

Peggy Sue's Convenience

By

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Brian held up his coffee and asked, “You live in town, Peggy Sue.” He read the name off the waitress's Id tag.

“I do.” Peggy Sue replied as she refilled his cup. “Why do you ask?”

“I need to find a hotel room or motel.”

“Honey, this one horse town ain't got no hotels or motels. We're lucky to have a post office and this here restaurant.” She put her hand on her hip, still holding the pot up.

Brian cocked his head. “How about a bed-and-breakfast or boarding house?” He smiled when she gave him a crooked smile, one where the right side turned up and left down.

“Not sure.” she replied. “Let me ask around. I'll get back to ya after I do the coffee round.”

“Appreciate that.” He said to her as she spun away from him and walked to the booth, two up from his.

Within a few minutes Peggy Sue returned. “You’re out of luck, honey. You're not from here are ya?”

He shook his head and pinched his lips as he looked into her sky-blue eyes.

“So, why are you interested in staying in Petway Village?”

“I am a writer and I need a quiet place without distractions to do a project. This burg seems to fit.”

Peggy Sue's eyebrows shot up in an arch. “A writer? What do you write?”

“Computer code.” Brian gave her a wry smile assuming that she probably didn't know what that means.

“Like programs? For what, games that all these kids waste half their lives on these days?” She wrinkled her nose up.

Brian shook his head. “No. Special programs for my clients. So, I need a place where I can work without drawing a lot of attention.” He caught himself. “You know distractions, interruptions. I'm on a deadline.”

Peggy Sue pooched her lower lip out and nodded her understanding. “How long do you reckon you will be here?”

“About a month.”

“You might be in luck. What's your name?”

“Brian.”

“Brian what?”

“Brian.”

“Brian, Brian. What the hell kinda name is that?” Peggy Sue stood with both fists on her hips.

He shrugged. “Peculiar.”

“I’ll say. What you willing to pay for a nice quiet place to stay?”

Brian wobbled his head. “I was thinking in the five hundred range.”

“Dollars!?!”

“I could pay in pesos or Deutschmarks, but it would take a few days to exchange the currency.”

Peggy Sue scrunched her eyebrows. “Don’t get cute. I meant that’s a lot of money.”

He smiled up at her. “I’d gladly pay less if it would help.”

“I tell you what, Brian Brian, I own an old two-story house that my two kids and I live in. We only use the main floor. If you don’t mind being around a four and five-year-old, you can rent the second floor for five hundred dollars a month.”

“Sounds like we just made us an arrangement. Do you have internet?”

Peggy Sue frowned. “Nope. Don’t even have a computer. No money for such niceties. The village library has one. New librarian talked the council into getting a few old computers and the internet.”

“Perfect. It’s a deal.” He held his hand out and she shook it.

“Deal. Meet me at 136 Liberty, at three-thirty. Go three blocks up Main to Liberty and turn left.”

“Short walk from here. Good.”

“It’s convenient.”

At the knock, Sara ran to the front door. “Mooooom, there’s a man at the door.”

“Ask him if his name is Brian.” Peggy yelled from the bathroom where she was toweling off from a shower. She brushed her hair out, climbed into cutoff blue jean shorts and pulled on an old t-shirt.

“Tell your mom, I heard that. Yes, I’m Brian.” He said. “What’s your name?”

Sara stared through the screen door at the bearded man. She yelled “He said he heard that. He said his name is Brian.”

“Tell him I'll be right out. Let him in.”

The little dishwater blond stood on her tip toes, poked the hook out of the eye and pushed the door open. “Come on in, but stay right here until my mom comes out.”

Impressed with the authority in her tiny voice, Brian snapped to attention, gave her a salute and said. “Yes ma'am.”

With both fist on her hips and a stern glare she said. “Don't get cute. We don't put up with any smart mouthin in this house.”

Brian chuckled and sat his duffel bag on the mat. “OK.” He looked up when a door down the hallway opened, and saw a barefoot Peggy Sue, walking toward him.

“Where's your brother, Sara? Tell him to come in here.” Peggy stopped beside the little girl and combed her fingers through her hair. “Go on now, I want to introduce you two to this gentleman.”

This sent Sara skipping down the hallway hollering. “Eli, mom wants you to come in now.”

They stood at the doorway for an awkward, silent moment, waiting for the children to return. Brian bent down, unzipped the duffel bag and pulled out an envelope. “Here's the rent.”

Peggy took it and stuffed it in her back pocket and gave him a smile. “Need a receipt?”

