

"Hi Eric,

Thank you for submitting "Every Cop Thinks about It" for consideration on Oct 30, 2023. Unfortunately we are not accepting your story.

The editors liked the humor and writing. However, it was all build up and the crime was limited to a single paragraph. One suggests it may work if you unfold the crime and build balance.

We hope you will consider again for future stories. Please check our submission page for upcoming submission windows.

All the best.

Ron Phillips, Publisher

Shotgun Honey

1/20/24

Eric Seiley

The B Side of Life

30 Oct 20223*

*revised 26 Feb 2024

5, 116 Words

Front Porch Crimes

Denmore say every cop thinks about committing the perfect crime at some point in they career. Literally fantasize about it. Mostly during them long days and nights when they's sittin' around in they police cruisers waiting for the radio to squawk and hopin' it don.' Especially if it be one of them annoying calls -- barking dogs or loud music or rowdy kids smashin' bottles down by the lake -- general wayward stuff like that you get

when you work patrol in small, rural towns. Be enough to ruin they evenin' if'n they's didn't have big imaginations to escape wit.

Denmore, he have quite the imagination.

"I figured out the perfect crime," Denmore say to his buddies who've all gathered on his porch for their weekly "porch patrol" party. Stevie Ray, Paul T., Bee, Tillman, Toomey, Frank, and Little Bobbie. All police officers working for the Lake Charles Police Department. Though tonight, while they's off duty, they be reclining on old lazy boys, dining room chairs, and a couple of cushioned bench seats from a rusted out 68' Oldsmobile, set up on Denmore's front porch. Most of 'em in various states of inebriation thanks to the cases of Budweiser beer and two dozen shots of Johnny Walker they each been tappin' into all evenin'.

"What the hell you talking about?" Paul T. say. Paul T. be Officer Reed when he on duty. But tonight he wearin' his regular street clothes – a pair of tight black jeans and a denim jacket with the sleeves cut off to show his muscled arms and biceps. "Bigger than ol' Charlie Bronson in *Hard Times*," he like to crow. "Twenty-two inches of pure iron baby," he say posin' like them Mr. Olympia posters with one arm pointing straight out and the other bent up bulging.

"I," Denmore continued, "figured out how to steal a hundred, maybe two hundred thousand dollars without any one being the wiser. All untraceable bills. With virtually no down side of being caught."

"The hell you say."

"The hell I did say."

"What's that you're going on about, Dennie?" slurred Stevie Ray, perking up. He was fairly well into his cups and just about fallin' outta his chair when he hear what

Denmore say and sit back up straight. Stevie Ray be Stevie Ray only to his friends. The rest of call him Officer Cadmore even when he not workin.' Cause he don' like no one disrespecting him or the uniform. And he real sensitive about it too. Especially if'n he think you joshin' him. He don' let no one do that, 'cept maybe Denmore. But that because they been best buddies since they's high school days playing freshman JV football together. And he real protective of Denmore. He just as likely to throw fists if he think you disrespectin' Denmore too. "What's that you say?" Denmore say, "Mr. Wanna-be-Detective, Law-n-Order, I-got-one-year-of-college says he's gonna commit a crime? The perfect crime even. How can that be?"

Everyone was pretty drunk by this point, with only two, Beatrice and Paul T., drinking fast to catch up cause they'd decided to take a "nap" together after church and showed up late to the party. But Denmore peaked everyone's interest and they all sittin' up and listenin' now. Crime stories being endlessly fascinating to this crew. Right up there with who fights best and who discovered who banging who behind The Roadhouse Bar out on route 5 last Friday night.

"Yeah, boy! At least two hundred thousand. Maybe even more. And nobody'd know who done it."

Now if'n y'all ain't never seen eight drunk, off duty cops shootin' the shit, then you 'bout to have a new somethin' to talk about. They all had opinions – it go with the territory -- but fire them up on a subject and they 'bout tear each other to pieces arguin' the ins and outs of it, the who be right and who be wrong of it all. That's why Denmore made a rule he and Stevie Ray enforce religiously – no uniforms, no badges, and no kinda on duty police at his place that not be invited. And definitely no one have or carry no shotguns, side arms, automatics, backups, batons, saps, boot knives, pepper spray, taser, or any kinda police gear during their gatherings. Leave it all at home or in the trunk of yo' car. Cause someone always likely to get shot or stabbed or hurt when

cops drink too much and get to arguin.' They all roosters looking to rule. And Denmore don't want to be answerin' for no one else's foolishness.

