

Opportunity Knocks

by W. Scott Lewis

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FADE IN

INT. A SMALL BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MAN, Peter Wilkins, sits at a desk pouring over a stack of papers illuminated by a small desk lamp.

Colored light dances across his face. He glances up at a muted TV a few feet away.

A man and woman on a late-night infomercial banter back and forth in silence.

Peter glances back at the papers spread across his desk.

Most of the pages have bold headings that read either "PAST DUE", "FINAL NOTICE", or "IN DEFAULT".

Frustrated, Peter picks up a pen and snaps it in half.

Drops of ink spray everywhere, dotting the papers and his shirt.

In a rage, he swipes his arm across the desk, knocking everything to the floor.

The room goes dim as the lamp shatters on the floor.

Peter sobs into his hands in the glow of the small TV.

PETER

God, show me a way out of this!

He continues to sob.

PETER

(angry)

Show me a way out!

He waits in silence, as if expecting an answer.

PETER

To hell with you! I'll find my own way out.

He stands and spins, knocking over his chair.

He takes a step to walk away.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Do overdue bills have you down?

Peter spins and looks behind him.

The volume on the television has come on.

He looks down at his feet. He is standing on the remote control.

He looks back at the television. It is a commercial.

ON THE SCREEN:

A WOMAN in a suit stands beside a desk.

WOMAN
Do your monthly minimum payments exceed your income? Have you been considering a second mortgage or even bankruptcy? Guardian Debt Elimination can help. Give us a call twenty-four hours a day at 555-0111 to set up an appointment. Guardian wants to be your guardian angel.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Peter enters through the front door.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Guardian Debt Elimination, please hold. Guardian Debt Elimination, please hold.

The waiting room is small. A receptionist's desk, three chairs, and a coffee table are the only furniture.

Peter approaches the desk.

PETER
Excuse me?

RECEPTIONIST
Yes, can I help you?

The receptionist looks up at Peter. She wears a telephone headset.

PETER
Aren't you...?

RECEPTIONIST
Yes, I'm the one in the commercial.

PETER
I didn't figure you really worked here.

RECEPTIONIST
Nobody ever does. Can I help you?

PETER
I have an appointment.

RECEPTIONIST
Name?

PETER
Peter Wilkins.

The receptionist checks a list.

RECEPTIONIST
Yes, here you are. Have a seat, and Mr. Cain will be right with you.

INT. OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Peter waits in the middle chair, reading a magazine. A MAN takes the seat next to him.

The man looks at Peter.

Peter turns and looks at the man.

MAN
Gambling?

PETER
Excuse me?

MAN
Did you get yourself in debt
gambling?

PETER
No, I lost my job.

MAN
Oh.

The man extends a hand to Peter.

MAN (cont'd)
I'm Adam.

Peter shakes his hand.

PETER
Peter.

ADAM
Nice to meet you.

PETER
You too.

Peter returns to his magazine.

ADAM
I sure hope they can help me.

Peter looks up, annoyed.

PETER

What?

ADAM

I hope they can help me get out of debt.

PETER

Owe some gambling debts?

ADAM

No! Why...who have you been talking to?

PETER

I just assumed since you asked me...

ADAM

Oh, yeah, right.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Peter Wilkins.

PETER

(to Adam)

That's me.

ADAM

Good luck.

PETER

You too.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A MAN sits behind a small desk.

MAN

Peter, please come in. Have a seat.

Peter takes a seat in a cheap chair in front of the desk.

MAN
Bill Cain.

The man reaches across the desk and shakes Peter's hand.

PETER
Peter Wilkins

BILL
What can we do for you, Peter?

PETER
I saw your commercial about debt consolidation.

BILL
No you didn't.

PETER
I didn't?

BILL
No. We don't do debt consolidation.

PETER
But I...

BILL
We do debt elimination.

PETER
What is the difference?

BILL
Well, while debt consolidation takes years and thousands of dollars, debt elimination takes less than a week and costs you nothing.

PETER
How is that possible?

BILL

Let me ask you a question, first.
Are you open to new things?

PETER

Sure, I guess. I'm open to
anything that'll get me out of
debt.

BILL

That's exactly what I want to
hear.

Bill opens a drawer in the desk.

He pulls out a handgun and sets it on the desk.

Peter jumps back.

PETER

What is that for?

BILL

Are you afraid of guns?

PETER

No, I just get a little edgy when
my financial planner pulls one out
of his desk.

BILL

I'm not a financial planner.

PETER

Then what are you?

BILL

I'm a bank robber.

Peter laughs.

BILL

I'm serious.

Peter stands to leave.

PETER
I think I'm in the wrong place.

Bill places a hand on the gun.

BILL
Sit down, Peter.

Peter looks at Bill, then at the gun. He sits.

BILL
See, Peter, you're in the right
place.

Peter's voice is shaky.

PETER
What is this all about?

BILL
I need a driver.

PETER
A driver?

BILL
A getaway driver. I recently lost
my last one.

PETER
You're running television
commercials because you need a
getaway driver for a bank robbery?

BILL
We ran a local ad at four in the
morning for debt consolidation.

PETER
Debt elimination.

BILL
Whatever. It hasn't exactly
brought the FBI knocking down our

BILL (cont'd)
door. To be honest, we only got
four calls, including you. I was
a little disappointed.

