



**AS
DARKNESS
BREAKS**

Jonny Newell

**DARKNESS
AWAKES**

The series - Book 1

Darkness Breaks

The DARKNESS Series – Book 1

Jonny Newell

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Dedication

For the beautiful boys in my life.

Michael W, Michael N, Vince, Ronan, John, Jack,

Karlos, Marcus, Corey

and

Vince and Jem's #3 who's on the way

(can't wait to meet you bubba)

Introduction

Being a lover of classic horror themes, I started writing my first anthology of short 'Classic' themed tales which reflected that inside, especially in those first early stories and a fair few of those ones have been revised, updated and tweaked to meet my own expectations and current standards, and are in this 3 book series – 'DARKNESS' along with new stories, which I've really enjoyed writing.

With new revised versions of my DARK tales from my previously released books - 'Broken', - 'Thirteen', and some of the brand new stories from my newly released full collection - 'When DARKNESS Shimmers' believe becomes a well-balanced cross-section of my darker stories.

Plus as an extra, I have included a couple of bonus stories especially written (1st and last story) for this book 1 of the series and only available for download within these books.

So welcome to Book # 1 of my new series - DARKNESS

Book 1 – DARKNESS BREAKS

I hope you enjoy this series as much as I had when writing, revising and collating the old and the new.

Jonny

*

Darkness Breaks

The DARKNESS Series - Book 1

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Darkness Breaks

The DARKNESS Series – Book 1

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Dead Inside

I have been so dead inside
All my feelings have dried up and died
You see me smile oh yeh it's fake
How can you smile when life's a snake

Once I had what I called love
Sent to me from up above
But then the devil took it all away
and replaced it with my apathy

**I am so dead inside
with all this death by my side**

With a touch of hope
And a glimpse of fate
The possibility to love
may shake my faith

But if it comes down
to another lesson in life
I will bolt the door

on all that's right

**I am so dead inside
with all this death by my side**

Find me, help me, save me

I'm not a bad person

I'm not a bad person

I'm not a bad person

I'm not a bad person

**I am so dead inside
with all this death by my side**

Story 1

The Dead Inside

Prologue - Happy Birthday

“Well Mum, I made it to 18! Happy Birthday to me.” But Mum never answered, how could she? She was dead! So I ate my chocolate bar and swigged the straight scotch next to her rotting skeleton as she lay in her queen-sized bed next to Dad’s. I had plans for my birthday and I would take a trip to the mall and pick myself a nice present. I was thinking of a new pair of jeans and matching bag, that would be nice and what about one of those makeup kits, then to come home, decorate with streamers and then get drunk as a skunk by myself at my party for one. I sat and talked to my parents, telling them of my excitement of my 18th party. I knew she would’ve loved to see me in my new clothes, partying with Cassie and my friends, celebrating my womanhood but there was no point in dwelling about it. I had got over that a long time ago.

*

The lucky one

I was 11 nearly 12 when it happened, and what I still have no idea but only knowing I awoke to a new day of death. Everyone was dead, and I mean everyone, even my pet hamster, Tiffy. You can well imagine the distress of that initial day, finding my family not waking with me. I thought they were simply sleeping but they weren't! I waited until 9 and believed they had just slept in being a weekend day. I was alerted when I turned on the TV to watch music video clips but the screen was just snow! So I turned it off and would ask Dad to fix it later, but he couldn't, he was dead too! I finally gave in at 9:00 and went check on them with a fresh cup of tea each that I'd made to surprise them (with 2 slices of buttered toast). Mum's opened mouth and the fear in her dead eyes made me drop the tray and I burnt my foot with the scalding liquid. I ran and shook her to wake her but she was dead and dead as Dad was. I stood there frozen looking at them wondering what at happened before my senses returned and I ran downstairs and would get help from Mr. Heckles next-door. I was banging hard on his front door when I saw him, lying there in his rose garden, with his mouth open like Mum's. It was then I looked around and no one was on the streets. And I mean no one! I saw a car crashed into a lamp post and a body was slumped over the steering wheel so I ran as fast as I could to see if they were alright, but they weren't! The family of 4 were all dead. I fell to my knees as the fear filled my tiny body, consuming my questions of why. I then saw Butch (my friend Cassie's dog) dead in the front yard. My mouth was dry as I was starting to believe she was dead too!

