

Across the Borderline

A Short Story
by Bob Goodwin
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Borderline personality disorder: A mental disorder characterized by disturbed and unstable interpersonal relationships and self-image, along with impulsive, reckless, and often self-destructive behaviour. (minddisorders.com)

Somewhere back in the house a phone rang and rang, until it eventually rang out.

Georgina smiled to herself – the plan was in place and everything would be okay. She studied the blood flowing over her left arm. The sensation was quite pleasant, it felt warm, soothing and tickled just ever so lightly. The sight of her draining blood was beginning to give her back the control she craved. It had been many months since she'd allowed herself this gift and right now she wondered why she had waited so long. After taking in a deep breath she let it out in a long slow blow between pursed lips. It hadn't taken long, but already there was the sense of relief as the stress ebbed away. With her right hand Georgina dragged the razor blade one more time down the length of her left forearm. That should be enough now. She let the blade fall to the floor. There was very little pain from the cut. In fact there was more from the bruise on her forehead and the black eye which she gently touched. Anyway, soon there would be no pain whatsoever – neither external nor internal. She let herself slide from her sitting position on the side of the bath to the floor and dropped both arms to her side.

There were five cuts in all, the third being the deepest. Blood flowed freely over her hand and fingers. A small but expanding puddle had formed on the bathroom floor and little red rivers tracked their way through the tile grout, around the tiles and towards the recessed drain.

Georgina let her head tilt back on the bath and stared up at the three heat lamps that radiated 825 watts of light and heat over her thin naked body. There was still plenty of

time, she could savour the moment, and allow the feeling of relief and tranquillity to wash over her. At first she was able to successfully empty her mind, but within a minute her thoughts had taken her back to the start of this bizarre day.

* * *

It was eight in the morning and Natalie knocked furiously on the front door. Not being a *morning* person Georgina felt that this was an unwanted intrusion, especially from her sister who knew better. Then again, Natalie had a history of being unreasonable and causing irritation, but in recent weeks they had been getting on better than ever and it looked like they had finally put their differences behind them. First it was the knocking then she added in the shouting. Really, what a rude awakening!

“Georgie, Georgie! Wake up! Come on girl! Hurry, please. Come on Sis.”

Regardless of the racket it was still five minutes before the door opened. Georgina’s blonde hair was like a bird’s nest, her bloodshot eyes barely visible as she huddled in her oversized dressing gown.

“What the fuck! Nat?” she grunted. Natalie barged past and marched to the kitchen with the words, “It’s Mum and Dad.”

The ground floor unit was small with only the one bedroom, but it was tastefully furnished and the soft pastel tones gave it an open and relaxed feel. Several nicely framed scenic and portrait paintings, with the signature ‘*Georgie S*’ in the bottom right corner, decorated the walls. There was an absence of clutter and a great sense of neatness and organisation throughout.

Natalie had the electric kettle purring away in no time and was preparing two mugs of instant coffee with a double scoop for each cup. Georgina ambled in, still half asleep.

“So, what have they done this time?” she yawned.

Natalie added the sugar. “You’re not going to like it.”

“Well, you’ve woken me up at this stupid time. Just tell me!”

Natalie looked at her sister, paused for a moment, and then blurted it out. “They’ve gone to Melbourne.”

“What?” Georgina’s eyes now widened. The kettle clicked off. “What, you mean they’ve gone to Melbourne for the day or something? They’ll be back for tomorrow, right?”

Natalie poured the coffee.

“Nat! They will be back?” She repeated loudly, as if reassuring herself. The adrenaline was picking up and a dreadful reality was looming large in Georgina’s mind.

“Sit down, Georgie. Drink this. It’s strong and you’re going to need it.” She took the mug and dropped herself down at the round table. Some unsteadiness had come over her. Coffee splashed out of the mug. She ignored it.

Natalie continued. “Dad said this business opportunity had come up. Something to do with a new partner. He said it was a once in a lifetime thing. He called the pilot yesterday evening to organise the plane and he and Mum took the jet down late last night.”