"I figured out the perfect crime is what I'm saying. Stealing enough money to live the rest of your life on free and clear. And never get caught. That's what I'm talking about."

"Does anyone even have two hundred thousand dollars around here?" cut in Beatrice, "except the bank? And even that's a maybe. Hell, robbing banks ain't perfect or safe. Those dipshits always gets caught when they rob and run. Hell's bells, there's only two ways out of this Po-dunk town -- right or left. And we know every single inch of those two roads. Plus staying in town ain't any better. We definitely gonna put the pinch on y'all then. There's nowhere to hide in this town that someone wouldn't either turn you in or gossip about where you're hiding."

Beatrice be "Bee." Officer LuPone. A tough as nails girl, but nice enough if you were respectful. Her family'd originated from the Black Bayou, more down toward Cameron, but she'd been brought up in Lake Charles before her mama lit out for Galveston, Texas with a boyfriend.

"Kidnapped," is how Bee told it. "And to make matters worse, when I hit puberty, I had to learn to fight cause of them skinny Texas fuckers and Mexican desperados all wanting a piece of my ripening *hoochie*, including my new step daddy. Whether I wanted to give it or not. So it was either lie down and take it till one of 'em impregnated me like my Mama or fight like hell! I chose hell and fought. And I'm glad to say I sent most of them sumbitches home with a case of the blue balls and more than a few missing teeth."

Bee lived out Texas way ten year, returning home to Louisiana the minute she turned eighteen so her mama and her mama's new boyfriend couldn't say jack about it. Tough

as nails and looking for a way to prove herself, she joined the Lake Charles PD a week after returning. And, despite her Texas accent, fit in real good with all the boys. Especially after she punched out a full grown man, a local shop owner, during her training when he tried to grab her ass one night while she be at The Roadhouse doin' a bar check. "No one grabs me I don't say yeah boy to first," she spat down at his unconscious body. Then she dragged his sorry ass back to the hoosegow and charged him with battery on an officer. No one wanted to mess with her after that.

"Banks are definitely high risk, low reward," chimed in Paul T, who also happened to be Bee's best buddy and constant side companion she'd given a 'yeah boy' to goin' on three month now. He used to work the law a few year back up north in Shreveport but moved down to Lake Charles cause "it's much smaller and not so big a pain in the ass when it comes to racial politics and ghetto attitudes."

In fact, all seven of the men and one woman sitting around on Denmore's porch late on Sunday evening represented nearly half the entire line staff working for the Lake Charles PD. The only people not present, and forbidden from ever settin' foot on Denmore's private property, were Chief Walpole, Captain Danvers, Lt. Poole, Sgt Watson (a northerner), Sandra, the married dispatcher, Cecil, the shop maintenance man, old Bill, the janitor, and Crosby, Stills, and Nash, who'd drawn the weekend shift.

Crosby, Stills, and Nash were actually Officers Ted Byron, Michael Thompson, and Shawn McNeil – three straight laced, church going southern boys who played together in a Christian country rock band on they's days off when they's wasn't working or going to church. But their constant harmonizing in the locker room annoyed the bejeezus out of the lieutenant -- strong enough he started makin' 'em work every weekend for an entire year till they's felt sorry for hurtin' his ears with they's messed up priorities. Which was why Denmore be able to host his weekend 'porch patrol' parties in the first place.

"Are you really gonna rob a bank? I can't picture that," laughed Toomey. Toomey was Officer Gelday who be twenty one and just honorably discharged from the Army a year ago. Toomey didn't talk 'bout his Army experience much 'cept to say he'd been sent to a base in South Korea for two years, that it'd been real boring, and that they food sucked big time.

"Naw, I ain't gonna rob a bank!" Denmore replied.

I grabbed a cold Budweiser from the cooler, popped the top, and set it down on the table in front of Denmore. He then tossed me back his empty -- which I crushed and dropped into my recyclin' bag.' Which was actually my old newspaper sling I had when I rode a paper route. But I converted the bag for Denmore's parties and it work good to hold all they's cans and bottles while I keep my hands free. When the bags full, I walk 'em out to my truck and unload 'em in the recycle bins I got in the back of my pickup. The bins be organized by type of recycling – aluminum, paper, glass, that sorta thing.

