

Jigsaw Flesh

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*N*ed Wines forced tears back as the coffin of his murdered son was lowered into the ground. Rain pattered down onto the casket. Ned felt the hurt that went deep and clearer than any he had felt before or ever would. He averted the gaze from the casket and to the grey sky. The fact that the murderer was in custody did nothing to dispel the hurt that boiled away inside him. Taken his son had been taken by the evil that walked and looked like a man and nothing would ever change that.

The earth thudded on the casket.

“Goodbye son,” he said as he turned and hurried out away from the scene.

“Looks nice doesn’t it,” Ned said placing the plate of sausages and chips in front of the empty chair where Matt used to sit.

It was a habit he didn't want to break anytime soon. Even though it had been five months since the funeral.

“Good, the new doll is coming along well, I've just completed one it looks excellent. The buyer will be pleased and it's going to fetch a good price.” He said to himself, he had to raise his voice to hear himself over the storm which raged outside.

He finished his dinner put his plate in the cluttered sink and headed to his workshop attic.

The room was a mess of doll parts, boxes scattered tools, and wood shavings. Every inch was coated.

Ned lost himself into putting the finishing touches to his nineteen-fifties styled wooden doll as rock n roll music blared in from the antique Vinyl player.

Ned dipped the paintbrush in the bright blue paint and dabbed on the eyes. His thoughts turned to his son, he tried to keep his thoughts from going to the truth, but he couldn't. He didn't want to admit it. He couldn't confront the fact that his son had been taken away from him in the cruelest way.

“But I'm not dead dad,” the doll spoke.

Ned jumped back his heart hammering in his chest.

“I'm here in this body you created. You made this body just like you made the old me. My soul is here.”

“But how as much as I tried to pretend it wasn't true you were murdered.”

“Do the how's really matter, dad?”

Ned could swear there was life in what passed for eyes on the wooden doll.

Could it be possible?

“Oh, it's true, just because it may seem out of the realm of what the majority may believe it doesn't mean I haven't returned to you.”

Ned looked at the doll dumbfounded. Could it be true?

The doll sat there smelling of shaved food and varnish, a shaking hand touched the hard wood and quickly drew back, it was warm and had the feel of flesh.

Suddenly the rock n roll that always got him bopping was too damn loud. He could feel the music pounding in his temples.

To the absolute horror of Ned, the doll stood, its movements stiff and unnatural.

“No,” he cried backing away, he slipped on a discarded screwdriver and landed hard on his ass. Teeth slammed together which sent shockwaves through his school.

“I’ve come back to you dad, isn’t that what you wanted?” the voice sounded like his son if he was talking with a mouthful of soil. At that moment Ned pictured his son peacefully in his coffin. Lifeless due to the evil bastard who had snatched his life, after he had snatched his son’s innocence.

“I don’t know this doesn't seem right. It’s against God,” Ned whispered, mouth dry heart beating too damn fast.

“God took me from you dad, he placed me in the hands of a rapist and killer of kids. Why would a loving God do

such a thing?” the unfinished wooden hands reached out towards Ned who was now shaking, cold sweat ran down his face, and dust tickled his nostrils.

“I don’t know, I’ve prayed and cried for your return son but if it’s your soul in there, what life is it stuck in a wooden body, neve being of flesh and blood like nature intended.”

I’m going crazy.

No, by some force unknown to him his son had returned into a body he had created with his hands. A body he had made whilst amidst the pain of grief.

“Be it a body of wood or a body of flesh I will be here,” the doll said the mouth splitting open as it spoke. The voice sounded like his son but a had a cold edge which unnerved Ned. The vice scared him, yet he didn’t know why.

“I buried you, and now you stand before me in the body of a doll. It’s like my prayers have been twisted into a waking nightmare.”

The doll didn’t respond, it returned to its original position as if the entire scene hadn’t transpired.

Ned sat there smelling sawdust and wood varnish. The sound of Buddy Holly continued to play.

At first Ned thought it was the storm that was raging outside that woke him, then he saw the wooden doll sitting at the edge of his bed and the scream tore from him.

Kicking out he caught the doll square in the chest sending the doll tumbling to the floor. Ned heard the sound of cracking and a weak scream.

Scuttling to the edge he peered down at the doll. Thick blood, which looked like ink in the moonlight, leaked from the broken head.

“Dad,” the voice trailed off into silence.

Then it wasn't a wooden doll lying there in the darkness as the rain assaulted the house. It was their son, his face twisted into an eternal scream.

Tears sprung from Ned's eyes, his face transformed into a grotesque picture of anguish, and he screamed.

The morning was a dirty grey, rain fell from bloated black clouds. A biting wind blew across the land and howled loudly outside.