Georgina gulped at her hot coffee spilling more on the table. “Are you telling me they won’t be here tomorrow?”

“Sorry, Georgie. I don’t like it any more than you. I think...” Natalie was cut off by a high pitched scream. Her sister jumped up catapulting the chair backwards. Then she smashed the mug down on the table. Pieces flew in all directions. The detached handle remained in her hand. She looked at the sharp broken edges, and then looked at her scarred arm.

“No Georgie, stop, you’ve been so good. It’s been five months. Don’t even think about it.”

Georgina was shaking. She raised her hand and with some effort forced her gaze away from her arm and hurled the handle blindly across the room. It struck ‘*Nat at the Beach House*’, her favourite and most recent painting, squarely in the middle of Natalie’s throat and just stuck there like a dagger. Both girls stared at it – a little stunned.

After a moment Georgina spoke. “It’s been six months, not five.” She had calmed a little after the explosive discharge.

“Shit, it’s just stuck there,” said Natalie with some surprise as she walked over to study it.

“Leave it.”

“Sure.” She gazed at it from close up. “Right in my neck. Wicked!”

“Really Nat, what parents would leave the State on the eve of their twin daughters twenty first birthdays? They have done this deliberately. To hurt me.”

“It’s okay, we can still party. It’s still all set to go at the beach house.” Natalie moved back to the table. “They won’t be there, so what.” She shrugged her shoulders. “I say it’s a good thing, at least we’ll only have people there that really care about us. We don’t need them anymore, Georgie.”

“This is so fucked up. I don’t know if I can handle it.”

“Hey, it will be okay. I’ll go to the beach house and check on things. The party plans are all in place. It will be fine. You don’t need to do anything except turn up. Just stay here and be cool.”

After about half an hour Natalie left for the beach house, while Georgina set about cleaning up the mess being on a promise not to self harm before her sister returned. The mug handle was left in situ.

* * *

Bringing herself back to the present, Georgina looked about the bathroom. It was opulent - a huge shower recess with two large shower heads the size of dinner plates, a marble vanity unit with a basin perched on it rather than in it, granite floor tiles, gold plated taps and heated towel rails and an oversized bath complete with thirty two spa jets. In front of her on the floor was a digital clock. She checked the time – 4.32 pm – bleeding now for seventeen minutes. Someone will be coming before thirty minutes was up – thirty-five at the outside.

A survey of the wounds revealed some congealing had occurred with some thick clots forming around her fingers. Blood was still flowing. A rather pleasant sensation of light-headedness had crept up – it was not unexpected and served as confirmation that everything was running on time. Her eyes closed.

* * *

It was precisely three o'clock in the afternoon when, once again, Natalie was hammering on the front door. It was almost a sense of déjà vu from the morning. The door opened with Georgina still in her dressing gown, but at least she looked awake and had spent a little time on her hair. Her sister charged through, forcing the door open and nearly knocking her off her feet.

This time Natalie went straight for the liquor cabinet, grabbed two glasses and the Johnny Walker.

“Nat, I’ve just got myself into some degree of composure. What the hell is going on now?”

“Fuck, I cannot get my head around this.” She took a big gulp of the alcohol. “Georgie, there’s been a fire.” Fumbling around her jeans she retrieved her iPhone and pressed a few buttons. “Check this out.”

The two girls looked down at the screen to see the beach house fully ablaze. Fire engines were in attendance and torrents of water were being directed into the flames.

“They think it was deliberately lit because it went up so fast. It’s completely destroyed. It seems...”, Natalie paused noticing her sister. “Georgie, what’s happening? Stay with me, Sis.” Blood had drained from Georgina’s face. Her body twitched and jerked as she stood there. Without warning she sprinted across the room towards the bedroom but crashed heavily into the door frame, bouncing off and landing flat on her back. An instant egg formed on her forehead.

It was ten minutes later before Georgina had returned to a semi-functional state. A cold pack was lying across her forehead and left eye.