Denmore continued, "I ain't stupid enough to actually commit no crime. It's just a watchma' call it...a mental exercise. A way to think like the bad guy so I can outsmart 'em."

"Well," teased Tillman, "at least that explains why we don't catch the smart ones."

Tillman be Officer Brown from Ardmore, Oklahoma. He married a local girl, Susan Perchance, and homesteaded here with her kin since he say he don' really have much kin of his own left up in Oklahoma. And what's left he not that close with anyhow. He be pretty good folk and don' mind me callin' him Mr. Till even when he in uniform.

"Very funny Till! Now hush, I want to hear about Dennie's perfect crime! Go ahead Dennie," cajoled Stevie Ray, "Thrill us with your acumen about being a master thief."

“Alright, I will. It ain’t no bank, I can tell you that. That’s just stupid. And I ain’t stupid. This is what I would do.”

“Sorry Dennie,” piped in Little Bobbie. “But, I don’t know if we should be talking about committing crimes together. That could be considered, like, conspiracy or something. It’s in the Justia statutes under section RS 14:26. If Watson or Danvers ever found out, they could charge us. Or somethin’ like that. I don’t want to go to jail or lose my job.” Little Bobbie be a brand new rookie who jus’ started with LCPD ‘bout two months ago. The only reason he even at Denmore’s ‘cause he be Frank’s cousin on his daddy side. And Frank vouched for him.

“Give me a break, Rook,” Frank chastised, “You don’t know squat. If you even knew you didn’t know squat, that’d be something. But you don’t even know that. So, keep quiet while the big boys talk.”

“Yeah, but the code says if two or more are plannin’ a crime...”

“This ain’t the academy, Rook, and you ain’t in some lame ass classroom anymore back talking your instructors. Ain’ no talking about a crime ever considered the same as actually planning a crime in the real world. We’s talking all theoretical, Rook. You’ll learn that when you get a little more seasoning and realize there’s a big difference between all that academic book stuff and the real police work we do. But in the meantime, take yer head out of yer ass and shut up about it, okay? Let the men talk.”

“Sorry,” Little Bobbie whined.

“So Dennie, what’s the *corpus delecti*? Go on, we’re all ears.”

“The trick is,” Denmore continued, “in order to steal real money and not get caught, you gotta steal money that either won’t be missed or no one’s gonna report stolen. Right?”

“Whose gonna have money they ain’t missed or not gonna report stolen?” Toomey asked.

“Maybe drug dealers?” Tillman ventured. “Or those biker gang fellas that blow through Callahan’s every week out off I-10 by the LC-Westlake bridge.”

“Who’d be stupid enough to mess with them guys,” Toomey replied, “and think they was gonna live, anyway.” Toomey was Officer Fentrell. A military brat from Baton Rouge who did a spell with the marines before settling down with a local girl.

“I’m not talking robbery. I’m talking a good old fashioned B&E,” Denmore explained, getting everyone back on track.

“B&E? Burglaries get reported just the same as robberies!” Frank added. “At least around here when they happen. Which ain’t that often, unless you count how many men break into Toomey’s mother’s box every weekend.”

“Hey, fuck you!” Toomey replied upset, but still smiling with everyone. “My mama’s a saint.”

“True,” Tillman soothed. “Plus, it ain’t breaking and entering if she invites you in, is it? So I guess there’s no crime.”

“You dick!” Toomey growled, starting to laugh along with everyone else. “Even still,” he said looking over at Denmore, “You can’t break into a bank. They’re pretty locked up night and day. Plus, if you robbed a bank, even if you broke in after hours, they’d still turn it federal. You know how they do.”

Denmore laughed. “It ain’t no bank! Y’all ain’t gonna figure it out. That’s why it’s so good. I ain’t talking banks or bars or drug dealers or gangs. I’m talking about a place no one thinks about, but is always there and has high volumes of cash they don’t count and don’t take to the bank. Nor would they report it stolen even if it were. You’d just

have to make sure they never found out you did it cause they'd handle their own business on the spot. But I figured that part out too, so it'd be one hundred percent a cake walk to steal and get away with without no one ever knowin."