I ran to get help away from my street but the further I ran, the more the dead accumulated. Cars were everywhere, none moving, some crashed, and some simply parked. I couldn't find anyone to help me; they were all lifeless and gasping for something! I rounded the block to see Johnson's Mall and there were a lot of cars parked in the car park so I kept running to the shopping center. I pushed the doors open and I could hear the music they always played as the place was lit up, so I held onto the thought, I wasn't alone. Bodies were lying everywhere. I froze and looked and screamed out for help as it echoed in the voiceless chamber of death. I am embarrassed to say, I wet myself when the power cut off and everything went silent and darkened. I couldn't help it, I was frightened then for whatever had killed them, had killed them all and at the exact same time. I sat in my wet panties and skirt at the water fountain and

splashed my face, staring at the dead. I was questioning then, why me? What had I done to be saved and not them as Mum and Dad? My mouth was dry and I needed a drink so I went to the Supermarket and took a water from the now dead fridge. I've never stolen anything in my life, ever before but I accepted that no longer mattered.

I walked home crying and not understanding any of this insanity. I showered and changed my clothes as the power flickered back on before being cut off completely. I knew this because I'd turned the TV back on to its snow picture, just in case an emergency broadcast would be televised. So here I was all alone in a powerless house with dead family and no idea what to do next. I made myself a peanut butter sandwich and still can't believe I was even hungry, but I was. I sat on the front steps pondering for hours. Darkness came and then I could see my friend Cassie's house was one of a few that had solar panels on its roof so was lit up in one room, hers! It took me a good hour to brave up but I had to, there was no choice left other than sit here in my misery.

I knocked knowing it was pointless before I smashed the door's glass panel and let myself in. Mr. and Mrs. Weston were dead beneath the breakfast bar in the dark (I found Dad's torch in the garage). Cassie wasn't here. I followed the glow from upstairs and it was from Cassie's room. I cried again as I found her slumped at her writing desk, where she was writing in her diary. I lifted her body to the floor but she was too heavy for me so she virtually fell there. My friend's face was the same as the rest as if oxygen had been stolen and she was gasping like a dead fish out of water. I dragged her body to her parent's room and shut the door. I returned to her lit room and laid on her bed and thought of how many times we had shared this single bed on sleep-overs; it made me smile for the 1st time today! I was exhausted but the silence clouded my ears and my body struggled to sleep. Mind games as well, and the worst one was that maybe I was destined to die just like them tonight, never awakening ever again.

*

Move on Sister

I did wake, refreshed and I accepted it was no dream; I was alone! After going home, I made myself some breakfast cereal but the fridge had been off for nearly a day and then I realized, I would never taste fresh milk after today. I made my way back to the mall just for the hope some poor soul was just like me, lost and alone. I waited for hours but nothing. So I got my head together and loaded a shopping trolley with what I believed would help me survive, canned food, bottled water, and fresh fruit. The dead were already stinking and I cringed as I pushed my trolley down the aisles, passing them all, even moving some of the bodies to get through but I had no choice to do so. I stopped at the toy section and stared at the doll, so I placed that in as well. I pushed the trolley home and carried in the loaded shopping bags and filled our pantry and unboxed my new doll.

Loneliness was starting to take a hold of me, not having anyone to talk to, so my doll, I named – Betty copped all my rantings; she never complained once! I was living at home and sleeping in Cassie's room at her house. I had to drag her parent's bodies outside to the backyard, where the flies found them straight away! Oh yeh, no cats, dogs, birds but the insects survived as I had and I laughed as Mum always had called me a pest and here we all were!

The wind was really the only noise you could hear and was driving me insane so I went back to the mall, found the electrical shop and claimed a new mobile phone and as many batteries as I could find. I scratched my head then, at how I was supposed to get songs onto them. I took them home and then went from house to house, searching for any phones or any solar powered items I could find. It was still hard to see all the faces I'd said hello to daily, rotting away with flies and maggots crawling all over them. It made me realize I had to protect Mum and Dad from these pesky critters.

I had found an iPhone full of songs so at least now I had music to keep me company. I had to spray Mum and Dad with surface spray to kill the bugs that had already found them. I covered their bodies with clear plastic sheets and only ever removed it when I wanted to visit.

