

Gone Fishing

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Gone Fishing

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[GRIAN]

Well, *this* is interesting. I thought this was one statement at first, but it looks like it's actually two and Etho just stapled the transcripts together for some reason? So I'm going to read this top one first and then record the other one separately, to make sure things don't get confused.

Statement of- ugh, initials again. And I can't even blame Mumbo this time.

Statement of X. B. Crafted, regarding his roommate's business dealings. Original statement transcribed February first, 2009. Statement begins.

Deals with the Devil

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

[Click]

(Papers being flipped through)

[GRIAN]

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Statement of X. B. Crafted, regarding his roommate's business dealings. Original statement transcribed February first, 2009. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

Alright, so what I'm doing here is a little trick called 'getting out ahead of the story.' Just in case Hypno comes in here to tattle on me, after what happened. I just want to give my side of things before he comes in and does something stupid, okay?

I knew Hypno for a year or two before we decided to move in together.

It wasn't, like, a huge decision. I was just having trouble making rent where I was at and needed to move, and I knew he was looking to move across town too, so it sort of just made sense. He worked days and I worked nights- uh, I'm a janitor, I work at an aquarium- so I was figuring we wouldn't see much of each other anyways. Which was perfectly fine with me. I'm a private guy, you know? I like my alone time.

Well, because we had opposite schedules, it took me awhile to notice anything.

Hypno was a... uh, I guess the word is reseller? Like, he'd buy old stuff and refurbish it, or have other people refurbish it, and then sell it for a profit. Furniture, mostly, but also cars, jewelry; any kind of thing he thought people would pay good money for if it was just a little shinier. It wasn't so much a business as like, five simultaneous side hustles, but he seemed to handle all the different threads of it pretty well, and from what I saw he made a pretty decent profit off all of it- like, he wasn't exactly rich, but he definitely made more money than I did.

For the first few months, that was that. I left him alone and he left me alone, and I didn't notice anything too out of the ordinary. I didn't see any of his customers or anything. He usually made house calls, and if he did anything in the apartment it was when I was either sleeping or out. Never thought anything of it.

The place where I work is closed Sundays, so generally I do a lot of sleeping after I get home Sunday morning and then wake up early Monday and spend the day doing stuff that requires me to be awake at normal human hours. Normally I run errands and then go for a nice long walk, usually down to the coast for some time in the sun and water.

Well, one week I got home from errands to drop some groceries off, and there was somebody in the living room arguing with Hypno. Nobody I knew, but he seemed really upset. Neither of them

had noticed me- I tend to move pretty quietly- so I hung back in the doorway and listened.

The stranger was accusing Hypno of scamming him- like, tricking him into overpaying for something? At least from what I could tell. And Hypno was saying no, no, the terms were clear from the start. He had- I guess a contract, or a bill of sale or something, that the guy had signed, and he was holding it up. The stranger, the customer, had... such a *miserable* look on his face when he looked at that piece of paper. Like he'd never made a worse mistake in his life than signing it.

Hypno was facing away from me, and I could see he had his free hand behind his back. His fingers were crossed.

Eventually the guy gave up. Stormed out right past me, slammed the door hard enough to rattle the frame. Hypno turned to watch him go, and that was the first time he noticed I was there, I think, because he sort of startled, and it took him a minute to get his face back under control. He looked really unsettled, but after a moment he was smiling at me. It was almost sort of... guilty. Like he knew he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't have.

He said hi to me, sounded a little nervous about it, and said he hadn't been expecting me to come home so soon. I said grocery shopping had been faster than usual, set my stuff down on the counter finally, and asked what that had been all about.

He sort of shrugged, said he'd sold the guy a car and the guy hadn't read the fine print, missed the interest rates. I said he'd seemed pretty upset over interest rates and Hypno sort of laughed it off- like, *some people*, you know?

I asked him if his customer interactions went like that often, played it like I was worried about people wrecking up the apartment if they got too heated in there. Cause, like, up to that point, I'd been under the impression that his little business was pretty low-key. Uncontroversial. Like, I knew he marked stuff up, but I was hard for me to picture him doing anything a person would get angry enough to scream at him over.

