

# Bullshit<sup>1</sup>

*Anonymous*

It was a Friday night; every Friday night, me, Frank and a couple other guys get together after hours at the warehouse where we keep our supplies to play a few rounds of a generic male gathering-type card game. Poker, blackjack, whatever. The game we play isn't important. The purpose, according to Frank, is to blow off steam after a hard week's work. And to gain a few bucks on the side. I attempted to politely refuse. I was tired that day, and I didn't want to be a part of the night's coming events. But, Frank felt otherwise. So that night, me, Frank and a couple other guys met for a game. I was sitting there, losing, as usual, while once again, Frank was reeling in the dough<sup>2</sup>. Naturally, this brought about complaints from our fellow card players.

"Jesus, Frank. Can't you give a guy a break once in a while? I'm getting cleaned out here," said the man whose name I forget. Jimmy, I think.

"Seriously, man. You just took out my week's pay. I have a wife and kids, you know. And they like eating every night." The guy who said this was Charley, the one man sitting at this table who was married. A man of many words, Charley sometimes can't keep his goddamn mouth shut. And when he's not talking, he's laughing.

Frank looked up from the haze of cancer stick smoke that always seemed to surround him. He was dealing out the next round. He picked up his cards and started to inspect it. He let out a small chuckle.

"I'm sorry, ladies, but I didn't make you play. If you would stop your bitching for a few seconds, then maybe you could win a round."

I looked at my own cards. For a change of pace, we decided that tonight was a good night to play a game of Bullshit. Naturally, Frank was well suited for this game. I was barely keeping up. Jimmy mumbled something to himself and picked up his cards. He smiled.

"Your ass is mine this round, Frank. I'm cleaning you out. Consider it a bit of payback."

Frank grinned. "Then I guess we'll begin this round with you."

There were a few moments while the table was sorting through their cards and organizing their lies. Jimmy looked up and put one card face down.

"One ace." He was playing it safe.

Frank looked at the lone card on the table. "I'll let that one go. Still too early for anything." Jimmy twitched when he said this.

The man with the wife and kids put down his cards. "Two twos." His face was the picture of confidence. As a result, no one spoke a word.

It was my turn, and I had no threes. Lying was never one of my strong points.

"One three." I placed a queen of hearts face down on the pile.

Frank let out a small laugh. "Bullshit."

"Damn, Frank. How do you do that?" Charley asked as I gathered up the cards in the center of the table and added them to my hand.

"I know when someone's lying. It's a useful skill when you run a business<sup>3</sup> like mine." Frank pulled out his cancer stick and blew out a smoke ring, a talent I often envy but will probably never attempt<sup>4</sup>.

"If you can even call it a business." Jimmy mumbled.

Charley laughed loudly. "You can always catch a liar, Frank? Unlike the Pope, you can be wrong sometimes."

Frank laughed. "True, true. But in this guy's case," Frank gave me a shove as he said this, "Just one look at his face and I know what he's thinking."

"Yeah, yeah, Frank. We go way back and all that shit." I looked at my newly gained cards. At this rate I was going, dead last was a

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<sup>1</sup> One small chapter in the sea of my personal experiences with Frank.

<sup>2</sup> Frank's a real card shark. Doesn't matter what the game is, poker, blackjack, old maid, goldfish. If there's a game that uses playing cards as a medium, Frank can play it. Well. In all honesty, Frank's Friday night card games were probably another way to line his pockets. Not that I mind, since Frank's money is essentially my money. I just wish I wouldn't lose all the damn time.

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<sup>3</sup> Frank uses the term "business" very loosely. Me and Frank run what one would call a delivery service. We deliver items that, shall we say, fail to meet security requirements at airline checkpoints. Or border checkpoints, for that matter. If a buyer needs a certain item without dirtying his hands, me and Frank take care of it. And right now, business is good.

<sup>4</sup> Mainly because I never touch cancer sticks, or alcohol for that matter. Frank loves his cigarettes, but I can't stand them. In my line of business, you'd think I'd be smokin' 'em up, but it makes more sense than you think. It's a bad habit, and one that doesn't yield any profit. You never see a guy getting paid to smoke a pack a day, or getting shitfaced before noon. And that's because smoking and drinking only work to push the downtrodden further down the ladder. So I just stay away from the stuff.

growing reality. Charley was a better liar than I originally believed. He put down an ace and a four.

