdonalds, Pizzathing, all of them, but I don't know if he thought that was a good idea. For all I know they might all be waiting to pay up right now.

I don't drink Coke any more.

We travel around, do a few good fires, a few boring ones, see the sights. Then after a while we start to drift South. Although it's only been a few months since we did the Name-Caller we go back anyway, what's the point of living if you don't take a few risks?

This is the second beginning.

We camp about a hundred K away and set off at dawn. The farm is gone, except for the chimney which is sticking up in a big patch of ash. We look around, there's nothing left, not even fillings. A few people had nosed around but no-one worth worrying about. B had done a beautiful job, I wish we could have seen it. In the yard there's a pile of bottles that's melted into a puddle, I love stuff like that. I stand there with my eyes closed, breathing it in. It's rained a bit since we left but it's been hot too, so the smell is clean. I imagine the flames and the heat and then I hear B saying "Look at this!" He's standing right by me, holding a thing, feeling the weight of it, brushing of the ash. He's very excited.

It's like two pitchforks, without handles, joined together by the points, but bent round like a ball. Hold your thumbs and little fingers together on each hand and tuck them into your palms, out of the way. Now make your other fingers into the shape of two forks and join them at the tips. Now make the whole thing into the shape of a big ball. That's what this thing is like.

B's holding it up above our heads, slowly turning it around.. He told me later that he knew about its power straight away and he was looking for something to destroy but he was scared. I was scared too but I didn't know why. I say "Let's go" and we do. He holds it on his lap. "Where'd you find it?" I say, but he doesn't say anything. He's holding it carefully, like it's fragile, but it looks tough as fuck. "It's called Fishgirl" he says. I say "What?" and he says "It's called Fishgirl" again. We get back on the highway and just drive.

Bit by bit we find out about Fishgirl's power and to be honest I never feel very happy about having it around. I'm not scared but what it can do is so big that it would get a lot of attention. And B starts to change, gets more and more reckless, I have to stop him destroying things all the time. He goes a bit crazy.

We decide to burn this fire station. It's difficult to organise, it's in the centre of this town and there's always some people in it. But we knew that once it was going a crowd would build up and we could have a good look. Which we did.

For some reason there are quite a few kids watching, even though it 's late, and I'm kept busy keeping them out of harm's way. Then I noticed that the one I'm holding isn't watching the fire any more. She's looking behind, not sure what to make of something. I turn round and there's B with Fishgirl on his head like a helmet. I give the kid back to her mum and go over to B. "Take it off" I say. "It's okay" he says "they can't see it." "Yes they can. Let's go." I walk back to the Ambulance with B following behind. I don't look back to see if he took Fishgirl off, but I really want to. I get in and stare at the dash. I hear him get in, take Fishgirl off and put it in this box he made for it. I didn't say anything. We drive off.

That was the third beginning.

It's about this time that the old bloke drives into the river.

B got worse and worse, he figured that with Fishgirl nothing could stop us. A week later a policeman pulls us over on some quiet country road. I get out and walk towards him and say "What's the problem?" He says "Can I see your licence Sir." I give it to him and hear B get out, I look at him and he's got Fishgirl on. I look at the policeman, he's just staring, he thinks it might be funny but he's not sure. B keeps coming, the policeman backs off pulling his gun out, trips over something and falls backwards. B's on him like a flash, head butting him with Fishgirl. The copper manages to get his Gun out and he's trying to get the catch off so I stand on his hand and he can't do a thing. B keeps on bashing. I look up and down the road but there's nothing coming. "Come on, leave him alone" I say but I know it's too late for that. B keeps on bashing and I wait for him to finish. He's got as much blood on him as the copper. I get the Gun and drag B off. They're both cut but the copper's much worse off, almost dead. I push B away. "Get in the fuckin Ambulance!" I shout at him. I hardly ever shout at him. He goes and I have to spend about three quarters of an hour sorting it all out.

I get in the Ambulance. B's sitting in the front, Fishgirl still on him, blood still on him. I make him go into the back and clean up and I drive off.

You don't do the police. They never let it go when you do one of their own.

I drive South for a few days. We don't talk. After a bit Fishgirl goes back in the box and I relax.

We're staying by the beach, a good place, almost empty with a new shower block. I'm feeling pleased with myself, I found the spot and it's perfect. I figure that we'll stay there for a bit, until B feels himself again and everything's back to normal. I go fishing. B hangs around.

But it doesn't go back to normal. It gets worse. B does things, he isn't careful, we have to move, we nearly get caught, he keeps on doing things. It gets very messy. I want to get rid of Fishgirl but I can't. So I decide to burn the two of them. And because B hardly ever leaves the Ambulance I decide to burn it all together.

B has an idea what I'm planning but he's so sure of himself, of the power of Fishgirl, that he thinks he'll be okay. He doesn't take precautions.

I'm driving all the time. Whenever we stop somewhere B wants to use Fishgirl and I have to try and talk him out of it. I don't always manage so we keep moving, keep changing direction. I stop using the mirrors, I get so I don't want to see what's behind us, like the old drivers, I don't want to see what B might have done. I stop sleeping.

I have a Plan, it looks like I'm just driving anywhere, but I know where I'm going.

It's early morning when we get there. I turn off the engine and look through into the back. B's asleep and I watch him. He's stretched out on his back, his arms out like a cross, just like when we were kids. I climb through and carefully tie his wrists to the bed. He doesn't wake up. I start to get the stuff I'm going to need and make a pile of it outside, the petrol, the food, clothes and stuff. I'm sorting through the pile when I look at B and he's looking at me, not struggling, just looking. "Give me Fishgirl" he says and like a crash I get really Scared. I don't know what to do, I just stand there. He says something like "It isn't right." I don't know what to say, everything's strange, I don't understand what's going on. I can feel my feet pushing down on the ground but nothing else is real.

Then B says "Ta" and he's got Fishgirl on his fucking head! And I look back and I've got two memories of how it got there. One I give it to him and one it moves by itself and I'm really scared and I can't move and then he says "Fishgirl" and I'm not scared any more.

I look at him, he's my brother. He looks at me. I look around at all the memories, all the souvenirs, all the stuff we've collected over the years and I shut the doors and go and collect the wood.

It's late afternoon when I've made a big pile. You can hardly see the Ambulance. I wish I'd done it differently. I wish I'd put the blue light on top so it would flash in the flames. I wish I'd taped up B's mouth so I wouldn't hear the screams. I wish I'd jacked the Ambulance up so I could get more wood underneath.

I'm just about to pour the petrol on when I see a replay in my head of what B Really said after I tied him up. He said "It isn't *night*."

So I wait till it was pitch black, the stars were amazing. I pour the petrol on. I light it and climb up the hill to watch.

B didn't scream, the only noise was the fire, which was very loud. I don't like the screaming, I can put up with it but I don't like it.

The fire is still going when I wake up. To be honest I feel sad. But with the sadness I feel good. That's the thing about fire, it seems that it kills everything, turns it all to smoke and ashes that just blow away, but really it's a new beginning, life comes out of it, beauty, old friends, new ideas, hope.

I'm not sure if "Fishgirl" is the right name for this story but when I went through the ashes I found it. It had melted, but only at the base of the prongs - not the points, which doesn't make sense. Then we figured that the whole thing was so strange that it wasn't worth thinking about. So I called the story "Fishgirl". And that's the end.

Hur, hur.