Ned looked up at the sound of the howling wind, his tired eyes looked down at the broken doll. The skull had cracked and fallen apart in numerous places. He had no idea where to start fixing the thing.

He cradled a piece of the wooden skull which was splattered with blood and left a sticky residue on his fingers.

“I'm sorry son,” he chucked the hunk of wood across the dust grime table where it landed with a hollow thunk.

His son was gone again.

Tears didn't come. Ned was too numb for tears.

“What do I do know?”

Build me a body a real body.

The ghostly voice echoed around the dust-caked attic.

Gooseflesh raced up Ned's arms and a chill fell over him.

The voice of his son was cold, ominous, and threatening.

I need to live, it's dark and scary here dad. I'm caught between the world of the living and the dead. It wasn't my time to die.

“I don't think there is much I can do,” Ned said sick to the stomach with the whole ungodly business.

You know what to do, dad. I need to come back to you; we have to be together.

Outside lightning lit up the overcast sky causing Ned to almost jump out of his clammy skin.

Rain trickled down the unwashed windows. Ned looked around his breath coming out in gasps. Sweat ran down the nape of his neck, a shaking hand wiped the sweat out of his eyes.

If you loved, you wouldn't have doubts about what needed to be done.

He knew what was being asked of him but the very thought of it might him cold and shivery.

“I won't do it,” Ned said his voice barely a whisper.

Please, dad. I'm lonely, it's dark and scary here.

Shaking hands wiped the sweat from his clammy brow. The room suddenly felt too small, the air too musty and hot.

An image of his son grew in up his mind, first hazy then growing in clarity. Him and his son on a sunny day playing catch. How he wished he could have just one more day with his son. One hug, one more chance to say I love you and for his son to tell him he loved him back.

Ned wiped tears from his red raw eyes and rose unsteadily to his feet. He had always said he'd do anything for his son, and now he was in a position that what was being asked of him was so sinister, so terrible Ned feared for his soul.

Ned threw the mud-caked and rain-soaked raincoat to the floor, his body ached, and he felt sick.

“Lord forgive me,” he poured a large measure of rye whisky and drank it in one go. The liquor burned a path to his twisting stomach. The digging had been long and hard, and his muscles now felt tight and painfully.

He was lucky he hadn't he had been seen. The body on the table was that of a twelve-year-old who had died from a tumble down the stairs. He had contemplated digging up his son but that had struck as too grim.

He discarded the tarp and looked down at the body. The skin was pale, and the kid looked as if he was in deep sleep.

Even though what he had to do Ned just couldn't set himself to the task. The tools were already set in the attic.

He turned the room into what he now referred to as the room of bloody creation.

He took another long drink and moved the body to the attic and got to work.

Blood, thick and reeking sickly of copper dripped off the table and puddled on the floor. The saw sliced Easley through the young flesh and grated against the bone.

Ned forced back bile as the arm fell with a thud on the attic floor. Sweat ran down his pale face. He could feel himself being watched by an unseen presence. He always felt that empty stare bearing into his soul.

The rest of the body was no good, too damaged from the accident he would need more. The knowledge he would have to go through with this act again made him sick in a way that was more than physical.

Nessun Dorma played softly as Ned picked up the arm, it didn't feel real. None of this seemed real, he felt like an outsider observing all this blood and depravity through a cloying fog.

He placed the arm in the ice chest. He sliced up the body and sank the remains in a twenty-gallon drum filled with bleach and acid.

The grey morning was filled with rain. Ned sat the table working his way through black coffee and a breakfast of toast and fried eggs. He drew hard on the cigarette he recently taken back up to habit after quitting for eleven

years. He caught sight of his pale and haggard face in the mirror.

I need you dad.

The voice whispered from behind him sending a chill through his body.

He exhaled smoke planning his next excursion to the graveyard.

The night was cold and wet, at times like this Ned was thankful for the seclusion of the house. He laid the tar wrapped corpse on the table and took a long slug of whisky.

Outside lighting illuminated the black of night.

Thank you, dad. Soon I will be back with you.

The voice young and full of snatched life sent icy pinpricks down Ned's spine.

"I can't do this, I just can't," tears ran down his dirt grimed cheeks. The glass shook as he downed the rest of the fiery alcoholic beverage.

"I JUST CAN'T."

The glass shattered against the wall; sliver of glass cascaded onto the pile of unwashed pots.

Dad, I miss you.

That voice again, so close yet so far.

Ned looked at the body on the table and wept.

Thick blood mixed in with the warm water. The drained and troubled face looked back at him from the grime-streaked bathroom mirror. The smell of dirt and the vile transgressions he participated in filled the house.

The moon shone brightly through the dusty windows. Rain hammered down on the roof.

Ned took a deep shaky breath and finished cleaning the blood off him. He left the bedroom and returned to the attic; the smell was overpowering. He forced himself to look at the body bile rushed up from his stomach and exited from his mouth splashing onto the dusty floor.