The phone batteries never lasted long and I was lucky to find a solar charger for them. I spent most days pottering around with earplug headphones in, blasting out my now dead heroes, such as Katy, Ariana, and Taylor. The smell of the dead at the mall was making me dry-retch now so something had to be done. I found the hardware and found a flatbed trolley and some straps, that at first were hard to master, but I'm a quick learner. I decided the alcohol shop (I would wait until I would be 18 to venture in here, oh how I was wrong). It took me months to complete the task, moving a few bodies a day, working aisle to aisle, shop to shop. I then mopped the shops out that I frequented the most and yet the smell of mass death took a long time to pass, years actually! But I was freed from looking at the mass grave it previously was. I actually started to enjoy being in the mall now, shopping for items that I could never afford (or my parents). My wardrobe was amazing and rarely wore the same outfit twice in a month.

A year passed and I'd never been sick, not a single cold, not a fever, nothing, until the cramps hit my stomach and back, I then knew I was becoming a woman! Lucky for me Cassie got hers early so she told me all about them and my mouth looked like their dead ones when she told me you had to actually shove that up there! Holding the tampon by its mouse's tail, I cringed. I then hit Mum up as I was freaked out so she explained 'the curse' to me and all about our female anatomy and how different we were to males and their testosterone. I complained of how easy they got it just putting up with the extra dangly bits down there. I was glad to wait ... but here it was. It made me sad as I laid on Cassie's bed, I don't know why but I was extra emotional, so I cried myself to sleep listening to my 'sad' playlist I had made.

How does one survive alone and for the years, yet I had. But I had survived and life moves in only one direction – toward death.

*

Bored to death

I felt I was a woman at 16, no longer a scared little girl and I was fucking bored out of my fucking brains! I craved for new tunes, new books, and a new life. I decided I needed a holiday, anywhere away from this limbo. So I loaded up my backpack with water bottles, supplies, and tools, turned up my iPod and rode off on my brand new racing bike.

I rode for 8 hours when I reached the town of Bentley, it was deserted except for the now skeletal remains of the dead (including animals). I found a hotel and the keys so went to claim room 13 (lucky for me) for the night. I cleaned it and changed the linen to be fresh and emptied the dead fridge of its rotten milk. I was happy the heating system was gas so I had a hot shower and washed my now bum-length straight dark hair. Darkness came and my LED lantern lit up the room while I ate my can of beans and meatballs, cold. I cracked the scotch bottle and swigged enough until my loneliness disappeared amongst the dizziness.

I woke to the sun blinding through so I found a fresh apple (from Cassie's Dad's tree) and munched on it with 2 headache pills and lemonade for the headache. I found a pamphlet for the local area and there was fuck all around here so I simply left and rode for another 6 to 8 hours before I hit Western Rivers. I stopped on a deserted bridge and checked out the glorious view of the river (which I assumed was Western River). It was magnificent and I had forgotten the beauty of Mother Nature working in her glory; she lived! Then I saw it ... a bird! One solitary bird flew overhead screeching and I believe it was a parrot! I wasn't the last living creature on Earth, there was more life out there!

I rode around for the next week staying wherever I wanted and doing what I pleased, but all I really wanted was to see the bird again, but I never!

After a month I decided to return home to Mum and Dad and my solace. The trip was good; I was refreshed!

Life returned to the normal boredom so I started drinking more and more. At first, it was only at night to help me sleep now it was for breakfast. I was becoming an alcoholic but I never really gave a fuck! I was destined to die here alone so it made no matter what I did or became.

So there I was 18 celebrating with Mum and Dad's skin-covered skeletons, drinking and dancing myself to oblivion ... when I saw the lights.

*

Belong

I ran outside and the lights were blinding, as the wind was blowing a gale and leaves were circling in a whirlwind. The white light engulfed our house and as my heart raced I looked up to see that it was true; I was not alone! The ship simply hovered over the house, silent and then with a bang the wind stopped and the light turned off, leaving me in blackness. I squinted and rubbed my eyes still looking upward to see the immense size of the UFO; it was as big as this street! Next minute a hollow of light beamed downwards and it was the colors of the rainbow and looked 3d to me. Why wasn't I scared? But I wasn't, I'm telling you, I wasn't! The beam just pulsated and I walked into it praying they would take me anywhere with them, anywhere where I was not alone. And within a moment they were gone and I awoke around midday in the middle of the street, sunburnt!