Denmore looked around at his buddies. "No ideas? Anyone?"

"Tell us already. You got the floor," Stevie Ray conceded.

"You burglarize a recycling and scrap yard."

"Like Minnie's out down by Codger pass on the way to the rig platforms?" Stevie Ray asked.

"Yeah, boy. Not like Minnie's. Minnie's itself. Think about it. They deal in cash on everything cause that's what their customers want, right? So they have to keep a lot of cash around in small bills. And all that cash they keep sits in a safe in the back office in a closet cause Minnie never trusted no bank his whole life. Hell, half the time they don't even lock the box or even close the door cause they figure who'd go out that way to even think about stealing it. Everyone who works for Minnie is family related by blood. And they don't even have security cause their Uncle Bennet live out there in a shack off the one road that comes in and out of the place. Plus there's low land bayou on all other three sides."

"Minnie's been around a long time," Bee mused. "Even before my people. My great-grandma used to talk about that place when it was a scrap yard for the town's old horse drawn carriages and stuff. I can't say it for fact, but I'm pretty sure my great-grandma and Minne's grandpa had a thing. Hell, we might even be related."

"Nice," Paul T. smiled, looking at Bee.

“Okay,” Stevie Ray guessed, “I got two questions. One, how do you know Minnie’s has that kinda money. And two, why’d you wanna rob Minnie’s in the first place. They’re good people.”

“One, cause I saw the money in his safe. And two, I don’t want to steal Minnie’s money! I already said that. I was just doin’ a mental exercise.”

“Well then, how do you know he has that much money in his safe? Did you count it or something?”

“Do you remember Elliot Sherman’s ex-wife, Sharon?”

“Yeah, we do!” Frank, Tillman, and Toomey all answered at the same time. Which made everyone laugh. Except Little Bobbie because he be too nervous and didn’t know what they’s was referrin’ to.

“She was some kinda gorgeous, let me tell you,” Frank commented. “Crazy as hell too.”

“Why are the hot ones always the craziest?” Tillman added.

“Not all of them,” Paul T. said looking over at Bee. Bee just looked back and smiled.

“Didn’t she, like, take after Elliot with a machete that year they got married cause he came home late and she thought he was cheatin’ on her?” Tillman asked.

“She always thought he was cheating on her. But yeah, it was a machete,” answered Frank. “She would’ve got him too, but he was still skinny and fast back then. She kept after him time and again during the few years he was married to her. Always accusin’ him of cheating. Hell, we was going out there, what, like twice a week for domestics at one point.”

“Sometimes more in the summer when it got hot,” Toomey added.

"But he never press charges though," Tillman agreed, "Always said it was his business and, if it didn't bother him, than it shouldn't bother anyone else. Said his neighbors could mind they own damn business and stop callin the PO-lice."

"Yeah, well, not like now. Now he's divorced and eats fried catfish and hush puppies every meal over at Charlie's Diner -- breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Probably weighs around four bills so she'd definitely catch him now."

"Hell, if that's what getting' rid of crazy does to you, I'd rather keep the crazy and stay lean."

"You said it brother," Paul T. threw in.

"Anyway," Denmore interrupted, "a few years back -- just before Sharon lit off for Florida or wherever, Elliot bought them those matching Ford F150's for their fifth anniversary, remember? Got his all decked out black and her's white with the gold trim. Remember?"

"Yeah, I remember," Stevie Ray said, "Didn't she send his truck over the edge at Neary's Quarry and crumple it up like an accordion? Totaled the damn thing and then drove off with his nephew, Chad-something-or-other, in the brand new white Ford he bought her."

"Which is why I went out to Minnie's a week later," Denmore explained. "I met Elliot out there to file a police report 'cause he said his insurance company wouldn't pay out till he did. After I gave him the police report number, he turned around and sold what was left of the truck to Minnie's son, Badger, for scrap metal."

"That still don't explain how you know Minnie had money in his safe." Tillman spoke up.