He shook his head no. The back door slammed and Brian followed Peggy's glance down the hall toward the rumble of little feet charging across the old polished hardwood floors, Sara in the lead, followed by a slightly shorter, dark-haired boy. They came to an abrupt halt, Sara on the right and the boy on Peggy's left side. She put a hand on each one's shoulder. “Kids, this is mister Brian. He will be staying with us for about a month. Brian, this is Sara and the smudge faced one is Eli.”

Eli stepped forward and stuck out his hand. Brian shook it. “Nice to meet you, Eli.”

Eli, stone faced, said nothing, just looked him directly in the eyes.

Sara stepped forward and held out her hand. “Welcome, mister Brian. My name is Sara.”

“Nice to meet you, Sara.” Brian bent forward. “Can I get off the door mat now?”

She looked up to her mom. “Suppose so.”

“Kids, mister Brian is going to stay upstairs and has important writing to do, so you are not to be bothering him. Understood?”

In unison, they chimed, “Yes ma'am.”, which made Brian smile at Sara. Sara shrugged. He gave her a wink. She put her hand to her mouth to hide the giggle. Peggy Sue glanced down then up at Brian and asked. “What?”

"It's our little secret, right?" Brian replied and watched Sara roll her eyes up to his, bite her lower lip and give a mischievous nod.

"Good lord. You've been here five minutes and already a conspiracy's been born." Peggy spun the children around, pointing them toward the back of the house. "All right you two, git out and get some fresh air. Stay in the yard, hear."

"Yes ma'am." They bellowed and stampeded down the hallway.

"They seem like well-behaved kids. You must be doing a good job raising them."

Peggy wrapped her arms around her waist. "Doin the best I can. Damn sure don't want them to live the life I had growin up. Don't let that brief moment of sanity fool ya, though. They do have their moments, especially Eli."

"I'll be prepared."

"Come on. I'll show you around." Peggy Sue led him through the main floor, then opened a door off the hallway that took them to the second floor. She gave him the option of which of the two bedrooms to use. "Get yourself settled. Dinner's at five."

"Thanks."

After three days, Brian felt comfortable and had established a routine of writing late at night when the house was quiet. The children went to bed between eight and nine and Peggy shortly thereafter. She was usually up by four-thirty and left the house to open up the restaurant at five-thirty. A local girl or her mother came in at that time to stay with kids until she returned home at three in the afternoon. He wrote from nine at night until two or three in the morning then, slept until around noon.

"Hello, mister Brian." Sara chimed.

"Good morning, Sara."

"Afternoon."

Brian looked at the stove clock and sure enough it was twelve forty-three. "I must have been really tired." He had been on a roll and worked well past three. "Have you guys eaten yet?"

Sara shook her head no. "Brandy was waiting for you to get up so she wouldn't need to make two lunches."

"Where's she and Eli?"

"She's laying in the sun and he's wondering around the back yard on some adventure."

Brian stretched his arms out and yawned. "Let's go find them. I'll do lunch today."

Sara gave him a wide-eyed look of surprise. "You can cook?"

Brian smiled. "Come on, let's see if they want to take the chance."

Sara burst out the back door yelling, "Eli, common up here. We have to have a meeting of the minds."

Brandy spun out of the battered lounge chair in a skimpy bikini and slowly wiggled into a t-shirt. "You're up. Thought you were going to sleep all day."

"Worked late last night." Then, he looked up when he saw Eli's little legs racing toward them. When he came to a stop beside Brandy, Brian offered. "How about I cook up something for a change? You know, treat you guys for a change."

He watched the three exchanged doubtful glances then clarified. "Well, I actually don't cook very well. How about we go down to the restaurant and I'll buy lunch?"

"Yeah!" Said Eli. It was the first time Brian had heard him speak.

"You had better wash your face and hands though, Eli." Brian suggested. "We wouldn't want to embarrass your mom. Sara, maybe you should help him."

Brandy took him by the hand. "I'll clean him up and put on some shorts." Barefoot she sashayed up the steps. At the top she looked back at him with an impish smile.

Brian caught the look and immediately turned to Sara and inspected her. "You should brush your hair a bit. Otherwise you're presentable." All the while thinking that he would have to be careful around Brandy.

