

Blood on the Help Desk Phone

By

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BLACKNESS

We hear a phone message

MESSAGE

(v.o.)

Hey kid, it's Uncle Sal. About the problem I had yesterday. I made a copy of the disk just like you said and I'll get one of the guys to send it down to you. You should get it sometime today. Have a good one kiddo.

FADE IN --

INT. HELP DESK OFFICE - MORNING

Curtains drawn. Dimly lit. Desks littered with hardware, open PC's, cables, screws and a weeks worth of lunch wrappings. A mini-fridge. Suddenly --

The phone rings.

We hear the door fly open. Fluorescents flicker to life. A breathless HELP DESK TECHNICIAN, CARLO "SISSY" CARLUCCI rushes in. He has his hands full with a cup of coffee, today's lunch and a carry case.

He dumps the case and the lunch. Kick starts his PC. Hits the speaker button.

SISSY

Help desk, Sissy speaking.

SPEAKER

(v.o.)

Hey Sissy, it's Mark, how are you?

SISSY

OK, what can I do for you?

MARK

(v.o.)

Well, you can fix this piece of shit machine you got me. It's not fucking working.

SISSY searches for an open spot to place his coffee.
Finding none, he opens the CD ROM. Instance cup holder.

SISSY
What's the problem?

MARK
(v.o.)
Every time I turn it on, I get a
message that says NTLOADER MISSING.

SISSY
(without hesitation)
You've got a disk in the floppy
drive. Take it out.

MARK
(v.o.)
No there isn't.

SISSY
Yes there is.

MARK
(v.o.)
There's no fucking disk.

SISSY
Mark, I know that error message. The
PC's trying to boot off the floppy
drive. There's a disk there.

MARK
(v.o.)
There's no fucking disk, Sissy!

SISSY
Have you looked?

MARK
(v.o.)
There's no --

SISSY
Will you take a fucking look!?!?!?!?

MARK
(v.o.)
I'm looking and there's
no.....oh...oh...there's a disk in the
floppy drive. How did that get there?
Sorry kid.

SISSY
No problem.
(hanging up)
Fat fuck.

PC boots up. SISSY logs in. Heads for the computer room.
Phone rings. Brings him right back to his seat.

SISSY
Help desk, Sissy speaking.

SPEAKER
(v.o.)
Hello Sissy, it's Gina.

SISSY
Gina!
(silently mouths the word "Fuck")
How you doing? Got a problem?

GINA
(v.o.)
More of a question.

SISSY
Oh yeah? What's that?

GINA
(v.o.)
Can you make my printer print faster?

SISSY groans inwardly.

SISSY
No, Gina, I can't. That's as fast as
it's going to print.

GINA
(v.o.)
Well, can I get a newer one then?
Adam told me, you know my son Adam,
don't you? He does the same thing you
do. He told me that there's this one
printer that would be very good for
me and that it's quite affordable.....

SISSY buries his head on the desk. It's going to be one
of those days.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN

TEN MINUTES LATER

GINA is still droning.

GINA
(v.o.)
- and I'm not sure the drive
structure you've set up is very good.
Adam set the one up in his company
with a home drive, a shared drive and
a department drive. He's so good, the
people he works for absolutely love
him. Adam also --

SISSY

(hurriedly)

Gina, I'm getting another call, I'm going to have to call you back.

SISSY disconnects before she has a chance to breath. Makes his way to the computer room. He returns to find a MAN - call him MICHAEL -- waiting for him. Goatee, clean suit.

MICHAEL

Hi, I'm -

SISSY

(dismissively)

Save it. You're either from the Federal Police or --

The man whips out a gun.

SISSY

-- a member of the Bosses competition.

(continuing)

Jesus, I go through this routine every few weeks. I just do help desk for these people. No data, no files, no information. The backups are at a remote location. I don't handle any of that. I'm just a TECHIE.

MICHAEL

We could ransom you for the information.

SISSY

Wouldn't work. I'm worthless to them.

MICHAEL

You're the bosses son -- !