“So, Frank, how’s Katie?” Charley asked while sorting through his cards.

“She’s fine. Haven’t seen her for a while now, though. Two fours.” Frank placed his two cards facedown on the table.

For the past few weeks, Frank had been seeing this girl Katherine Wells who worked at the nearby bank<sup>1</sup>. We make plenty of deposits over the week, and Frank is usually the one to make them. He freaks out a bit when it comes to money, so he likes to be the one to handle it. As for me, as long as I get to appreciate the finer things in life every so often, I’m good. Though I occasionally make it a habit to check the savings every once in a while. So this new teller gets hired, and it’s Katie. He strikes up a conversation with her and the next thing I know, they’re going out. I never really talked to her, so I didn’t know too much about her. I don’t really know much about Frank’s love life<sup>2</sup>.

“One five.” Jimmy pulled out a card from his hand and placed it on the table. The game had just begun, but Jimmy was already sweating buckets.

“Two sixes.” Charley smiled. “You should keep Katie on a short leash, Frank. A girl that looks like that is prone to wandering. If I wasn’t married…” Charley didn’t finish his sentence. He didn’t need to.

“Thanks for the love advice, Dr. Phil,” Frank said. “But I think I got it covered.”

Charley let out a loud guffaw.

I looked carefully at my hand. Bullshit loses its fun when you don’t want to be there. I finally had a card that I could put down. “One seven.”

Without pausing, Frank put three cards face down on the table. “Three eights.”

Damn, I thought. A challenge this early? The other guys seemed to be thinking it too. Should one of us call it? I mean, three eights seemed

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<sup>1</sup>The bank was not Wells Fargo. Sure, it could’ve been and then we’d have a stupid little joke about a girl named Wells that works at Wells Fargo. And then we’d all laugh politely. But that would be a huge waste of time. Like what’s happening right here.

<sup>2</sup>It’s funny, I know. Actually, for as long as I’ve done business with Frank, I’ve never known too much about his personal life. It never really came up.

to me a pretty big stretch this early in the game, even for Frank. Jimmy must’ve thought the same thing.

“Bullshit, Frank,” he said. “That can’t be true.”

“Then take a good look, my good man.” Frank smiled.

“You’re bluffing,” Jimmy said as he flipped the cards. There, on the table, were three eights<sup>3</sup>.

“That’s bullshit!” Jimmy exclaimed.

“No,” Frank said. “As you can see, that’s the truth.”

“That’s pretty goddamn hilarious, Frank.”

Frank laughed and looked down at his cards. “Stop whining. There’s still plenty of time until the game ends. Relax. You never know when the tables might turn.”

“You’re taking this too seriously, man,” Charley said. “It’s just a game.”

“Yeah, a game that’s just eaten the rest of my paycheck,” Jimmy said. “I’m only sticking around on the hopes that I don’t spend another week eating instant noodles. Two nines.”

And so the game continued for the next hour<sup>4</sup>. Jimmy continued to bitch, Charley continued to laugh it off, I continued to sweat, and Frank continued to be Frank. Frank also continued to spend cancer stick after cancer stick. Finally, we were down to the final stretch of the game, and the winner seemed apparent. Frank had only one card left, while the other of the cards was distributed amongst the rest of us. In the middle of the table sat a huge pile of cards waiting for the next person to mess up. Frank was up.

“I have the biggest pile of cards here, Frank,” Jimmy smiled. “I can bet that the next card you put down will be bullshit. Go ahead, man.”

Frank smiled and put his final card down. “One ace.”

Jimmy snorted and looked through his hand, a big smile plastered on his face. Then the smile began to fade as he looked over and over through his hand. His faced paled.

“Well?” Frank asked. “Am I bullshitting you?”

Charley laughed.

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<sup>3</sup> Knowing Frank, he must’ve snuck in a couple of extra cards before the game started. He may be a card shark, but that doesn’t mean he’s perfect.

<sup>4</sup> I don’t care to elaborate. If you want to read a turn by turn description of a game of Bullshit, then you lead a much more dreary existence than I originally believed. Here’s an idea: gather the few friends you have and play a round. Then you won’t be so curious anymore. Don’t know how to play? Wiki it, genius.