It was past the lunch rush when they walked into the restaurant. One of the other waitresses saw them first and called for Peggy. Peggy put them in an L-shaped booth in the front corner. Eli slid in first then Brian sat down beside him. Sara climbed into the other side and Brandy behind her, leaving her sitting directly across for Brian. Peggy picked up on the fawning look her sitter was giving her renter. "Well, well, isn't this a pleasant surprise. To what do I owe this treat?"

"Brian said he was cooking lunch." Sara said. "But he said he can't cook very well, so brought us here." Eli gave his mom a big smile.

When she looked at Brian he shrugged. "It's such a beautiful day I thought it would be nice to get out of the house. Besides, I want to stop at the library and check out what they offer. That OK with you?"

Peggy considered it for a second then said. "The kids have not been to the library yet. Might be a good experience for them, wouldn't it Brandy?"

"Wouldn't hurt nothin, I suppose."

Peggy suspected that Brandy's lack of enthusiasm for providing intellectual stimulation for the kids had much to do with the fact that she'd miss her afternoon soap operas. She took Brian and Brandy's order and filled in what the children would eat then turned it into the kitchen. She returned with orange juice for the kids, a coke for Brandy and a cup of tea for Brian.

With a peck on each child's cheek, Peggy sent the troop on their way, with directions to the library. She tilted her head slightly when she saw Eli reach up and take Brian's hand. When her son turned and looked back at her with a big smile, she waved at him. He flapped his other hand in return. A flush of warmth flooded through her chest and she touched the lip she was now biting, trying to stem the tears.

The library had four fairly new big box computers. Wanda, the librarian, gave him their hours of operation and suggested that early morning would be easiest to get access to the computers. She said they had cable which made them quite fast. After setting up an account, he established a G-mail account and sent a brief note to his client. Then, he did a little research before joining the kids in the children's book corner. Brandy was perusing clothing and had headphones on, no doubt listening to music Brian would never understand.

“What are you guys looking at?” Brian squatted down beside the low round table strewn with books.

“Animals.” Eli held up a book on zoo animals, beaming with curiosity. “Can you read it to me?”

“Sure sport, but let's see what Sara has her nose stuck in first.” Eli jumped up and followed him around to the other side of the table where Sara was engrossed in Cinderella. “Who is your favorite dwarf?” He sat down in the low chair beside her and Eli wedged between his legs so he could see.

Sara looked up at him. “Dwarf's?”

“Yeah, the little people.”

“I'm only five. I can't read.”

“Ok. You want me to read this to you?”

Sara turned toward him, eyes beaming. “Sure, that would be cool.”

So, Brian leaned over Eli's shoulder and took the book from Sara. “You turn the pages when I tell you.” he said to Sara. Running his finger over the words as he slowly read the story, Brian stopped periodically and pointed out the characters and their names. When he finished, he sent Eli for his book and read that to them. Noticing the time he suggested that they check out a few books and head for home before their mom got there.

“We can take books home with us?” Sara queried.

When Brian affirmed they could if they had library cards. Sara squealed, “Great.” While they

surveyed and selected the books, he went to the desk and filled out cards for them. He said Peggy would stop by and sign for them. Wanda understood and agreed.

Books in hand, he sent the kids to let Brandy know it was time to go.

Later that evening, Brian helped Peggy clean dishes. "I'm not comfortable with Brandy."

Peggy laughed. "I saw her look when you were at the restaurant. It's hard to find someone who can come in at five-thirty in the morning. There aren't any day care centers around here. It's not easy." She finished with a sad frown, as she watched out the window over the sink at her children playing in the back yard.

After a few minutes of silence as she washed and he dried, and put away dishes, Brian grabbed her arm and turned her toward him. "Can I make an offer?"

"Of what." Peggy asked, shaken from her solemn moment.

"I'm here all day, and I'll adjust my sleeping and writing times to take care of the kids. Why don't you let me watch them? No cost and it won't bother my work."

Another long silence, as Peggy stared intently into Brian's eyes. "Wouldn't that be convenient? Let me think about it." Then she placed a hand on his arm. "Thanks for taking the kids to the library. They are so excited about having those books."

Brian laid his left hand over hers. "We had fun."

The next day, when Peggy came home from work she told Brandy that she did not need to return in the morning. After fending off her tearful plea to keep the job, Brandy left in a huff. Brian stepped down from the safety of his rented man cave when he heard the door slam. "I assume she didn't take it very well."

Peggy laughed. "That's an understatement. She had it pretty comfy. Do nothing, eat for free and get paid for it. What a little bitch."

"Ouch. Please tell me what you really think."

She punched him in the chest. "Don't get cute."