I was physically drained as I crawled back inside and then sat in the shower with the cold water pouring over me as I was still fully dressed. I regained some energy after 30 minutes of soaking. After rubbing my sunburnt skin with fresh aloe vera, I made my way outside with my bottle of scotch to finish yesterday's celebrations. I went take a swig and my body refused! My mouth rejected the taste, so I placed the bottle down and looked into the stars wondering just what they had done to me?

I waited out there every night for them to come back to claim me, but they never did.

*

Decision or death

3 more years passed and my 21st was fast approaching and I had made my decision; I was leaving! I had nothing but to dwell on but the days and nights of this endless groove but what it did give me was a desire to live, not death, and was the chosen direction I was to head toward.

I finally buried Mum and Dad in the backyard under Dad's favorite tree and said a little prayer for them, better late than never! I had buried Cassie's remains yesterday

I stood outside our house and reflected back at my growing up in there for half my life alone. But there would be no tears today, only memories, good and bad! But they were memories ... and totally mine.

*

Epilogue – The end of the road

It is Christmas day tomorrow (well I believe it is) and again I spend it alone as I travel across this beautiful country of this beautiful planet, that God gave us to inhabit. As I ride from town to town, city to city, I visit all the wonders that mankind has left behind. Oh, nothing much works anymore, with rust and corrosion ceasing most of man's creations, as Mother Nature slowly reclaims the Earth as she had at the very beginning. But beauty has been left behind imprinted forever by us such as art, movies, music, and libraries, and it is the history of our time here as her caretakers so I visit them all and will continue to do so until I literally cannot ride.

I still wait patiently for the visitors to return and find me again, but I take solace in knowing, they are watching me closely.

So as I sit here on my Christmas Eve, I open my tin of peaches and celebrate this blessing under the sparkling stars, that I was given solely and accept it was given to me because – I am and always will be – a good person!

Eternal Hunger (darkest lust)

Darkness bled an unholy web as frozen hearts lie on the bed

Our love is stained with crimson red

Deepest eyes that mesmerize our fatal charm will terrorize

Chosen one come taste your fate

Lose control guilt plays no role

We have no need for shame

Poisoned touch with tainted lust

Come play our coldest game

Hunger for eternal love

Wallow in your darkest lust

Taste the kiss, everlasting love

Follow in our darkest trust

Hypnotized, soul paralyzed to be re-born first pay the price

Awaken to your new moonlight

Lose control to pay your toll

With nervous pulse so warm

Poisoned touch with virgin lust

Come drink with us 'til dawn

**Hunger for eternal love
Wallow in your darkest lust
Taste the kiss, everlasting love
Follow in our darkest trust**

So hungry, we can't sleep
So hungry, we must eat
So hungry

The wine flows red tonight

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Story 2

Dark Lust - Into the Night

Part 1

Prologue - Fate

Do you accept some paths of life are for a reason? If so - then why do we always question the inevitable as if we have a choice? So if you're like me then your miserable fate is already written.

As a man of few words – it comes hard! Why me? I never even believed in the supernatural or things that go bump in the night. I never even liked horror movies or books so for me to tell this story is a sort of - CrAZy! Only it needs to be told just in case you get a visit from me! For I am one of your nightmares or commonly known as your - BoOgiE Man!

*

The bet

“Don’t forget your raincoat ... they reckon rain tonight!” Jerry was drilling me with his instructions of what not-to-forget as he’d been hunting pigs many times as part of the – W.D. Boys (Wild Dog) my drinking partners and his faithful pit-bull, BIG-dog. He’d been trying his hardest to get this here chicken boy (me) to go hunting for as long as I can remember. I wasn’t a hunter or a killer but he was one of the four pricks that started this whole ridiculous situation that ended up twisting my arm to surrender from just winning a lousy fucking unwinnable bet!

It was the Saturday 2 months prior to this day and as usual, with the full crew of the W.D. Boys there at our local Irish haunt - Irish Malones, getting tanked with their weekly consumption of Guinness by the pint.

It was Paulie who saw her looking at me; she was way out of my league!

“Hey Jay Jnr,” Paulie whispered and got all the four of us’ attention, he continued, “check out nine o’clock ... I swear she’s checking you out!” I did as we all did and yes – confirmed, but out of my league!