“Hey Sis, welcome back.” She stroked her hair. “I know exactly how you feel. I know exactly what you want to do and I don’t blame you a bit. I also know that Dad increased the insurance on the property recently. What a jerk. I really hate my parents.”

Georgina cried. “I hate them too, and yes I have to cut... sorry, but I just have to, Nat.”

“After all these years I really do understand the pain you’re going through. So, if this has to be done, let’s do this in a controlled way. Get yourself organised and I’ll call the mental

health service. You know what you should do don't you? You should do it at the parents' place – bleed all over their stupid house.”

* * *

The two drove the few kilometres to their parent's mansion. They laid out their plan – and while it was not an exact science, they had both been on this journey enough times to know how it was likely to pan out. Natalie would ring the mental health service at 4.10 pm, five minutes before the first cut was inflicted. The staff would then try calling any contact numbers they had and, after getting no response, would do a prompt home visit. By the time the staff got to the house it would be about half an hour, they would prevent further bleeding and call the ambulance or alternatively arrive with the ambulance officers in the first instance. The front door would be left unlocked. As much as Natalie wanted her sister to bleed all over the carpets and furniture Georgina insisted that, because of her neatness gene, she could only allow herself to use the bathroom.

* * *

She forced open her eyes and looked at the clock – 4.50 pm. She felt tired and, despite the warming ceiling light, was beginning to feel a little cool. They better come soon. A swirl of flames and bright colours washed through her mind. Like parting clouds the colours separated leaving the image of the mug handle embedded in Nat's throat. There was a trickle of bright red blood running down her sister's neck.

* * *

Two mental health staff together with two ambulance officers arrived at the front door. After knocking and waiting less than a minute they tried the door handle – it opened. They entered.

* * *

Georgina thought she heard a faint knocking sound and a voice. “Georgina!” It was a female voice - it sounded so far away. Come quick, please! At last they were here – better late than never. She drifted away again briefly and was seeing the beach house burning. The picture was so steady, so clear and so perfectly positioned – like a movie.

* * *

A bathroom door swung open. The head of a female ambulance officer peered in and looked around the tiny room. “All clear here. That’s it then the house is empty! She’s not home!”

* * *

Another bathroom door opened. Natalie stood there looking down at her sister.

“Hey Georgie, you look like shit.”

Her sister squeezed out a soft, “Nat... ambulance.”

“Sorry Sis. I sent them to your place. Silly me, you know how bad I am with the little details. Hey, I’ve got some great video to show you.” With that she knelt down on Georgina’s right side, avoiding the bloodied area of the floor, and held the iPhone up for her to see.

“Okay, now here I am pouring a couple of drinks and of course adding a little secret ingredient. Stir, stir, stir – very tasty.” She tapped the iPhone screen a couple of times.

“Now here’s one of Mum and Dad having that special drink with little old me at the beach house. Look we’re all waving and having fun. Wave back.” She lifted up Georgina’s right hand and waved it at the phone. “Hello Mummy, hello Daddy.” She let her sister’s hand go and it flopped straight to the floor.

“Nat,” panted Georgina.

“Yes, now wait a sec, there’s more... yeah, there’s a quick one of Mum and Dad fast asleep. Let’s fast forward a wee bit, whoa stop... now this is really cool. This is me leaving a piece of lit mosquito coil sticking out of a box of matches on the kitchen bench, and you’re going to love this... here I am turning on the gas stove. I tell ya Georgie, you’ve got to fiddle with those self lighting bastards to stop them lighting up. Now I believe you saw the beach house burning down. So I guess that’s pretty much a wrap on the whole deal.”

Georgina’s eyes were wide open. Her breaths rapid and shallow. “Don’t let me die,” she puffed.

Natalie stood and pocketed her phone. “You fucking borderlines are pathetic. Much better to be a psychopath with a multi-million dollar budget and a private jet don’t you think? Bye Sis.”

Psychopathic personality disorder: A pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others and inability or unwillingness to conform to what are considered to be the norms of society. (medterms.com)

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