For the next two-and-a-half weeks, Brian and the kids worked into a well-defined routine: a good breakfast, Sara and Eli played outside on sunny days inside when it rained, until ten-thirty, while Brian wrote. Then, with great animation, Brian read their books to them and played with them until noon, when they went to the restaurant. After lunch, it was off to the library, where the children perused for books and Brian wrote or sent emails to his clients. By three, they headed to the ice cream shop for a

cone. When Peggy came home, Brian retreated to his floor and continued writing, while Peggy spent time with her children. He would come down at five-thirty to help prepare dinner.

After the kids finished eating they clamored to the back yard for play. Peggy and Brian remained sitting. Peggy said. "I must say this arrangement has become quite convenient, mister Brian, Brian. A girl could get used to this."

"She could, eh?" Brian smiled. "Don't become too comfortable. I'm leaving in about a week."

"Why?"

"When I complete this project for my client, I'll need to leave here. It won't be good for you or the kids, if I don't." Brian saw the candle light in her eyes snuff out.

"What do you mean?"

With a slight shake of his head, he said. "If I told you, I'd have to shoot you."

Her eyebrows furrowed. "You a spy or something?"

"End of discussion. I have some work to do."

Summer was ending and Labor Day weekend had arrived. The restaurant was closed for four days giving Peggy a vacation of sorts. Saturday morning she slept in until nine. When she walked into the kitchen a partial pot of coffee, with an empty cup beside it, awaited her. Squeals and laughter drifted in the screen door. Standing at the sink, she saw the kids playing in the sand box and Brian sitting in the shade under a nearby tree. His laptop opened up on his thighs. He held a coffee cup in his left hand and appeared to be typing with the right. She stepped to the door. "Hey, you guys eat breakfast yet?"

Sara and Eli stopped what they were doing and turned toward the house. Brian looked up. "Up and at em sleepy head?"

"I'm hungry." Peggy Sue said.

Brian jumped up and the kids scrambled onto the back porch. When he walked in, he said. "I whipped up something special." He walked to the refrigerator and retrieved a breakfast casserole, turned on the oven and slid it in. "Hope you can hold out for thirty minutes." He pulled a loaf of homemade bread he had bought from a lady in town who sold bake goods. He cut off slices and plopped them in the toaster. "Take a seat, guys. There's some toast to tide you over until the casserole is done."

The toast was devoured as it popped out of the toaster. Sara and Eli licked the butter from their fingers and Peggy made a new pot of coffee. "I might take up baking." Peggy said.

"Or, buy your bread from Emma. I began to drool when I walked up on her porch." Brian opened the oven and poked a tooth pic into his concoction. "A few more minutes."

“Mmmmm.” Sara murmured. “Smells yummy.”

“Mmmmm.” Eli mimicked. “Smells yummy.”

Brian and Peggy Sue laughed and raised their cups to each other.

Late afternoon, Peggy Sue walks out to the tree where Brian had replanted himself to work. “My mom called. She wants to take the kids up to her cabin on Big Pine Lake, my stepfathers place.”

Unsure whether she was telling him or asking for his permission, Brian asked. “When they picking them up?”

“Be over in a bit. Kids love it up there.”

“Cool.”

After the childrens left with their grandmother, Brian took a shower and climbed the stairs to his den to work. He heard the shower come on. A short while later, he stopped typing when he heard the whine of the hair dryer. Then, there was silence, until the soft pit-pat of bare feet came up the stairway. Sitting on his bed he watched the door to the room. When it opened, he smiled at Peggy Sue wearing cut off blue jeans, a pure white t-shirt, holding two bottles of beer. It was obvious that she’d forgotten to put on a bra. “My landlord comes to my abode bearing gifts.”

“Your servant, master.” Peggy Sue laughed.

“She is serving the nectar of the gods.” He looked around as if talking to his court.

Peggy Sue walked to the edge of the bed and handed him an ice cold Labatt Blue Light. “It's Labor Day. Figured we should celebrate.”

“A grand idea, my lady.” Brian clinked his bottle against hers and took a long draw. “Been awhile.” He smacked his lips and took another swig. “Got anymore?”

“I bought an eighteen pack for the weekend. Thought I should repay you in some way for taking care of the kids. They’ve taken a real shine to you, you know.”

He smiled. “Me too.”

“Scooch over.” She slid onto the side of the bed and nudged him over. Brian folded his laptop and set it on the night stand.