He fell to his knees while body shaking.

The thing lay on the table, a mismatch of parts stitched together. The flesh was grey and crawled with life of the ground.

One more that's all we need dad, and we can be together.

Ned didn't respond.

How was he going to bring this abomination to life?

There are ways rituals that go against the teachings long since held.

Ned jumped.

“How did you know what I was thinking?”

These things need not concern you.

“This spits in the face of God.”

A cruel vindictive God who snatched me away from you. We need to together nothing is stronger than the love of a parent and their children.

“Just one more then I'm done.”

Thunder boomed in the night sky and lightning streaked the black horizons. Rain fell in torrent.

The dust from the attic was getting into the throat of Ned, he coughed and wiped tears from his gaunt cheeks.

He gazed at the monstrosity on the tale, a patchworked of a boy. A jigsaw made of flesh and blood.

Lifeless eyes, one green one brown seemed to gaze into his very soul.

Ned slowly walked around, his shaking hands touching the abomination he had created.

“Lord forgive me.”

Rain hammered down, drenching the postal worker who stood looking in shock at the skeletal man on the doorstep.

Ned accepted the package and headed back indoors. The smell inside the flat was nauseating, a rotten stink that permeated every inch.

Ned seated himself at the table and took a long drink of whiskey and took a bite out of his cold greasy bacon sandwich, never noticing the flies which buzzed around his food.

The packaging was torn off in a hurry. Ned looked down at the black leather-bound tome. Purchased off an occult site in the deepest regions of the internet.

It will work if we believe, the ritual shall succeed, and we will be back together.

Ned shivered at the cool calculated voice as he downed his whiskey.

Trembling fingers flicked the ancient pages, grotesque illustrations accompanied the rites. Spells and rituals predating any known religion. Weary bloodshot eyes scanned the incantation to bring life to the dead. The words were a blur to a gibberish penned by a madman. Ned poured another long measure of whisky hoping that when he awoke from the inevitable blackout this nightmare would be over.

The liquor burned a scorching trail into the pit of Ned's rolling stomach. Did he want to go through this?

No matter what his thoughts the conclusion was out of his hands. On unsteady legs he rose, clutching the book to his chest, he staggered upstairs to the attic.

Upon entering the room, he was assaulted by the stench of rotting flesh, he gagged and fought back the vomit that wanted to spew forth.

He moved across the floor that was coated with a thick layer of dust. Ned jumped back as a large mangy rat raced in front of him. The rodent looked at him with black eyes, the two canines protruded long out of its mouth.

"Fuck off," Ned snarled as he aimed a kick at the animal. The animal squealed and ran off.

Ned wiped sweat from his eyes, his heart thudded painfully in his chest, he approached the makeshift. The

abomination of life long lost lay on a black sheet draped over a rickety wooden table.

Flies buzzed around the corpse; maggots wriggled across the body. Ned stopped in front of the monstrosity of creation, stitches crisscrossed the makeshift child like a jigsaw made of flesh.

Ned stood in front of the patchwork boy and opened the book and laid it on the naked torso. From his pocket he drew a switch. Palm facing upwards he cut deep into his hand blood splashed down on the lifeless face as he chanted the ancient words.

Lightning streaked the sky, and the humid attic turned deathly cold. Goosebumps broke out on the clammy skin of Ned.

The pages of the book quickly fluttered, and the book slammed to the shut. Ned's eyes widened in disbelief as his spilt blood sank into the skin of the body on the table. Slowly life came to the eyes and a shuddering breath flowed the body. The muscles contracted and slowly the body sat up, maggots spilled to the floor as did the book.

The mouth opened and a scream escaped.

“Son,” the words were a barely audible whisper.

The scream was the very sound of damnation itself.

The body burned with unwanted life.

Ned reached out a hand and took hold of the rotting flesh of the right arm.

“Son it's me. It's dad.”

The scream fell silent and vague understanding sank into the disfigured face. The creature of new life tried to speak but was unable to utter any words, the only sound that emitted from the cracked and blood caked lips was a low primal growl.

Pulling away the creature toppled off the table and landed with a thud.

The creature stood shaky and looked through Ned.

Thoughts of the life he would lead with his returned child filled Ned's already shattered psyche. Crazy thoughts of days at the park, holidays at the beach all the activities that bonded father and child.

Lost in his own world he never noticed the knife in the reattached hand until it sliced through his jugular spraying blood in long jet.

His hands clasped the wound. Life fluid squirted through his fingers and poured down him as he crumbled to his knees.

“Why?”

“Should...have...left...me...dead,” the words had to forced out of the creature's mouth.

Ned fell face first at the creature's feet.

Outside the wind howled and the rain fell down in a torrent.

THE END