"I'm getting to that. I get curious cause Badger disappeared into the office and comes back with a wad of cash the size of my fist to pay for Elliot's truck. After Elliot takes off, I hang around to talk to Badger about it. And what does he do, but walk me back into the office and open this side door. I think there's gonna be another room in there, but damned if there ain't an entire safe fillin' up the whole room. Hell, they probably built the room around that safe, y'all. It was that big. And at least a hundred years old. It actually looked like one of them fancy bank jobs, but from the turn of the century. Easily like eight feet tall and ten feet wide with one of them heavy duty doors that had the old metal wheel you spun to open it. Only the door was wide open. And looked like they never closed it. I could see rust on the hinges. And that safe was loaded too, boy! Top to bottom with cash on every side all the way to the back. Not just singles either, y'all. We're talking easily stacks and stacks of twenty's along with them tens, fives, and ones. There had to be at least half a million in there."

"Now it's half a million," Frank laughed. "Ho boy, this is getting good."

"Okay, so now what?" Stevie Ray asks.

"I mention to Badger that's a lot of cash to just be sitting around in an open safe. Weren't Minnie worried about being robbed or a fire or anything? How much was in there anyway?"

"You didn't!"

"I did. I know it weren't good manners, but I was in uniform and figured I could pass it off like I was just being a thoughtful neighbor and police officer giving them advice on how to best safe guard their property."

"What'd Badger say to that?"

“He laughed. They don’t even really know how much money was in there. Minnie never counted it, but they been stashing it in there longer than he could remember. Just sticking some in and taking out what they need when they needed it. Going back to even Minnie’s granddad. Badger even claimed they had some confederate money still stored deep in there somewhere buried in the back, like, from 1861. Minnie told him it once belonged to the Trudeau family when they’s boys came back from the civil war and wanted to hide what they had left.”

“No shit!”

“I kid you not. I tell Badger, don’t you worry about someone stealing it? He laughed again and said, ‘Good luck. Ain’t no one dumb enough to do that ‘round here. Minnie’d chop ‘em up on the spot and feed ‘em to the gators out back. And we never let Yankees or strangers come around here to do business. So who gonna steal it?’”

“That’s what he said?”

“That’s what he said. So there you have it.”

“Well,” Bee jumped in. “That still don’t sound like the perfect crime. Sounds like a recipe to get yourself dead.”

“No, boy. Here’s the best part. You know Minnie and his people go all the way back to when old Bonaparte owned Louisiana and the Cajuns were born from them French barons mingling with the local girls, yeah?”

“I’ll take your word for it,” Paul T. replied, “I ain’t lived here long enough to know anyone’s history. “

“Well I did some diggin’ and...”

“What do ya’ mean you did some diggin’?” Stevie Ray asked surprised. “On Minnie? Why’d y’all go and do a dumb thing like that?”

"I was curious, you know. And it got me to thinkin..."

"Which still isn't a good idea where you're concerned," Frank ad libbed.

"...who, besides Minnie and his family would know about his family. In fact all the families around here."

"Only one woman I know," Bee mentioned.

"You didn't!" Stevie Ray laughed. "That woman's older than dirt and meaner than a mule that's gettin' it's testicles tied off."

"Who that be?" Paul T. asked, "I ain't been here long as y'all."

"I did. I went and saw old lady Havisham herself."

"Old Lady Havisham? Like from that Dicken's book they made us read our freshman year? She was a real person?" Paul T. asked. "Damn, I forgot what the name of that book was?"

"Great Expectations," Frank replied. "But no, she isn't the real Ms. Havisham. That'd make her well over a hundred and fifty years old. She's actually our town librarian spinster, a Mary Ellen Dampiere. She's old, but not Methuselah old."

"My daddy, before he passed," Bee said, "used to tell me a story about how Charles Dickens came to these parts to visit Mark Twain back in the 1850's. And that Twain took him to meet the Dampiere's at their plantation over in Prien back when they was the reigning aristocrats in the area. Most folk even believe Dicken's not only met the Dampiere's, but modelled Mrs. Havisham and her daughter, Estella, on Mary's own great-grandmother and grandmother respectively."

"Maybe so, but I wasn't thinking that when I went to see her," Denmore spoke. "I was just looking for some information."

“Brother I don’t know why you started investigating Minnie. But, that seems like a hell of a bad idea to let be known around town. Especially if it gets back to him. And the way this town gossip, you know it might.”

“I wasn’t investigating him, Stevie. I made that really clear. I was just doin’ more mental exercises, you know.”

“Yeah, but did anybody else know that’s what you was doin’? At least did Old Lady Havisham know that before she told other what you were up to?”