Peggy reached over and pulled the chain on the light. They sat silent and drank their beers in the waning dusk. Peggy Sue broke the silence. “I haven't had sex in two-and-a-half years.”

Brian pondered this bit of data.

She looked at him. "Want another beer?"

"Better bring a couple."

She patted his thigh. "Will do."

Within a few minutes, she returned with a salad bowl filled with ice and four beers, setting it on the night stand. Peggy twisted off a top and handed a bottle to Brian, then did one for herself, hopping back onto the bed. She clinked her bottle against his. "Kids are gone until Monday, we have the house to ourselves. I like you, and I think you like me, and there's eighteen beers between us. Ain't that convenient."

Brian put his arm around her shoulder and drew her close. "Ain't that convenient."

The Wednesday following the holiday weekend, Peggy left the house at the normal five-thirty, for work. Brian and the children's schedule resumed. After leaving the library and he bought them ice cream, then called Peggy Sue's mother. "Can you take Sara and Eli for the rest of the afternoon? I have some place to be and don't want to bore them with my business stuff."

Lorraine, always willing to dote over her grand-children jumped when given the chance and replied. "Sure." She was there at two-thirty on the dot.

When Peggy Sue returned home after work she found the house empty. On the kitchen counter was a note. "Kids are at your mom's, BB." Peggy ran up the stairway and pushed open the door of Brian's room. Empty. There was no sign that he had ever been there. An empty feeling flooded in. "No good bye?" She whispered. She wiped at the tear trickling down her cheek.

Seven days later there was a knock at the front door and Sara ran to see who was there. "Mooooom, there's a man at the door."

Peggy Sue walked into the living room, from the kitchen, and stood before the screen door looking at the tall dark man dressed in all black. "Can I help you?"

The man raised his badge. "Dood, FBI, ma'am. Are you Peggy Sue Williams?" At her nod, he said. "I need to ask you a few questions."

"About what, mister Dood?"

"Was there a man who rented a room from you?" He replied.

"Maybe. Why you askin?" She stared stoically at him.

"Because we need to ask him some questions."

“He in trouble?”

He smiled. “Probably. May I come in?”

She pondered the question for a moment then unlocked and pushed the door open. “Sure.”

As he surveyed the living room he asked. “Is he still with you?”

“Nope, left a few days ago. Didn't say a word, just disappeared, as if he'd never been here. Upset the kids that they didn't get a chance to say good bye.”

“We figured as much. You mind if some of my people look around a bit?” Then he spotted a laptop sitting on an end table. “That yours?” He pointed.

Peggy Sue had found it on the kitchen table opened up. When she started it up, it had three log in icons: Sara, Eli, and Peggy. “Yeah, bought it to give the kids a leg up.”

“Mind if we look at that too?”

“Help yourself, but don't screw anything up, or you'll pay for getting it fixed. Give me your card, and I want the card for everyone who steps through that door. If you so much as scratch anything, you're paying for it, understand.”

“Of course, Peggy.” He handed her his card.

“Names Ms. Williams. Don't know you well enough to be on a first name basis.” She snatched the card from his fingers. “Get busy Mr. Dood. I want you and your people out of here by dinner time.”

He walked to the door and waved for his crew to come in. After he collected their cards and handed them to Peggy Sue, he asked. “Where did he stay?”

“Upstairs.” She led him to the stairway door and opened it up, then went outside and rounded up the kids. As they walked through the house, she told Dood she was taking them for ice cream and would be back in a bit. When he asked if they could talk to the children she spun around and put both fists on her hips. “Not on your life is that going to happen.”

He nodded, rubbing the nap of his neck. “Understand.” He said softly.

When Peggy and the kids returned home, the men were standing around their cars chatting. She sent the childrens to the house then said to Dood. “You find anything?”

Dood scrunched his mouth up and shook his head no. “Clean as a whistle, as we expected.”

“Tell me Mr. Dood, just what did this fella do to capture your interest?”

“Walk with me for a bit, Ms. Williams.” After they had put some distance between them and the other agents he explained. “Our mystery man is a computer hacker, a really good one... smart one.”

One who gets paid a lot of money to do what he does. He writes code for companies that they can use to hack into their competitors and find out what they are up to, in order to gain a competitive advantage. While he doesn't actually do the hacking he is considered to be aiding and abetting a criminal act.”

“And, just what makes you think this mystery man is the one who rented a room from me?”

“It seems a package was sent to his client from one of the village library's computers.”

Peggy Sue looked up at Dood. “How do you know that?”