Her long black hair was dead straight thick and shiny and touched her arse which belonged to the body of a supermodel, Scandinavian white skin with the darkest of eyes. We were all guessing her nationality, with German, Russian and Steevo’s Icelandic as the winning suggestion from us judges. She was stunning we all agreed and was she smiling our way? ‘Naaa!’ Definitely not at me, so I resumed my attention to my Guinness. As I swigged a mouthful, I glanced back and bet it was Billy as he’s the usual lady puller in our group.

“She’s eyeing you off mate!” stated Paulie and Jerry reaffirmed, followed by Steevo.

“She is!” Billy turned and winked at me,

“You’re in Motherfucker!”

“Bullshit!” I was shaking my head as she had returned her attention to the band who were pumping out ‘Bad Moon Rising’ by C.C.R.; So I watched her while I sipped a mouthful!

It was Jerry who laid the bait, egged on by all the rest of the bastards.

“I bet you, you could bang her?” I looked at them all and they were shaking their heads, spitting out their beer and Steevo spoke,

“I’m willing to back he can’t!” whacking \$50 on the bar table in a flat slap sound! Before long, there was \$200 (4 x \$50) sitting in front of me including Jerry’s with the W.D. Boys all grinning the stupidest of grins at me, egging me on to - ‘*Go for it!*’

“You’re all off ya fucking heads!” I shook my thick ginger shoulder-length mane and glanced over to her ... she was looking back at me while Billy was doing a chicken impersonation.

“\$200 if you score! But Jay,” Jerry grabbed my wrist and stated, “... with one extra little clause! You’re to grow a set of balls, man up and join us on our next big pig hunt!” Before I’d even accepted the bet Jerry’s add-on clause had the boys signing the deal on my behalf.

After 30 minutes of their peer pressure and my pint nearly finished, I gave in.

“O.K. pricks, I’ll do it!” but peer pressure wasn’t the reason ... she was! So I sculled my pint, let out a burp as the - *let the games begin* siren sounded and I faced the ‘Demon’, the - ‘Demon of Rejection’! I didn’t have a hope in hell’s chance! But I apprehensively made my way to her to get this over and done with and before I missed out on a drink as it was Billy’s round.

“Hi, good band eh? I’m Jay ... or Jay Jnr, yep 2nd generation of a shit name,” my nerves had me motor-mouthing, “I’ve had it since a kid ... you know parents.” The band was alright but nothing spectacular just your average covers band playing ’80s and ’90s tribute rock, well enough to recognize the tunes. She turned and looked me in the eyes and smiled,

“I love the '80s! All those hair bands and healthy egos.” She turned and looked me in the eyes, “I’m Nat ... Natasha ... Tash, 1st generation!” She outstretched and shook my hand and her accent was European but I couldn’t pick it.

Now I had exhausted my usual only one – name is, pick up line, I stumbled into awkwardness. Lucky for me, Nat - Natasha – Tash, wanted to chat.

“A Guinness man, nice!” Tash clicked hers with mine. “So are you a local boy?”

“Yeh we all are!” I was pointing back to the table of fuckwits who were doing their best to protect their \$200 kitty by crude gestures mixed with thumbs down. I felt my face heat up and match my hair; lucky it was dark!

“Can I buy you a drink Jay?” Natasha beat me to it!

“Yeh, yeh ... sure!” I was a bit shell-shocked and motionless as she made her way to the bar. I looked back at the W.D. Boys and Billy was waving the moolah at me as he put it in his top pocket, so I gave him the - *‘2 bus tickets to Valley please’* fingers up.

“Hi nice to meet you,” Jerry shook Natasha’s hand while the other boys’ crudeness had been exchanged for politeness, Steevo asked,

“We were guessing what nationality you are.” Tash smiled and answered,

“Romanian.” Steevo looked at Billy as if to say, none of us were right!

Natasha was hypnotic, to say the least, and she had these wild dogs tamed, all covering eyes downwards; she could eyeball them all under the table - *Down boy down!*

I did win the bet and it paid off, but ... fuck the money!

Natasha's body was firm and athletic and she rode me like a bucking bronco through the heat of passion. Her sweat was sweet but bitter, with her mouth exciting and constantly inviting my tongue. Her hair was so straight and long as it covered and stuck to our naked sweaty bodies. But it was her smell that was the most intoxicating! I just couldn't get enough of it! So breathed her into me, taking in I could. I knew I had definitely reached the top bar of my pole vault height here; Natasha was clearly a - 10.