SISSY

-- who doesn't know how to handle a gun or run a business, thereby proving to be worthless. Why do you think I run a help desk? Even if you did take me hostage, what do you think would happen? This isn't the movies, you know. You take me hostage, my Dad calls the police, he calls the media. An inquiry is made, YOUR bosses name comes up. Suddenly, he's got all this unwanted attention on him. And for what? For information I don't have! Like I said, I don't handle the data.

MICHAEL

(smiling)

Except for today.

(continuing)

You're getting a disk today. Uncle Sal?

SISSY

How -- ?

(stops short - understanding)

Inside man?

MICHAEL

Inside man.

SISSY

Which means I'm pretty much dead. Fuck.

MICHAEL

Your Uncle Sal isn't too savvy with computers. He doesn't know that the disk he's sending you has the sort of information that the people I work for would kill to have. It's coming in sometime today, so settle in.

SISSY

Great.

The phone rings. SISSY immediately goes to answer. Held back by MICHAEL.

SISSY

I have to answer it.

MICHAEL

No you don't.

SISSY

If I don't answer, they'll think something is wrong. They'll send someone to come look for me --

MICHAEL

All right, but put it on speaker. No codes.

SISSY

Fine.

(answering)

Help desk, Sissy speaking.

SPEAKER

(v.o.)

Sissy, my boy!

SISSY

Oh no. What have you done now, Tony?
Please don't tell me you've got
another keyboard problem.

TONY
(v.o.)

Funny you should say.

SISSY

Dammit Tony!

TONY
(v.o.)

I'm sorry, Sissy. The keyboard's
jammed again.

SISSY

How many times do I have to tell you?
Stop eating your subs on the
keyboard. I found a tomato slice on
the last one I cleaned out for you.
And I'm not talking about a little
morsel of vegetable here, too. It was
an ENTIRE tomato peel.

TONY
(v.o.)

I know. I'm --

SISSY

Forget it Tony. You're on your own
this time. Turn the computer off,
unplug the keyboard and clean it
yourself. Ok?

TONY
(v.o.)

Ok.

SISSY
(disconnecting)

Bye.

MICHAEL

You're kidding.

SISSY looks at him. Points to a stack of keyboards piled
nearby. We see stains congealed with crumbs, dirt,
greasy, oily finger marks.

MICHAEL

Jesus. You're not.

Phone rings.

SISSY

Help desk, Sissy speaking.

SPEAKER

(v.o.)

David here, Sissy.

SISSY

What can I do for you?

DAVID

(v.o.)

Um, my two year old poured wine on my laptop.

SISSY groans.

HOURS LATER

SISSY continues with his calls. MICHAEL has a distraught look on his face.

SISSY

(on the phone)

So let me get this straight, Lara, so we can all understand this. I send out an e-mail to everybody, you included, telling you about this new virus that's going around. I give you specific details about this virus, what the e-mail looks like, the subject line, attachments etc. You read this e-mail, right?

LARA

(v.o.)

Y-yes --

SISSY

And you understood it fairly well? Got the gist of it?

LARA

(v.o.)

Uh huh.

SISSY

So after all the warnings and explanations, why the hell did you go and do the exact thing I told you not to?

LARA

(v.o.)

It was from my boyfriend. I forgot --

SISSY

You forgot. Yes, that'll go down well with my Father when I have to explain why we just lost 58 GB of data. Thank you very much.

(hangs up - to MICHAEL)

Want a drink?

MICHAEL

What?

SISSY

A drink. There's some in the mini-fridge. Help yourself.

MICHAEL hesitates -- SISSY seems pretty cordial for a guy under threat -- grabs a pair of cans. Hands one to SISSY.

MICHAEL

So what kind of name is Sissy anyway? Don't sound like an Italian name. I thought your name was Carlo.

SISSY

It is. Carlo Carlucci.

MICHAEL

So?

SISSY

That makes my initials CC doesn't it? CC? Sissy? My brothers used to tease me all the time cause I use to cry a lot, so the name stuck.

MICHAEL

Oh.

(beat)

You know, you seem pretty calm considering the current situation.