“We have our ways, Ms. Williams. But, he is usually gone before we get the track on him. Poof, like he never existed. He'll screw up some day though. They all do. We'll get him.”

When he stopped and stared off down the street for a few moments, Peggy asked. “Then what?”

Dood spun around and began walking back to the car. “We'll see when the time comes.” Then he abruptly stopped and Peggy walked a step beyond him and turned back. “Look.” He said. “We know he left that computer for you. My people scanned it and it's clean, so you can keep it. He must like you. Did, ah, you two have something going on?”

Peggy Sue hesitated, considering what to tell him, then said. “Let's just say he was convenient to have around.”

The right corner of his mouth curled up in half a smile. “You'll contact us if you hear from him again?”

“Probably not.”

He stared at her a moment and stuck out his hand. “Thought so. Thanks for your cooperation Ms. Williams, but understand we have our ways.”

She smiled at him and shook his hand. “Bet that's convenient.”

He smiled back at her, turned and resumed walking to the cars. Over his shoulder he mumbled. “It is.”

Three days after the FBI visit, home from work, Peggy sat at the kitchen table reading her mail when she opened a thick envelope from her bank. In it she found a letter explaining that her mortgage was now paid in full, a deed releasing the property from the lien the bank held, and telling her to come in to sign paperwork to release the escrow account and advise them how to disperse the funds. When she called them and inquired about how this could happen, the Mortgage manager told her that funds had been wired to them from a bank in the Cayman Islands. They had called to confirm the transaction and were advised that it was a legitimate unnamed account and the transfer was authorized by the owner. The amount transferred was more than the payoff on the mortgage. She said the overage was placed in the escrow account. Peggy thanked her and hung up.

Sara and Eli joined her at the kitchen table where they found their mother holding the telephone and staring at the bank documents spread out in front of her. "What's the matter, mom?" Sara chirped.

"Nothing, Sara. Nothing at all. All is good."

"Mom, will you take us to the library? We want to get some different books."

Peggy scuffed Eli's hair. "Sure kiddo. Then maybe go for some ice cream."

"Just like with Brian." Said Eli.

"That would be convenient." Sara gave her approval of the plan. "Could you read to us, too, like Brian did."

"It would be my pleasure, darling."

The kids deposited their books in the book return cart and scuttled to the children's area and began leafing through new adventures. Peggy stood at the counter and waited until Wanda finished her phone conversation. When she hung up, Wanda said. "Oh my goodness, Peggy Sue. Did the FBI come see you, too?"

"Yes they did, but didn't find anything. What did they say to you?"

"They asked a few questions about Brian then checked the computers. The one he always used, they said was toast. Said he must have ran some kind of software or code that wiped everything out. The hard drive is shot."

Peggy shook her head and smiled.

"Come in the office, Peggy." She whispered. "He left an envelope for you. He said he was sure the kids would make you come down here, eventually. Smart guy, eh?"

Wanda shut the door behind them and saw Peggy peering out the window to where the childrens now sat at the round table. "They'll be fine. Bet those two would sit there for hours if you left them alone."

Peggy turned back to see Wanda sitting at her desk rifling through a drawer. "Probably. I think Mr. Brian started something I'm going to have to finish. Make sure I get a library card before I leave. I should start doing more reading, myself."

"Here they are." She pulled two envelopes from the draw and handed the top one to Peggy. "He said to give this to you. This one's for me." Wanda ripped open her envelope and pulled ten one hundred-dollar bills with a note paper clipped to them, reading. *To replace the computer.*

Peggy pulled the flap open and took out the single page note.

Peggy Sue,

By now the Feds have visited you. I hope they did not give you and the children much hassle. I normally stay in hotels or motels for this reason.

You, no doubt, now understand why I had to leave. They are a pest that way!

I wish I could have said good byes to the kids. Tell them I will think about them every day. You too.

I took care of some business for you, to help out.

If I stay out of trouble and can finish two more projects, I will be in touch with you. If possible, after things cool down around there, I'll come by.

Until then, keep reading to the kids and your chin up.

Give Sara and Eli a hug from me.

Love..BB

P.S. Better have Wanda shred this after you've read it.

Peggy folded the letter and held it to her chest as she looked at her children and whispered. "That would be convenient."

Wanda looked up from the bundle of bills. "Did you say something, Peggy Sue?" She saw the tears welling in her eyes. "Are you all right, Peggy?"

"I'm more than all right, Wanda." She held the note out to her. "Can you shred this for me?"