

Time Drains Away

By William Quincy Belle

Peter lay on the floor propped up against a kitchen cabinet. He stared across the room through the door to the hallway. It was quiet. The man had left.

The man had left him to his fate. He could have phoned for help. It wouldn't have mattered, but the man was afraid. Peter tried to understand why the man would be afraid however, the question seemed immaterial now. The pool of blood was not growing as fast as it had been, but it was still widening on the kitchen tiles. How much time did he have? How much blood could the human body lose before the loss of consciousness and death?

This was an unexpected turn of events. He had hoped to spend a quiet evening in. He had picked up a spy novel this past weekend at the library and right from the beginning, the story had captured his imagination. The action adventure of this globetrotting spy was anything but the quiet uneventful life he led. What an odd surprise to have that action show up in real life when he came home after work to find an armed intruder in his home. And what an unfortunate surprise to have said intruder panic and shoot him in the abdomen.

He looked at the blood. It was a dark shade of red. Wasn't it supposed to be a brighter red? How was he going to clean this mess up? He held his right hand over his stomach. Was this an instinctive gesture to press on his injury to stop the bleeding? It didn't work well. Blood soaked the lower part of his shirt. The stain went down on his pants and there was a small pool of the red liquid spreading out from his body.

How odd. Even though he had been shot, even though there was all this blood, he didn't feel pain. He felt discomfort but no real pain. Was he in shock? What was shock? What a curious predicament. This had never happened to him so he had no idea of what to do. He didn't know what the experience would be like. This was it. This was what being shot was. How odd.

Was the man gone? Then again, was it a man? He seemed to be young, maybe a

teenager. He was shocked to see someone standing in the kitchen. It would seem that whoever he was, he couldn't have been a professional thief. Would a professional have been so surprised? Would a professional have fired? A professional would have done a better job of planning a robbery to avoid any such confrontation with a homeowner. Does anybody want to go from robbery to murder?

He thought he should try to call for help. Now he was alone and didn't have to worry about the robber coming back to shoot him again. But could he move? He felt weak and lightheaded. Once again, it was odd he didn't feel pain so much as a certain discomfort. He always thought from the television shows that anyone would be in agony after being shot.

Putting his unbloodied hand on the floor to brace himself, he moved his legs. A stabbing pain came up out of his abdomen. He let out a gasp and froze; his eyes squeezed shut. Time stopped. He relaxed back against the cabinet. He wasn't going anywhere. Even though he had only been feeling discomfort not pain, he knew he was hurt and hurt badly. Whatever that bullet had done inside him, moving made matters worse. Even if he could move, how was he going to call for help?

Peter had come home after work and unlocked the front door. Stepping inside the front door, he bent down to pick up the mail that the postman had shoved through the mail slot. He shut the door and walked across the living room to the kitchen. He had just finished setting the few pieces of mail on the counter when the young man walked through the door on the opposite side of the kitchen. He was carrying a gun. Their eyes locked and Peter saw the look of utter surprise on the man's face. There was a bang followed by a sharp pain in Peter's abdomen. He automatically grabbed his stomach and looked down. Blood was oozing out of him. He thought he would faint. He had to sit down.

Still holding onto his stomach, he slumped down onto the floor. He sat on the tiles with his back up against a kitchen cabinet. All his energy had drained out of him. He held his blood soaked hand up. This was surreal. He had been shot.

Peter looked at the man. He still had a look of surprise on his face. Had he meant to

shoot him? Was it an accident? At this stage of the game, did it matter? The results were the same.

Peter's voice sounded in a whisper. "Help."

The man did nothing. He was frozen on the spot. He stared at Peter with wide eyes unsure of what to do. Peter had seen him. Peter was a witness. On top of it, he had shot Peter. This was not adding up to be a slam-dunk, in and out smash and grab. This had gotten really, really complicated.

"Help."

The man looked around the room. He saw a wall mounted telephone beside the kitchen table. Taking two steps to the phone, he set his gun on the table, picked up the receiver and unplugged the cord. He picked up the gun, turned and headed back from where he came. From the door, he glanced back at Peter and disappeared. Peter heard a few noises he thought were the backdoor being opened and closed. It was silent.

How long had he sat there? Five minutes? Ten minutes? He couldn't say. He didn't have a real sense of time. Besides, he felt lightheaded and that made him confused. He tried to shake this stupor off because he realised he had to do something. He wasn't sure what, but he couldn't stay sitting on the floor. It seemed as though he would not stop bleeding so he needed to get help.

He looked up at the wall-mounted telephone. The cord hung down from the main unit. The thief had taken the receiver. He didn't want Peter phoning the police. Never mind the police, did it not dawn on him that Peter couldn't phone for help? Now what was he going to do?

There was an extension in the den. Could he crawl that far? Could he attempt to walk? Trying to get up before was painful but he had to try something. However, if the robber had taken the receiver of the phone in the kitchen, how did Peter know whether he had not done the same to the phone in the office? Maybe he didn't think Peter could move.

It occurred to Peter that nobody would find him for days. Years ago, the household had

Writing Raw

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been a bustling social center with children, friends of children, and other neighbourhood parents. There never seemed to be a time when the house was empty. Now with children gone, now that Peter was a widower, the house was more than quiet; it was empty. Previously, he would have been found in hours if not minutes. Now, he would be lucky if he were found in days. He had to do something. He had to get to the den.

Peter took a deep breath. He didn't feel lightheaded as much as dizzy. Focus, Peter, focus. He rolled to one side and attempted to get up on all fours. It was painful but he thought he could put up with it. He crawled a step. He looked down. His bloodied hand had left a big print on the tiles. No matter. He could clean this up later. He moved one arm and one knee forward to take another step. His head was swimming now. Was he going to pass out?

He moved into the hall. He winced with every movement. Blood was dripping onto the floor but he ignored it focusing on taking one step at a time, on putting one foot in front of the other. He shook his head. The dizziness was getting worse. Was he going to make it? He shook his head again then...

Peter lost consciousness and collapsed on the floor. A pervasive silence filled the house as his breathing slowed and became shallower. Somewhere in the den, a souvenir clock from Disneyworld chimed the hour.

The End

William Quincy Belle bio: William Quincy Belle is just a guy. Nobody famous; nobody rich; just some guy who likes to periodically add his two cents worth with the hope, accounting for inflation, that \$0.02 is not over-evaluating his contribution. He claims that at the heart of the writing process is some sort of (psychotic) urge to put it down on paper and likes to recite the following which so far he hasn't been able to attribute to anyone: "A writer is an egomaniac with low self-esteem." You will find Mr. Belle's unbridled stream of consciousness here (<http://wqebelle.blogspot.ca>) or @here (<https://twitter.com/wqebelle>).