He said now and then people just couldn't handle getting the short end of a deal, but that I didn't have to worry about it. He said he had it all under control.

Now, I don't know about you, but I feel like people only ever say that when they don't have anything under control at all. So I let the subject drop, but I had no plans of leaving it alone. I wanted to know what he was up to.

It was actually pretty easy for me to start keeping closer tabs on him, because like I said, I was usually just asleep in the other room when he was meeting people. All I had to do was set a little alarm for myself in the morning and then crack my door open to listen in on what was going on in the living room. It meant not sleeping, but I was curious. And I've never really needed that much sleep on a daily basis, anyways.

For the next week or so, I eavesdropped whenever Hypno was doing meetings, and I started realizing that whatever he was selling, it wasn't just cars or jewelry.

He would *promise* people things. Sometimes it really was just normal things- a certain ring, or an antique clock. But other times it would be things like... a memory. I remember standing there, just behind the door, and listening to this girl bargain with him for the memory of the only time she'd met her grandfather. Or... a second chance. Love. Someone's safety. Things that aren't tangible. Things that can't be bought and sold.

Sometimes he got paid in money, but a lot of times he would barter. More than anything, he wanted them to sign those little pieces of paper- he just called them IOUs. I just kept watching, waiting for the other shoe to drop, for everything to come together in a way that made it all make sense.

And then one of his customers died.

I only learned about it by chance. I was flipping through a newspaper somebody had abandoned on a bench at the aquarium, and I recognized his face in the obituaries. The man who'd been upset about the interest rates on his car, according to Hypno. It said he'd died prematurely, natural causes even though he was barely thirty. And I knew... I can't tell you how, but I *knew* Hypno and his scraps of paper had something to do with it.

I didn't- you know, there's probably a lot of stuff I would've let him get away with? I've been around the block a couple times, and not a lot gets to me. If he was just fleecing these people the normal way, it would've been- whatever, you know? It's a dog-eat-dog world, we all do what we gotta do to stay alive. But this wasn't that. It just... tasted rotten to me.

At the very least, it wasn't anything I wanted happening in my living room.

It was raining hard, that morning when I got off work. I walked home and caught Hypno as he was eating breakfast, and dropped the newspaper on the counter in front of him.

I told him we needed to talk.

He tried to brush it off, act like he didn't know what I meant, but I could tell right away he knew exactly what I was talking about. His eyes went to the obituary right away. I couldn't really read his expression, but it seemed... scared, almost.

I suggested we go for a little walk, and after a moment he agreed.

There's a walk I take... at least once a week, usually more. There was an old saltwater river course that used to run right through where the city is now, before people really settled down here and started building. It dried up when all the sand got moved around, but the oldest roads still wind around where it was, and I like following the path of it all the way down to the sea.

It was still raining, as we walked.

And Hypno told me about what he'd been up to.

He said it had gotten sort of out of hand. That he'd just picked up a few tricks, when he was first starting out with his business, and one thing had led to another, and before he knew it he was way out of his depth. He didn't know how to stop now that he'd started, he said. He'd built a clientele. Everybody knew he could sell you whatever you wanted, so long as you were desperate enough to pay. All it would cost was your lifespan, or your memories, or your health.

He told me he had more years on his life now than he knew what to do with. That he hadn't thought things through, hadn't done the math, and now he was probably going to outlive everybody he knew ten times over. He didn't sound happy about it.

We reached the ocean, eventually.

I told him I'd make a deal with him. He'd stop buying things from people that they couldn't afford to sell, and in exchange I'd stick around and keep him company. It took some work, but he agreed, once I convinced him I was good for it.

We shook on it.

And, uh, that's most of the important stuff. Everything to do with Hypno, at least. There's more to the whole story, but... it's really a different story, and not one I feel like telling.

If Hypno comes in here... nothing I can do about that. He will or he won't. But at least I got my side down in writing, first.