I awoke in the morning to find I was alone in my bed she had come (err no pun intended) and gone only leaving me with one hell of a hickey on my neck and a hand note scribbled in lipstick.

That morning I met up with the boys for our usual recovery breakfast at Café 666 where we always ordered exactly the same meal from the - Devil's Brekkie menu – 'Burn in Hell' (bacon, eggs, toast covered in hot chili sauce and a tomato juice nipped with tobacco and a dash of lime). It was a boy thing that we all challenged each other on whose stomach could take the most punishment after a night on the grog. Usually, the following day at work was always a not-so-gentle reminder who'd participated in the game we'd named - Ring of Fire!

"So c'mon, tell us prick! Give us all the juicy blow by blow details." Steevo was gleaming at me, poking my bruised neck while the others were drinking their juices and agreeing with a look of hunger, for the finer details of my latest sexual encounter.

"A gentleman does not kiss and tell!" I smirked as I nodded away from them all.

"Fuck off ... and your shouting breakfast, arse-wipe!" Billy waving my \$200, complaining as a let-down Jerry pulled a disappointed face, while Steevo's cringed with frustration. So I gave them all just a little,

"Look, guys, it was fucking great! She was amazing ... it was totally amazing ... and so fucking hot! Just fucking mind-blowing ... that's all I've

got to say.” I had quenched their thirst of my sex life (or more like hers) with just one droplet of water, or so I believed.

“So she sucked your cock, right?” and straight back to the gutter, Paulie took us, as grins surrounded me with staring eyes. So I changed the subject to her mysterious exit and the strange note she’d left on the coffee table.

“That’s fucking weird mate!” Steevo, as the others agreed with him, backing his obvious statement. I tried my best to argue for Natasha’s sake about our one-night stand, being a simple wham, bam, thank you mam, and out of there, but it was the note that pierced holes in my justification.

‘Jay had a great time last night, such a great guy. Satisfying sex! I will call you when the time is right but not before but it is not now as our time will come soon, it will be destiny.’

The boys kept insisting there was something creepy and weird about that note she left and it wasn’t that she just used me but like she knew these words were a little haunting and knowing they would leave me more than eager to repeat the night’s lovemaking with bated-breath, until her call ... then I remembered one small hitch in the plan; she didn’t have my number!

“Did you see her eyes? They were black, black as the ace of spades!” Jerry nodded to Steevo’s observation and it was like the weird note had changed all their approval of my punching above my bar sexual encounter height to simply analyze Natasha to be some sort of weirdo sex fiendish freak! I found this too weird, as they would all jump into her knickers (or lack of, confirming here) if they had half the chance!

I changed the subject to the bigger problem I had just inherited - my bet win and loss!

“You know I’m not a killer! Shooting a pig with a gun is fucking stupid!” I was doing my best to plead my way out of this nightmare. I had never been hunting on any of their trips; it was the one WILD Dog’s thing I wasn’t into; they could shove hunting up their hunting arses!

“You’re fucking coming Jay Jnr!” Jerry ordered with a finger point, touching the tip of my nose from across the table. Billy was sitting beside

me and he grabbed me around the neck and kissed my head, then chucked in his 2 cents worth.

“The bloody smell of a dead pig all over your clothes and in your lovely long red hair ... oh, it’s gonna be so good!” Billy then smelt my breath, double checked the smell and then the dirty prick announced,

“Ah, is that Natasha? - ‘cause I smell ... Breakfast of Champions!” The bastards all cheered and I gave in and protruded my tongue with a wiggle. I was fucked then as they all did their chant ‘woof woofs’ with the tomato juices banging on the table, finished off with a unified moon howl by all ... so I joined them - *Fuck it!* I love these stupid juvenile pricks!

*

Not quite déjà vu

A good month had passed by and I accepted I would never see Natasha again. Our Saturday night Malone's routine was never broken, and you were guaranteed it was the place you were more than likely to find us, hanging off a round bar table. With the equal amount of Guinness spilled on our shoes, as consumed (well it looked like it).

I looked out for her every Saturday, waiting in trepidation but she never showed, so the truth of it being nothing but a simple one night stand.