PETER
What makes you think I'd be your
getaway driver?

BILL
Because you need the money.

PETER
How much money?

BILL
Twenty-five percent of whatever I
get away with.

PETER
And how much is that going to be?

BILL
All we know right now is it's in
excess of a hundred grand.

PETER
You're offering me twenty-five
thousand dollars to drive the car?

BILL
Well, I can't very well have you
hold up the bank, now can I?

Peter seems lost in a dream.

PETER
No, I don't suppose you can.

BILL
Will you do it?

PETER
What if we get caught?

BILL

I haven't been caught yet.

PETER

What about your last driver?

BILL

He quit.

PETER

Quit?

BILL

He decided he'd made enough money and wanted to spend more time with his family.

PETER

(still lost)

Oh.

BILL

It's an easy job. If you don't want it, there are others who will.

PETER

How do you know I won't go to the police.

BILL

Go to the police. I don't care. We'll be long gone by the time you convince them your financial planner propositioned you to take part in a bank heist.

PETER

Is it dangerous?

BILL

I don't know. Is it normally dangerous when you drive?

PETER

And I'll only be driving?

BILL

Just driving. You don't even have to carry a gun.

PETER

I don't know.

BILL

I can't wait for an answer forever, Peter. I'm offering you what amounts to some people's yearly salary for one day of service.

PETER

Twenty-five thousand would pull me out of the hole.

BILL

And just think, it might even be more than that. What do you say?

Bill sticks out his hand to shake on the deal.

Peter tentatively extends his own hand.

As it crosses the table, his hand knocks over a figurine.

He picks it up. It is a statue of an angel.

PETER

What is this for?

BILL

"Guardian wants to be your guardian angel." It's the motto from the commercial. So do we have a deal?

Peter glances at Bill then back at the statue.

PETER
I'm sorry. I just can't do it.

He sets the statue down.

BILL
Why not?

Peter stands.

PETER
I don't need the money that bad.

BILL
The hell you don't!

PETER
Find someone else.

Peter turns and walks out of the office. He passes Adam, still sitting in the waiting room, on the way out.

ADAM
How'd it go?

PETER
Good luck.

Bill watches from the door of the office as Peter storms out of the waiting room.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

RADIO DJ (O.S.)
Good morning, good morning!

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Peter stirs in bed. He rolls over and looks at his alarm clock. It shows nine AM.

RADIO DJ (cont'd)

It's a beautiful day to be stuck in traffic, so quit yelling at the driver in front of you and just enjoy the drive. For those of you just tuning in, the top news story this morning is the robbery of the First National Bank downtown.

Peter starts to roll back over then bolts upright. He stares at the alarm.

RADIO DJ (cont'd)

Police have issued a statement confirming that shortly after the bank opened this morning, a man wearing a ski mask entered the lobby and held a teller at gunpoint. The man reportedly escaped with nearly a quarter of a million dollars in cash that was waiting to be transported from the vault. As of now, the police have no suspects.

PETER

Twenty-five percent of two hundred and fifty thousand.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

Peter sits slouched over the bar, an empty glass in front of him.

A BARTENDER washes dishes behind the counter.

PETER

Bartender. Give me another.

BARTENDER

Sorry, Pal. You've had your limit.

PETER

What kind of limit is that?

BARTENDER

That's our ten o' clock in the morning limit.

PETER

I just lost over sixty thousand dollars. Is it too much to ask for another scotch?

The bartender pulls a bottle and a fresh glass from under the table.

BARTENDER

Sure you did.

The bartender sets the glass in front of Peter and pours him a fresh scotch.

BARTENDER

This is the last one, so don't try telling me five minutes from now that you just lost a hundred thousand because I don't care.

Peter takes the drink and waves the bartender away.

He glances at a sign behind the bar that advertises "DISHWASHERS WANTED".

He glances at the TV. It is muted. Suddenly, a black and white picture of Adam appears on the screen.

PETER

Turn that up!

The bartender looks up at the TV.

BARTENDER

This?

PETER

Yes!

The bartender walks to the TV and turns up the volume.

FEMALE REPORTER

Again, police have reported that a blown tire was most likely the cause of the wreck that led to the death of bank robbery suspect Adam Johnson.

Peter watches in disbelief.

FEMALE REPORTER (cont'd)

Over ten thousand dollars of the stolen money, as well as a handgun matching the one used in the robbery, were found in the getaway car with the body of Adam Johnson. The cause of death is being reported as blunt force trauma to the head.

Peter runs his fingers through his hair, feeling his own head.

FEMALE REPORTER (cont'd)

Associates of Johnson say he was in deep financial trouble as the result of a gambling problem, and this may have been the motivation behind this well planned yet ill-fated robbery. Police are questioning Johnson's friends and family in hopes of learning where he may have hidden the bulk of the stolen money.

PETER

Turn it off.

BARTENDER

Are you sure?

PETER

Yeah.

The bartender mutes the television.

Peter looks at his drink then pushes it away from him.

PETER
Do you have any coffee?

BARTENDER
Yeah, you want a cup?

PETER
Please.

The bartender reaches for the coffee pot.

BARTENDER
Giving up on that hangover you
were working on?

PETER
Suddenly it just feels good to be
alive.

The bartender pours the coffee.

PETER
How much does that dishwashing job
pay?

FADE OUT