[Click]

Chapter End Notes

hey! it's a two parter! we'll get the other half in the next chapter. :) i wonder what xb left out?

can you tell this is inspired by [fixed and dilated](#)? i am a BIG fan. i'm only a very intermittent xb watcher, so i hope i did alright with him here!

The Oxbow

Chapter Summary

[GRIAN]

And then the other one is... *aha*. I did start to suspect. Guess that explains why Etho filed these two as one statement. Statement of Hypno Tized, regarding certain behaviors of his roommate. Statement originally *also* transcribed February first, 2009.

I have to say, it sounds like these two were *perfect* housemates for each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

[Click]

(*Pages turning*)

[GRIAN]

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I have to say, it sounds like these two were *perfect* housemates for each other. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

Do you know what an oxbow lake is?

It's like- you know how a river will sort of twist back and forth, as it goes? And sometimes something happens, a flood or a drought or just the landscape changing, and the river straightens out a bit, cuts across the land a little differently, and leaves the place where it used to curve behind. But the old riverbed is still *there*, and it's still full of water. It just doesn't lead anywhere anymore.

I learned about them when I was a kid- trip to a state park with my grandparents, I think. Never really thought it would come in handy twenty years down the line, but. I remember it stuck with me, looking at maps of the area from overhead with the oxbows all outlined in red, the curves of where the river used to be, thousands of years ago.

This isn't *really* a story about that, but it also kind of is. It's about my roommate.

I met XB through a mutual friend- I thought they were dating at the time, actually, though now that I've got to know them both I think maybe they're just like that. At first he didn't really stick out to me. Not in a bad way or anything. He just sort of kept to himself. Quiet, you know? But friendly. Laidback, I guess.

I wouldn't have ever said I knew him *well*, but we got along pretty decently, and eventually it happened to come up that his landlord was kicking him out right when I was trying to move and find a new roommate, and it just... worked out. He was really committed to staying right in the same area of the city I was wanting to move to. Didn't think much of it, at the time.

Things started out pretty normal. I was running my own little business. He *said* he worked nights at an aquarium. Looking back now, I have no idea if that's true or not- I've got my doubts- but anyways I didn't see him much, which served me just fine. I didn't want him snooping around in my business.

I'm, like- we'll say I'm an entrepreneur, or at least I was. I found a book, a few years back, and- well, I bought and sold things. The important part is that I occasionally had clients who *might* not have been happy with me, for any number of reasons, and it was just convenient for me that he wasn't around much. That's all.

He didn't seem to eat at home much. I guess I figured he was just a restaurants guy. Which I *get*, right? He was working pretty long shifts, or at least I thought he was, and like, you get off one of those and you don't really want to come home and cook. So I didn't think much of it.

The first thing that struck me as *off* was the first time he went shopping.

Or, I guess he went shopping. All I know is he came home with some bags. I wasn't expecting him to be there at all, but I woke up late one morning and he was loading stuff into the freezer. I asked if he needed a hand, still rubbing sleep out of my eyes, and he said sure, so I wandered over to have a look inside the bags.

It was all *meat*. Dead fish, specifically. All neatly cleaned and gutted and everything and packed in ice and paper.

And like, listen. We live in a coastal city. Fish is pretty cheap and easy to come by, at least during most of the year. It wasn't *weird*, not really. Or it shouldn't have been. But there was *nothing* else in the bags, no bread or fruit or anything. I tried to ask him about it, but he just grinned at me, like we were sharing a joke that I wasn't in on, and didn't say anything.

And- at the time, I figured it was just the bad kitchen lighting, but for a moment it looked like his teeth just went *back*.

I was sort of... uneasy around him, after that. Which- maybe that was unfair. He was always friendly to me. I never felt *unsafe*, or anything, not really. Just... on edge. The way you might feel if you were on a movie set with a trained animal you didn't *actually* trust not to lunge, no matter how calm it acted.

Everything stayed normal, though. Everything stayed under control.

And then one day, he came home while I was talking to a customer.