"5 weeks and counting ... buddy boy!" Jerry slapped my back and my shoes wore a little more. He had planned our hunting trip for the weekend over Easter so we could get a full weekend in (including traveling). I will state I wasn't looking forward to it as it gave me the fucking willies, thinking about holding a rifle to shoot a pig or slit its throat with a knife – just barbaric! I held on to my knowledge that I didn't have a gun license, so I could pull this one out of the hat when I was out there, as a last resort. Yet I bet you it wouldn't work in the middle of whoop-whoop, especially with these persistent bastards!

"It'll be fucking awesome ... you'll fucking love it!" Jerry was doing his best to convince me again as the others slapped my back for more beer spills. It was Billy who saw her walk in,

"Hey," he dug me in the ribs, "... look what the cat dragged in over there!"

"Where?" I couldn't see her.

"There," Billy pointed, "... fuckhead!" I was still looking for her as my heart raced, "Over there!" Billy was still pointing towards the end of the bar closest to the entry door. Then my gaze caught her as Natasha had walked straight in and headed straight to the bar to order a drink. I felt a little weird and turned back as if I was questioning myself whether to go over and chat or not? Did she want to avoid me? Paranoia was kicking in hard!

"You're gonna screw her again, aren't you?" asked a very direct Paulie.

“Why? What’s it to you?” I answered the question with a question to divert my obvious answer. Steevo dropped in just to add his bit of disgust,

“Yeah, we want sloppy seconds!” I punched his arm hard and he cowered laughing, but Jerry wasn’t! He was watching her intensely and out of nowhere, made an out of the blue statement.

“I don’t trust that bitch ... something’s wrong with her, you can feel it!”

“Feel what ... your balls? Because they’re not getting sucked tonight, like his ... unless Paulie’s up to the task?” And Paulie’s tongue was out of his mouth in an instance, wide-eyed grimacing at Steevo’s comment. The chauvinistic banter had lightened the moment but Jerry’s mood was unsettling with his attitude towards Natasha, who had just spied us at our usual table; she was heading this way! All stomachs were sucked in and back’s straightened.

“Hey!” Tash reached our table and did a little wave to the boys. Her eyes darted into mine and she whispered, “Can I speak to you alone?” Before touching my arm on the elbow before squeezing it and looked at me without blinking; my eyes had nowhere to go!

“Yeah sure ... at the bar? I need a pint anyway.” And by the time I finished my sentence her arm was locked around mine as we left the W.D. boys at the table. But I did look back to catch Jerry’s last glance as he was shaking his head as if to say – *‘Beware!’*

“I missed you, Jay. I was hoping you’d be here tonight.” Natasha French kissed me and I responded as you would when the hottest girl in the club selects your number.

It was pretty obvious that I was taking her home to my place again. She was stuck on me like Supaglue and let’s face the - truth! A guy like me only ever gets 1 possibly an outstretched 2 sexual encounters of this quality and this was my #1 ... so fuck #2! I was hanging on to this high-class ride as long as I fucking well could grip those reins!

The boys were well-behaved (including Jerry) while Natasha hung with us on my arm. The conversation was minimal and a first for this lot. I wasn’t sure if it was the way she was all over me, or a slight problem

connecting with the boys with her unusually solemn personality. She wasn't much of a smiler either, not that she didn't; it just looked a little too forced or fake! She sure did seem to draw attention with those long white legs of hers in those skin-tight black leather shorts and how tall was she? I was 6ft but she must be at least 2 inches taller, add on a pair of 5-inch high-heeled stilettos and she towers above most of the men in here, especially Paulie the short-arse, down there at 5 foot 2 inches. It was clear as mustard that she had ominous intimidation over males.

Natasha went to powder her nose and Paulie whacked me on the back with his congratulation speech,

“Man she is fucking hot tonight, you lucky prick! Why those legs ... oh boy! All the way up there to her arse - phew!” He was shaking his open right hand.

“Watch yourself Jay Jnr ... she's not normal, psycho or something? Can't put my finger on it!” Jerry was suss on Tash from the very first moment but the other boys as I, thought he was losing his fucking mind – *psycho?* Where the fuck did that come from? She was calm natured, almost an understated non-personality type. Maybe he put it down to the old saying – *‘it's the quiet ones you have to watch!’*

We cabbled it to my place, a small upstairs/downstairs, unit dark brown brick 2 bedrooms, with Samual the next door neighbor's cat waiting at my front door for his expected Sunday early morning, drunken scratch on the head. I paid the driver and got out shutting the taxi door, she was all over me instantly and I could smell pussy (and it wasn't Samual), and it was wet and wanting. I was hard as a jack-hammer ready for a good night's roadwork ahead of me. We made it to the front door and as I shuffled through my jeans pockets for my keys, Samual was just sitting wavering his tail in front of the security door.

