

# Got a Minute?

By Perry McGee

Sometimes it just pisses me off how stupid most people are.

Like today, at a red light; this simple jerk decides to make his topaz El Camino start hopping. Now don't get me wrong, it ain't that I don't like cars that hop, but I do care about being to work on time. Why the moron felt the need to do it right then and there, right in front of me, I'll never know.

Neither will he because I put an echo in his head. That was...oh, around eight this morning, it's noon now so the simple-ass should be presently dead. At least I hope so. Stupid people piss me off.

I work day shift in a gas station and eat living flesh at night. And really it ain't so bad. There are enough transits and homeless folk running the streets that my food supply won't become a problem for quite a while. By that, I mean a 'problem' for the Pittsburgh cops. Homeless people usually don't make it to the Missing Person report. I like that, it keeps outside interference down to a minimum.

And you wouldn't believe the 'out-of-towners' that ask me for the name of a cheap motel. I've eaten very well thanks to these people and their information. It always starts the same way. I ask how much gas they want, then they tell me where they're staying, and I stop by for dinner after work. Sweet, I don't need to do a mental search of these people's minds. They just flat out tell me where they'll be.

While on the clock, I wear a small piece of plastic informing people my name is "PANDY". Just like that, white lettering in quotation marks on black plastic. Bob—the upper-management grease monkey in-charge-of making nametags—always quotates nicknames. Says it's more better that way.

I wear it pinned to a blue and gray striped shirt with Sunoco embroidered across the back. My pants have a stripe running down the outside hem and damn if I don't look like Elvis in a war movie. Someday I'll throttle the life out of Bob the Manager for making me dress like this, but for now I keep a low profile at work. A low profile is more better, as Bob would say.

Like last night, I ate a hooker and today's newspaper never mentioned it. I don't like hookers but sometimes they're all that's available, and it ain't like they have a drive-through for someone like me. Even McDonald's won't sell living tissue and they're always on the lookout for new and unusual food.

The hooker fought me too, damndest thing. I sent a powerful echo and she wasn't affected. Not at all. So I hit her. I hate to eat bruised food, but like I said, I was hungry.

As I ate I found out why she wasn't receptive to my signal; she had a metal plate in her head. I found this out when I was going for dessert. A skull is easy to crack if you know how. It's just like shelling a lobster; it's all in the wrist. One good smack off of the concrete and the bones give way, then it is only a matter of pulling the skin away and eating the treat inside. But smacking the hooker's head on the ground only cracked the concrete. I beat her off the ground the same way I beat all my meals off the ground but nothing happened, no satisfying crunch of bone giving way, just a solid thump. Her head was practically destroyed by the time I got to the food inside.

Talk about a bad meal. After all the hard work I had to do, I'd lost most of my appetite.

Still, I ate just for the principle of the matter.

The brain is good, but my favorite is the heart; especially the left side where the blood is at its freshest. Messy, but really good. I feel like a new man after eating a heart.

Oh, excuse me please, I got a customer.

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Okay, where was I? ...Oh yeah, eating people.

Clean up always sucks. I'm usually so bloated that it's hard to move, let alone dispose of the garbage. It would be nice to just lay back and enjoy the afterglow of a scrumptious meal, but in my particular situation that's a luxury I can't afford

The Allegheny River is a great garbage-disposal. As I've told you already. I don't want the cops on my trail.

When I first began eating people I tossed the entire remnants in the water, but that proved to be a mistake. Down river, where the Ohio is born, bodies began turning up. I remember four years ago, during a day game at Three Rivers Stadium, two bodies were discovered. The "official" investigation claimed accidental death and heavy decomposition.

Even the Pittsburgh Police Force, as inept as they are, knew the difference between fish food and cannibalism. They needed help on that case so they called the FBI.

Damn lotta' good that did. The FBI only conducted interviews with scumbags and harassed parolees. Then they went back to DC.

So after that incident I used a different approach. All leftovers are bagged in canvas bags and strapped to something from out back. Like maybe a transmission or a discarded hood. Bob the Nametag Guy so far hasn't said anything about the missing parts and I don't think he will. After all, why does a small gas station need a twelve-foot high pile of non-usable car parts? And with the price of scrap iron so low, hauling it to the recycling center makes it cost-prohibitive. No, Bob won't say nothing.

Maybe I've killed over three hundred people since my arrival, really I ain't sure. But do the math: I eat four times a week minimum, and I've been here for five years, so that comes up to...

...A shitload of bodies.

Last night's hooker is currently anchored to a busted front axle from a semi, ebbing in twelve feet of murky river water. I didn't have a canvas bag handy but I think she'll be okay. I tied her like a damn Egyptian mummy, so after the fish and the caustic enzymes finishing polishing her bones, she'll be untraceable. That's if the authorities ever look in that spot. It ain't likely they will. After all, I'm sort of helping them out. I'm probably an Honorary Member of the Pittsburgh Vice Squad, Hooker Removal Division and don't know it.

Wouldn't that be a hoot? And... oh, sorry, got another customer, be right back.

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Wow, that guy was strange. He offered me an extra fifty bucks if I would pump something else, something a little more "masculine" he said. I know he was talking about gay sex but I ain't into that. I just can't bring myself to be with a male, it actually disgusts me. I've done it when I couldn't find a woman, but I really don't enjoy it. Anyway, I played along with him.

He gave me a business card with a room number on it: 209. Then he winked at me as he pulled out. I should have sent an echo but that's something I need to keep at a minimum. Once a day is really too much, twice would surely draw attention.

To tell the truth, I have eaten only three men in my illustrious career. I'll never forget the taste of those meals, tough and sinewy, full of harsh minerals, and the hearts left a very bad aftertaste. So I prefer the female of the species. But hey, the sucker asked for it, didn't he? So solly cholly, but tonight you'll be in my belly.

I really don't recall where I came from; I have no memory of anything further back than five years ago. Sometimes when I sleep I have dreams of a place much different than this place, barren and airless, unpopulated and dangerous. But upon waking these dreams diminish in intensity, they float away much like the remnants of the folks I toss in the Allegheny. Maybe I came from another planet or was created in some secret lab in Russia, I don't know. But I do know I can blend in with the general population as long as I'm careful. Can't get careless is my golden rule.

One more thing, I... oh shit, look what just pulled in. It's that same topaz El Camino from this morning. Why ain't that guy dead? Am I losing my echo ability? For the first time in my short life, I'm scared.

I can feel something from this guy, he's putting something inside my head. He's looking straight at me. I feel... I feel... he's sending an echo. He is like me. He is just like m...