“Whatever, man. If I come in second, then I’ll still have enough to last until the next paycheck.” Jimmy looked damn near ready to explode. “Three twos.”

I looked at my hand to see if there was any indication that he was lying. Of course, I couldn’t find anything.

“Bullshit,” said Frank. He finished his cancer stick and pulled out another from the box in his pocket. He took it out and shook it. “I seem to be running low on cigarettes<sup>1</sup>.”

“What the hell, Frank? You won already!” Jimmy yelled. “That’s just kicking me while I’m down.”

“Just flip the cards,” I said.

Jimmy looked at me angrily and flipped the cards he just placed on the table. There lay two twos and a three.

“Got a bit too greedy, eh?” Charley laughed. “That was a good call, Frank. Now it’s my turn.”

Frank shrugged. “What can I say? It’s luck, man. Luck.”

“Shut the hell up!” Jimmy exploded. “How am I gonna last this week now, Frank?”

“Two threes,” Charley placed his cards on the table.

“Hey, we all got our own problems. Don’t think you’re alone in this,” said Frank.

Jimmy’s face changed. He let out a slow smile. “Trouble in paradise, Frank? Something going wrong with your ‘business?’”

Frank stared at Jimmy for a few minutes.

“No,” Frank said. He put out his freshly lit cigarette. Then: “Actually, yeah. There is a bit of trouble in paradise. In fact, that’s kind of the reason I called you two over here for a friendly game of cards.”

Frank looked at the two men sitting before us. Then he looked at me. “Why don’t you explain things?”

I looked at Frank, somewhat hesitant. I knew where this was going. “Well, you see,” I started. “I was going over the accounts the other day after the big job we pulled a while back. You know, just to make sure we were all square.”

Charley shifted in his seat. “Well, what’s that got to do with us?”

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<sup>1</sup> Frank was smoking doing a lot of smoking tonight, and that’s saying a lot. His usual three-pack-a-day regime wasn’t cutting it tonight. Pack number five was already close to empty.

“Yeah, I don’t see where we fit in here.” Jimmy looked around the room.

“You didn’t let me finish,” I continued. “As I was saying, I was going through the accounts, when I realize something. I pulled Frank here to check it out, just to make sure I didn’t go crazy or anything.”

As I was talking, Frank’s face grew tight. His skin reddened a little when I got to the root of the problem.

“Well, Frank double-checked my work and came to the same conclusion. Our account is missing a huge chunk of dough. This isn’t chump change. We are missing-”

“Half of our goddamn savings.” Frank cut me off. His voice cracked<sup>2</sup>. “And I believe I know where it all went.”

“Calm down, Frank,” I said. “We’re not even sure yet.”

Frank glared at me. “Not sure? This is half of our life savings here. We probably won’t see that money again.

“Not sure of what?” Jimmy had beads of perspiration on his forehead. He already knew what was coming. “Look, Frank. I don’t know nothing about any money.”

Charley looked at me and Frank and laughed. “Ok, I get it. This was a great joke, guys, but seriously, that much money can’t be missing.”

Charley’s desperate laugh continued to echo around the room. When he noticed that we weren’t getting the joke, the laugh slowly faded. His face paled. “So what does this mean? Who took the money?”

Frank said nothing, and instead pulled out a handgun. Jimmy and Charley’s eyes widened in fear. Frank placed the handgun on the table.

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<sup>2</sup> One clear indicator of Frank’s moods is when his voice cracks. That usually means that he’s thoroughly pissed. I learned this through personal experience. A couple years back, our business was given a fairly large job from a big name. This big name storms into our depot a few days after the request and demands a package that was apparently lost in a delivery run. Making this man unhappy is a bad idea. A very stupid idea. Cross him and you just might find yourself in a place you don’t want to be. So there I am, shaking and damn near pissing my pants when I look up at Frank. I’m astonished. He’s barely breaking a sweat and he looks straight at the buyer and calmly says “We will have your package tomorrow.” As he’s saying this, his voice cracks. We look to the one responsible for the delivery and bring him in so that Frank can give him a little educational training. When he’s done, we have our package and I’m stuck hosing down what was left of our former employee from the walls. As a result, we gained the respect of the upper crust of the crime underworld and I learned a very important lesson: Don’t piss off Frank.

