

# Megan:[the empty call]

by

Kevin Stillwater

*Downloaded from the future by Brett Paufler on +/- 3-7-08;  
so that means, originally recorded around 2053.*

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You could spend a lot of time searching for the right skin. But perhaps I should rephrase that, I could waste a lot of time. That is to say, I waste a lot of time searching through the galleries looking for that perfect skin.

I'll admit it, I dig looking at the chicks. But then, don't we all?

Some of those skins are easy to spot:[to place, to integrate into a call, and/or to wrap a story around]. You can just look into their eyes and you know:[everything].

Others...

Well, you don't really want a story with them. You just want to lie there in bed and never get up:[never let anything happen to them, to let anything harm them].

Do you know what I mean when I say that? Has it happened to you? Have you ever fallen for a proxy? And I mean fallen, subscribed at the premium rate, gotten the daily:[the last minute, the real time] update and just corresponded with air:[the server, a router, a meddlesome brain-dead subprogram] on just the hope.

You know they got you on file.

Yeah. Well. I've been there too.

Mostly now, I look for the ones now that aren't perfect:[have that blemish, that fault, that tomboy:{rugged and hard} demeanor]. I like to know that they can carry their own weight, and when the going gets tough:[and the bullets start flying], they won't crumble, but can keep pace and match me:[one for one:{1:1}, or whatever

you like to set it at]. Then when it's all over, and they're getting all pissed:[mad and irate:{“I could have gotten killed back there!”}].

But no:[not really:{“Not you.”}], and you kiss and it's all better. It's the best of both worlds.

And then after that:[a space saving:{dead air} intro like that], believe it or not, I don't have a skin for you:[nothing, nada, zip]. Nothing's going to load. Wait all you like, it's not going to happen.

Me, I say unwrap your favorite:[take it off that shelf]. Or then, maybe not your favorite, maybe the one you been saving for years, the one you put on a back-shelf and just forgot about. Take her:[use her, defile her]. All I'm suggesting is that you go through your back files:[the ones that are tagged, re-tagged, filed, and sorted], and take her out. Load her up. And, let her play.

Better yet, let me play.

I like to play.

[X!:{dealers choice}]: load it in:[down and dirty], and watch it swirl:[like putty].

Just for practice:[and old times sake], a fist to the head:[deformed and reformed, cracked and made straight].

Play with the effects:[a fractal display, like a puzzle whose pieces don't quite fit, and cold light seeping through the center]. Play with it till you get it right:[beauty and the beast].

[Satisfied?]: OK, then.

That's her:[that's Megan:[beauty, but then not] standing outside, shivering in the rain.

Now, you can't really see her. But you know this all the same because:[you know, it's one of those things].

Drop in if you'd like:[take it first person as G'lg:{reformed demonic detective, searching for Good:(whatever that means)}]. Of course, whatever it means, doesn't mean you don't start the day smoking a spliff:[open], taking a sip:[once again, whatever], or

idly wasting your time thumbing through the pages of a magazine: [the sporting gazette, the news, or a girly-spread: {glossy and bold}].

Make yourself at home:[put your feet up on the desk]. This is your room:[your house, your domain], after all. You run the show here:[a used car lot, a gambling book, or a blue store: {liquor and more}], but business is slow.

Natasha:[your sidekick, a lover, and demonic sprite] stares out the door. She's cute:[she's a demon: {she's a goer}]. But she's bored, you're bored, and time moves slow:[hey, be a masochist and set it at 1/10 speed].

Feel it:[time moving slow].

Just feel it.

Take a sip.

Take a puff.

And, turn the page:[and maybe catch up on your research: [the skins}].

“What she doing out there in the rain,” Natasha asks finally out of concern:[unconcern, or simply just boredom: {let's get this show on the road}].

Ignore her. Change the subject. “Did you put the top down on the caddy like I asked?”

“You never asked me.”