SISSY

(takes a sip)

Nature of the business, no? We're in a very volatile industry. There's no guarantee that we'll be alive tomorrow let alone twenty years from now, so it's better to live life day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. Plan for the best, prepare for the worst.

MICHAEL

Jesus that's bleak.

SISSY

You're sitting here threatening me with a gun. You're going to tell me I'm wrong? Anyway, I said, I live life by the minute. I'm not dead yet. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

MICHAEL

(cool as)

You're on the bridge already.

A steely expression on Sissy. He rises and advances on Michael. Michael backs away gun raised.

MICHAEL

What are you doing? Sit down.

Sissy continues forward.

MICHAEL

You think this is some fucking game? I'll fucking shoot you right fucking now.

SISSY

(rapidly)

Then do it. Go on, kill me. But if you do, you won't get the disc will you? You could shoot to maim or cripple, but the neighbours will hear the shot and call the police, so what are you going to do? What are you going to do?

MICHAEL shakes. A coiled spring. Ready to pull the trigger. Sissy suddenly stops the advance. Smiles.

SISSY

"You're on the bridge already."

(returning to seat)

Give me a fucking break. What Schwarzenegger movie did you rip that line off from?

MICHAEL

You were fucking around?

SISSY

Proving a point actually.

Phone rings.

SISSY

Help desk, Sissy speaking.

TONY

(v.o.)

Tony again, Sissy.

SISSY

(irritated)

What?

TONY

(v.o.)

I got the keyboard unstuck...

SISSY

Buuuut...

TONY
(v.o.)

It's not working now.

SISSY
How the hell did that happen?

TONY
(v.o.)

I don't know. I plugged it in after cleaning it and now it's not working. It's still wet though, so maybe I didn't give it enough time to dry off yet.

SISSY and MICHAEL exchange looks.

SISSY
You mean you washed it? You cleaned it with water?

TONY
(v.o.)

Well, how do I know?

SISSY
How stupid are you, Tony? Do you clean your gun with water? Do you? We're talking about a piece of electronic equipment here and you're using water!

TONY
(v.o.)

I shoot people, Sissy. That's what I'm good at. Or collecting money. Or beating the crap out of someone. I can't deal with all this computer shit. And when you're as old as I am, you shouldn't have to. Know what I'm saying?

SISSY
(sighing)
I know. I'll send another one over.

TONY
(v.o.)

Thanks.

MICHAEL
How in the blue fuck do you put up with all of this?

SISSY
As long as there are stupid people in this world, I'll never be out of work.

MICHAEL

But you're going to go out of your mind. I'm not killing you I'm doing you a favour.

There's a knock on the door.

Both tense up. The gun is out.

MICHAEL

Get it.

On MICHAEL as SISSY slowly opens the door. We just hear the dialogue.

SISSY

(o.s.)

Hi.

COURIER

(o.s.)

Delivery from Uncle Sal.

SISSY

(o.s.)

Yeah, thanks. Tell him I'll call him later.

COURIER

(o.s.)

All right. Bye.

The door closes. MICHAEL snatches the envelope from SISSY'S grasp. Rips it open and produces a sheet of paper. Barely gives it a look. Explores further.

There's nothing else. A perplexed look from both parties.

MICHAEL

What the hell?

MICHAEL then reads the sheet -- and chuckles. He sniggers and then lets out a bellowed laugh.

SISSY can only watch. MICHAEL drops the sheet. Laughing all the way to the door.

MICHAEL

This has been a hell of an eye opener. I'll see you later.

And he's gone.

SISSY can't believe it. He picks up the sheet. Reads it. A smile forms.

SISSY

You've gotta be kidding me.

He laughs.

SISSY

Why am I even surprised anymore?

Continues laughing.

Drops the sheet. We follow the sheet to the ground. It lands face up. We look at it for the first time as SISSY locks up in the background.

The sheet reads:

"KID HERE'S A COPY OF THE DISK LIKE YOU ASKED FOR. HOPE THIS HELPS. UNCLE SAL"

Beneath the writing is a black and white photocopy of the disc.

The lights are turned off.

FADE OUT

END