His hand shook violently as he let it go. “I don’t know, Charley. Why don’t you tell me?”

Dammit, I thought. It was too soon to resort to intimidation. The gun wasn’t even real. It was just for show, to scare them into talking. But this was too soon.

“Frank,” I said again. “Relax.” I looked at Jimmy and Charley. Jimmy was now sweating profusely and Charley just sat there, pale faced and dazed. “Here is the point I’m driving to. Me and Frank are the heads of this company, right? And in this company, there are only two people that are close enough to us to have access to all that money. See where I’m going with this?”

“Oh, God,” Jimmy sobbed. Tears were slowly falling from his face. “Look, you guys, I swear I have nothing to do with this. What would I want with your money?”

Charley snapped out of his daze and looked at Jimmy. “Oh, come on, Jimmy,” Charley said. “Who was the one complaining just a little while ago that he was in need of cash? And don’t you have some gambling debt on the side to pay?”

Jimmy looked at Charley, horrified. He looked back to Frank, who was seething. “No, no, no! Please, I’m telling you! It wasn’t me! Frank, come on! I said some angry things to you, but you know I’m no rat<sup>1</sup>!”

Frank got up and grabbed the gun. I only had to look at his face once to realize that the gun he was holding was no fake. I stood up, and backed off. I wasn’t gonna be the one to stop Frank at this point.

Jimmy fell from his seat and recoiled in fear as Charley screeched his chair away from Frank. “Oh God, oh God. I don’t wanna die, Frank. Please, I don’t wanna die,” Jimmy broke off into unintelligible blubbing. Frank said nothing and walked closer to Jimmy, keeping the gun pointed at his head. Time seemed to slow down as Frank cocked the gun. Jimmy curled up into a fetal position and whimpered. Charley looked away. I closed my eyes.

The gunshot broke the tense silence that filled the room. I could only imagine the cleanup we would have to do, the cops we’d have to pay off. The body we’d have to dispose<sup>2</sup>. Slowly, I opened my eyes.

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<sup>1</sup> I felt a little sorry for Jimmy at this moment. Poor Jimmy. He didn’t know what was coming to him.

<sup>2</sup> I know what you’re thinking: “You cold son of a bitch. A man dies and all you can think of is cleanup?” Yeah, well if this sort of thing was a permanent fixture with

Jimmy lay there, limp. “God, Frank,” I said. “Look what you did. You scared him shitless<sup>3</sup>.”

Frank smiled. “Well, he was pissing me off all night. I thought I’d return the favor.”

Charley sat there, once again dazed. He looked down and saw the gaping hole in his stomach. He coughed and blood came out of his mouth, mixing with his tears “How . . .?”

“Did we know?” Frank finished his sentence. “Simple. Someone as stupid as Jimmy couldn’t have pulled off what you did. Then again, what you pulled off was pretty stupid. I have to say, it was clever, how you were able to take so much money from us. Taking a little bit at a time under the guise of ‘travel expenses<sup>4</sup>’ was a good idea, but I’m not an idiot. You took quite a bit from us, Charley, but don’t worry; we’ll make sure to get that money back. We’ll just pay your darling wife a visit.”

“Frank,” I said with a cautionary tone. Frank smiled.

Charley’s eyes widened. “Damn you, Frank. I was planning on getting that money back eventually...” Then he was gone. His last words.

“What should we do about Jimmy?” I asked.

“Wake him. We have a warehouse floor to clean and a body to dispose.” Frank walked back to the table and flipped the two cards placed there. It was a two and a four.

“Heh,” Frank laughed quietly to himself. “Bullshit<sup>5</sup>.”

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your line of business, you wouldn’t be thinking too much about the “human” side of death. You’d be thinking which brand of bleach gets rid of bloodstains best.

<sup>3</sup> I mean that literally.

<sup>4</sup> The reason Charley could get away with this is because our line of business requires plenty of travel, in order to pick up and drop off our precious cargo. And guess who’s been doing the most “traveling?” You got it: Charley.

<sup>5</sup> Frank always had a sick sense of humor.