Put the magazine down. Set the drink down. Flick the ashes on the dwindling spliff. And, look at her:[OK, maybe just glare]. “No, you're right. I didn't ask. I told you,” and maybe you'd go on to ask her the question again, but you know the answer:[she didn't, she hasn't, she won't], and even now, inventory is getting ruined. But you don't really care, and you don't want to deal with it:[Natasha, or any of it].

But she does. She wants it out:[she's sick of it]. “Then why'd you say asked?”

Annoying little question:[just looking for a fight: {maybe a little fun:(she's a demon, you figure it out)}, but that's not the turn

we're going to take: {that I'm going to take, I'll wait, take your time}].

After bit:[a delay, a pause for your fun], Natasha inquires, "Why's she out there, anyway?"

And then, say it like you mean it, "Who?"

"Don't start with me. Why's she here?"

"Why don't you open the door and ask her?"

"I ain't your secretary." Of course, Natasha:[second hand slut, impish delight that she is] is right:[she's no secretary: {not if you want your till full, or the books to make sense}].

"Just open the door."

"I ain't your..."

Raise your voice:[like you mean it]. "Open the door!"

With a fury to match your own, Natasha kicks at the hinges until the door swings open:[broken].

Cut.

Pull Out

Drop into Megan:[broken, discarded] standing in the rain.

Feel the twitch of your face, the pain in your jaw, and the fear in your heart. Watch as the door flies open. So he knows you're here. What else does he know?

Take is slow:[step by nervous: {frightening, mind numbing} step]. Look at the cars:[the derelicts, the junkers, and the Caddy: {the pimp ride}] getting wet.

Look at the danger:[the waste].

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. Take a step forward: [nonetheless] and then take a step back.

Only to hear Natasha call from the door, "What the hell is she doing out there?"

And then his voice soft and low:[dangerous: {mumbling and something being thrown}].

Still, you are here. Gather the courage. Walk through the yard. Just be thankful he doesn't believe in guard dogs:[or worse].

And take the slippery steps into the waiting room:[one slippery step at a time].

Hell, we've done the rest:[you cross dressing freak].

Cut. Twist:[and pull], as you drop into Natasha.

Feel her anger:[her hate, the rages inside: {a demon born of the depths, confined to this used car lot: [Hell!]}]. I don't think so: [not for long]. "You coming in or not, Sweet Cheeks?"

And even before the words leave your mouth feel G'lg's anger:[just know it, just sense it, just feel it: {and reflect it right back}].

F! him:[I think you know what it means].

He's gone soft. You can feel it:[you can taste it, you can see it].

And not just today, not just now. When's the last time he hit someone:[punched a girl, kicked a man when he was down: {cheated at cards, or sold a bad car}]?

The man's gone soft. Everybody knows it:[everybody]. Even the girl knows it:[the girl]. Even she:[the wreck, the contemptible slut: {let the hate grow}]. Even she knows it:[the stammering fool].

"I heard, I heard," she stammers:[getting nowhere, going nowhere: {always the same}].

You could sneak up behind her:[snap her neck: {end this charade}], but G'lg won't let you:[wouldn't let you].

No, he wouldn't:[he still has that control].

He won't kill.

He won't steal:[or badmouth his foes].

But give you your freedom...

"What did you hear?" he says to the girl, and he's all nice: [and kind, and soft spoken]. What's next? Offering her a drink? Asking her if she's cold?

At least he hasn't slipped that far. He only inquires of the girl, "What did you hear?"

"That you could help."

And can you feel yourself twitch at the word:[finally: {it's enough to break free}].

Cut.

Spin.

Descend.

And, sigh!

It was bound to happen:[Natasha breaking free].

Still, you:[G'gl, as if you didn't know] would have liked to save her:[carry her with you, and protect her: {she's got that kind of face, when she's not angry}]. But she's been angry a long time:[as long as you can remember, ever since your fall: {not that it started there:(she's a demon, remember)}]. And well, maybe her going is for the best:[The Good, and the happiness of all].

“Where's she going?” the girl asks:[concerned, worried, afraid of cross: {single or double?}].