Like I said, people occasionally had... reason to be upset with me. This particular guy was trying to bargain me back out of a deal we'd already finalized- it's not that important. Just meant I wasn't paying attention when the door to the apartment opened behind me.

It was XB's day off, so I'd figured he'd be out all day- he usually was. I didn't realize he'd come in until my client gave up and stormed out. I turned around to watch him go and- there he was, standing just inside the door, staring at me. And...

There was something about his eyes. They were blue. Which-

It sounds weird. He didn't *look* any different, not really. He looked exactly the same he always had. His eyes have *always* been blue. It was just like... there was more behind them? Like there was an ocean behind his irises. Not in a pretty way, or anything, though. In a terrifying way. Like there was a *wave* there, stretching up from floor to ceiling, ready to just sweep across the room and

swallow me whole before I could even run. I thought I could *hear* something, too, ringing in my ears like rushing water.

And then he blinked, or I blinked, and it was over. Whatever had been in his eyes was gone again, or at least not... visible. He asked me what had been up with the guy and I gave him a quick explanation. Mostly I just wanted to get out of there. I felt like I couldn't even be in the same *room* as him right then. I wanted to get *something* between me and him.

The feeling only went away once I was in my room. It was the first time ever I actually used the lock on that door.

Those next two weeks were... they should've been normal. They weren't.

I can't exactly pin down why. I just felt like I was being... not like I was being watched. More like I had the *undivided attention* of something very, very large.

XB wasn't... acting any different, not really. It *felt* like he was around more often, but I couldn't tell if that was real or just my brain playing tricks on me. And even if he was, it's not like that would explain anything. He was just my roommate. He had every right to be there. But I just couldn't shake the feeling that *something* had changed.

It was almost a relief when one morning, he walked in while I was eating breakfast and told me we needed to go for a walk and... talk things over. It was a rainy morning- all grey and wet outside. I didn't want to go out. But I felt like if I spent another hour with that... *weight* curled around inside the walls, following me wherever I went, i was going to lose it.

And... maybe I wanted to get some things off my chest, too.

So I said sure, I'd go with him. He said he had some questions for me. I said I had some questions for him, too.

He led the way. He had a specific way he wanted to go, down the boulevard toward the ocean. The whole time we were walking, I felt like I could hear the waves in my ears, getting louder and louder, drowning out everything else besides our conversation. There wasn't anybody else out- just the two of us, and the rain.

It was like the world sort of... faded. I could hear myself talking, and I could see the raindrops hitting the ground, and I could hear the waves in the distance, getting closer. But past that it was like... the city wasn't really *there* anymore. Where there should've been the skyline there just sky, grey and cloudy, and undeveloped grassy dunes and crags of rock as far as I could see. I couldn't tell if the buildings were destroyed or if I was seeing a time before they'd ever been there at all. I don't know if there was a difference.

There was a river I've never seen before running along next to our feet, heavy with rainwater.

XB also looked different, as we got closer to the shore. He didn't... fade out, not like the city did. If anything, it was like he got *more* solid, but he also got... like I couldn't really see his face anymore? Except for his teeth. And his eyes. I wasn't sure if it was the clouds getting thicker and blocking out the sun or something else, but...

I wanted to run, but I couldn't. *I really* couldn't.

We were talking, the whole time. I could only sort of keep track of what I was saying. Almost all my focus was on just keeping my feet under me as the wind and rain got wilder and wilder and the city dissolved around me. I know I was saying stuff I'd wanted to keep secret. Stuff I hadn't

planned on telling anybody else ever.

I couldn't help it, though. It felt like I was pleading with something not to *eat* me.

We reached the shore, eventually. The waves were so loud in my ears I couldn't hear anything else, but his voice cut right through the noise.

He told me... well. Basically, he told me I needed to be better to my customers. That he wasn't happy with some of the stuff I'd been up to, and that he intended on sticking around for as long as it took to make sure I stayed on the straight and narrow. And the way he said it- there was no doubt in my mind that he meant it. That he was just going to be there, no matter what I did.