“Well, she told me Minnie and his folk hail back to *Guignolee*. *La Guignolee* apparently being some long standing New Year’s Eve custom they have in older French Cajun circles where their entire extended family gather together every New Year’s Eve. It frankly sound like a family reunion, New Year’s celebration, and Fourth of July all rolled into one the way Old Lady Havisham explained it. And each year, a different clan hosts the event. This year, the very same upcoming New Year’s Eve in four months, Minnie and his lot’ll be goin’ all the way over to Broussard just below Lafayette where his third cousins hail from. That’s about eighty-three miles as the crow flies.”

“Your point being?”

“Well, if Minnie and his whole clan travel, then they’ll be gone at least two to three days over New Years. And no one, not even Uncle Bennett, will be minding the store. All a fella has to do is drive on out there and load up his truck with money from their safe. Then skedaddle and no one’d be the wiser. Small bills, untraceable, that’d last a lifetime. As long as you don’t get greedy and start living too high on the hog. Making it obvious and all that. Plus, Minnie and his folk don’t believe in the government or cops or anything like that, so they’d never report anything lost or stolen. No bank or anyone else would ever know. Hell, they’d probably just go back to adding more cash to the safe. It’s not like they don’t have a successful business to run apparently.”

“Well, go fuck a duck fellas,” Frank laughed. “I think he did it. I gotta hand it to you, Dennie. I had my doubts, but you might’ve pulled the big one out. That’s a pretty darn near perfect crime, if I do say so myself. You thought it out pretty good.”

They’s was all still fairly drunk by then, even Little Bobbie, but they all got to their feet and gave Denmore a standin’ ovation. I ain’t never seen them do that before. I stayed through and picked up after them until they left or went inside to sleep it off fer the rest of the night.

And I kept comin’ back weekends more whenever Denmore asked. Those porch patrol parties kept me regular in cash just cause them boys could put away a ton of beer.

And come New Year, I learn Denmore plan be spot on. All I had ta’ actually do was drive up in my pickup, back up to the office, and walk right in. The safe was wide open like he say and no one be around for more’n fifty miles I figured. After unloading my scrap bins, I refilled them with as much cash as they could handle. Ten crates worth. But I still barely even put a dent in the money that was in they’s safe. Phew daddy! You never seen so much money! They had to be more’n a couple million easy. Not just a few hundred thousand.

I left Minnie’s with near one hundred and sixty thousand stuffed in my recycle bins. I knows cause I counted every bill as I wrapped them up tight and buried them clean and neat under the horse stalls out back in my barn. Where they’ll sit, hidden and safe. I don’ plan on touchin’ much of it, exceptin’ what I needs on occasion, for a long whiles to come.

I got to give it up to Denmore too. He had a good idea. It did be the perfect crime.

Poor Denmore though. I do feel a bit bad ‘bout that. Denmore’s porch parties broke up not even two months after New Year’s Eve cause none of ‘em could take the pressure over wonderin’ which one done it. Which one of ‘em committed a crime and robbed

Minnie's. Now the police department be in trouble, and even Chief Walpole be noticing, cause none of them are gettin' along. Chief don't know why his officers won't work together no more, but they do. Not one of 'em is talkin' and no one be trusting the other. They's as suspicious as vipers in a pit – cause one 'em done it. But they don't know who. Who actually took Denmore's plan and made it happen. Even Paul T. and Bee took to doubting each other before long and broke up. Which be a shame 'cause I really liked 'em both.

Course Minnie and his boys also be like a hornet nest disturbed. They come to town regular now, ever since returnin' from Broussard after New Year, and discoverin' someone stole cash outta they's safe. I guess they do know how much be in there. Now every day one of 'em be watching the bank and watchin' the stores and watchin' the bars in town seeing if anyone be flashin' any big money around. Buyin' everyone drinks, or pickin' out new furniture, or showin' up drivin' a brand new truck or whatever. Anything that take lots of money they didn' have before.

Neither Minnie nor none of his folk ain't never reported nothing missing to no authorities, but everyone know they lookin' for somethin.' Or someone they's be real serious about finding.

I just smile and keep my head down, doin' my jobs as usual. Denmore be right, that money be the kind comfort a man – let him know he no longer has to worry for the rest of his life. It help I don't need much, so the money should do just that.

The End.