“I don't know,” too bad lying's not your strong suit. And then:[reflectively, honestly], “She's been wanting to walk out that door for a long time.”

“Oh?” Like she could understand.

But she didn't mean it like that.

Take a deep breath.

Take a swig.

Take a puff.

Wait.

And then get sick of waiting.

“So?”

But all she offers is blankness:[an emptiness: {inside}].

“Look, I haven't got all day.” Reach for the mag, but it's across the room:[where you threw it: {outside in the rain, in a puddle, getting wet}].

Fine!

“What brings you here?”

“They say you can help.”

Narrow your eyes:[your patience is waning: {I can tell}].  
“We’ve been through this.”

“The thing is, I...”

Watch as she feels her face:[every fist has a face: {but you knew that}].

Watch the light play on her features:[spooky, surreal, creepy, and sublime]. You recognize that face:[every fist has a face].

Take a drink:[gulp it: {shaking, steady for more}]. That’s right, you deserve it:[you need it: {how many addictions can you fight at once?}].

Pour yourself another:[forget about the glass: {decorum or taste}].

“What do you want?”

“I want to know? Who?” And then the hard one, “And I want to know, why?”

Just repeat it, “Why.” It’s not even a question:[not anymore: {just a wonderment, an astonishment}].

“Yes, why?”

“And then?”

“I... I... I don’t know,” she honestly considers:[like she’d never thought of it before]. “I don’t know. I just thought if... if I knew why...”

Then what:[the question unspoken]?

Then what?

Reach for the bottle, but it’s empty:[where did it go?].  
Frantically, look for another:[a crutch: {in your cabinets, the desk}],  
but Natasha always kept you supplied.

And where is she:[in this moment of need]?

Oh, it would be easy to get mad:[real: {real} easy].

But, “There is no why? There just is,” you say:[remembering a catechism: {as if in a dream}].

But she presses on. Why does she press?

Why?

Flip it over.

Switch into her.

Can you feel your face twitching? And, what did they say?  
What is it that they said?

Remember:[they said he was a demon:[G'gl: {you remember  
that sound:(gagging and hacking), and his fists:(pounding)}].

Pounding.

And pounding.

Before he turned Good, before he saw Grace, there was a  
time...

Remember.

“It was you, wasn't it?”

Flip.

Switch.

Revert.

Just look at the girl, her face:[distorted: {beauty destroyed}].

Just look at the girl:[standing, accusing].

“It was you, wasn't it?”

What else is there to say?

“Yes. It was me.”

“Why?”

Why not? Is that even a reply?

“It's what I did.”

“Why?”

But she's not listening:[not anymore: {sobbing, and crying:  
(tears to the floor)}].

Comfort her if you can:[big guy: {demon that you are}].

But you can't.

How could you?

And at your slightest touch:[before you know what you've  
done], she flies into the night:[the coldness, the rain: {anything to  
numb the pain}].

Just stand there.

Look around. The dingy trailer:[the shack], the cars in the  
lot, and the icy cold rain.



You could pick up the bottle, but there's none left:[no spill, no drink, and the even skins: {those endless skins} have washed down the drain].

It's all you can do to stagger to the porch:[the front steps] at the edge of the rain, and take a seat:[collapse to your knees].

Watch the lighting. Hear the thunder roar.

And as the static in your mind:[from the disconnect] grows, it is all you can do to listen to the patter of the rain:[and through it, beneath it: {Natasha's cruel voice:(for you are that close--still, even, now] as she giggles and laughs and tells of your fall to [Kracka-Boom: Windjinn, and all of the rest}].

And it would be here:[if you have the will: {if you have the way}] that you shall cradle your hands in your face and shed a few tears.

Oh, not for yourself, but for poor Megan.

And at this point, please don't ask me why.

From there you're on your own: [ready to rock, ready to roll].  
I mean, there's got to be a story in there somewhere:[if you've got the heart: {the body} and the soul].

After all, didn't I tell you at the beginning, this was going to be a little ditty about...

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