He phrased it like a deal, but it wasn't really something I could refuse. I knew that right away. But I didn't...

I was... in over my head in more ways than one. I knew that. I'd been an idiot.

At least *he* seemed like he knew what he was doing.

So I agreed, and shook his hand. It was cold, and it had claws that dug into my skin but didn't quite draw blood. He smiled, and it was like that first time- his mouth was nothing but teeth that just went back and back and *back*. And then...

All at once, the rain stopped.

The ocean settled, even though I could still hear the waves. The sky was clearing. When I turned around, the city was back, all the buildings intact. And the river was gone.

'Weird weather,' XB said, and when I turned back to stare at him he just looked normal again, hands in his pockets, entirely human.

Didn't fool me, though. I'd seen him. What he really looked like.

I rolled my eyes and told him I was heading home to change, because I was soaked from head to toe.

On the way home, he told me about the river that used to run through where the city center is now.

[Click]

[Click]

[GRIAN]

Well. This is interesting. A little irritating that Hypno doesn't elaborate ever on the book he found- I'd bet real money I can guess whose name was stamped inside it.

Anyways. What I find most interesting about this pair of statements is that they almost seem to indicate a sort of... like attracts like? It almost seems like the closer you are to this... everything, the more likely you are to continue to encounter it in different forms. I wonder why that is.

I'm reminded again of that camping trip, and how Scott, Lizzie and Jimmy have all run up into different manifestations in their own lives following it. Or False, and the experiences she had with both of her roommates paired with the statement about her. Or even me and... Scar, and the both of us winding up here...

(Clears throat) Anyways.

I do wish I knew where this had taken place; neither of them mentioned, which is... aggravating. Etho actually did apparently take some interest in this case- he's got a map in here with a couple different cities in Wales highlighted as possible settings, but it looks like he wasn't able to narrow it down any further than that, which is a pity...

(Knocking on door)

[GRIAN]

I'm *busy!*

(Door opens)

[SCAR]

Ooh! What're you working on?

(Footsteps approaching)

[GRIAN]

I'm *recording!*

[SCAR]

Oh! Did I interrupt you?

[GRIAN]

Yes.

[SCAR]

(Laughs) Sorry, sorry! I was just wanting to let you know-

(Pause)

Oh, hey, I know that guy!

[GRIAN]

...Who?

[SCAR]

This guy! *(Taps paper)* Hypno? I mean, if it's the same guy. Remembered because of the weird name. I met him a couple years ago! Birds of a feather, him and me! He tried to sell me something. Don't remember what. But it was fun! Not often I run into a guy who can give me a run for my money when it comes to, uh, bargaining.

[GRIAN]

...Is that *so*. Do you remember what he wanted from you?

[SCAR]

Uh... no, I don't think so? I remember it was something kind of weird.

[GRIAN]

(Audio crackles) Are you *sure?*

[SCAR]

Yep! Sorry. It's gone.

[GRIAN]

(Groans)

Do you know where he's at now? Or- wait, do you at least remember where you met him?

[SCAR]

Oooh... might've been somewhere north of here? I don't know, I did a lot of travelling around before I got this job! Places all sort of blur together, you know how it is.

[GRIAN]

Right. Well, congratulations on managing to be even *less* useful than the statement itself.

[SCAR]

(Brightly) You're welcome!

[GRIAN]

What did you want to come in here to tell me, anyways?

[SCAR]

Uh... oh, right! Mumbo called and said he's not coming in today. Guess he's sick or something.

[GRIAN]

Oh. Well, hope he feels better soon. I'd feel bad bullying him when he's not well.

[Click]

Chapter End Notes

WOOO ITS DONE this is my first experiment with bundling multiple statements into one fic in this series to tell one story! i'm planning to do this at least one more time in this series, so, as always, comments are very appreciated!!

i'm so excited for the next statement! part of the reason this one took so long to finish is because i kept working on the next one instead. i hope you guys enjoy it as much as i do!

also! there is now (3/5/23) an additional little prose character study/backstory piece [here](#)! i would recommend it highly!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!