“Hi, Samual pussycat, come here, boy.” He walked towards me but it was like something had given him the hee bee jee bees and he flared up at Natasha, hissing with his ginger hairs on his back raised!

“What the Fuck!” I jumped back from his first swipe and the little bugger took another swipe at us both, hissed and then pissed off over the fence. I’d never seen him like that before, he was always super-friendly; Nat spoke,

“I hate cats and they hate me!” She swung around and pressed her body face to face with mine, followed by grabbing me by the arse with both her hands and squeezing. She stuck her tongue down my throat, it tasted of Guinness.

We only made it to the lounge room this time and we screwed on the lounge, the floor, and even the coffee table; it was out of this world! Inside her body was like a sexual awakening for me; it was heavenly! The sex was way more intense this time and I wasn’t missing a second of it, savoring every blow and every taste. Locking them all safely away in my memory wank bank.

After an hour or so we made it upstairs to the bedroom but my body was getting depleted and drained, while Tash was like a demon-possessed, wanting it hard and fast so I kept feeding her desire with the little I had left. By this time Natasha was doing a lot of the work herself while I just laid back and provided the necessary equipment required. The bed was swirling as I was drifting downwards to total exhaustion and then I felt her bite me ... and she drew blood!

“I’m so sorry!” Natasha was apologetic as she had crossed the line alright, it fucking hurt! I grabbed a tissue to stop the bleeding as she sat on the bed with her face on her knees in a naked fetal position.

“It’s cool!” I lied - it wasn’t fucking cool at all!

“I’d better go,” Tash was uncomfortable, “I’m so sorry! I never meant to ...” – and within a fleeting minute, grabbed her clothes, bag, shoes, and left while I was still holding my neck; it throbbed like all fucking hell!

I made my way to the bathroom to inspect the damage and what I saw shocked the fuck out of me! As I was looking in the mirror I could clearly see that there were 2 tiny puncture holes an inch apart, amongst another huge love bite on the right side of my neck. I don’t know why I laughed but I did? Was it because of Jerry’s unsettling psychotic warning or because my subconscious started putting 2 and 2 together about Natasha’s accent,

her milky white night tan, and a neck bite, all equalling to a Transylvanian vampire. Now, who was going fucking crazy?

After sleeping off my sexual drained depletion back to the land of the living, I had regained enough time and energy to join the boys for breakfast ... but I never made it!

The Sunday morning news was on the tele as I drank my 1st coffee and the headline made me lose my legs. So I sat in the doorway and read the story about the body found murdered at the back of Malone's, a 28-year-old unidentified male with his throat bitten out by what they suspected was an animal of some description; a big animal! I just sat there fixated on the story reading it over and over trying my best to not let my mind take me where it was pushing and forcing its way straight to – *Natasha*.

Could this even be possible? But my mind was accepting as much as it was refusing, totally splitting it down the center! Was my fantasy reality or vice versa?

A murder was reality, so I finally chose and did my best to accept the rational reason and not the supernatural one.

*

Bad news spreads fast

“Have you read the fucking news?” Paulie was on the other end on his mobile. Of course, I had and I daren’t tell him my crazy thoughts so I listened, “They said it was an animal! What fucking animal? Lions and tigers roaming loose in the shithole place? Wanna go hunting?” He chuckled and added, “Just doesn’t fucking add up! Anyway, what’s your piss-weak excuse for not turning up at breakfast?”

“Sorry mate, too hard a night on the bones ... especially one!” I made an attempt at a joke and it seemed to work.

“Jerry didn’t come either, both hopeless pricks! I rang him he said he’s feeling tired ... poor baby! I don’t know you two must be getting ready for the retirement home? I suppose getting your dick sucked earns you a little leeway.”

‘Ahh, gee thanks, Paulie.’ I thought but it at least made me smile. Paulie did all the talking, “Oh yeah Steevo told me to pass on he thinks you’re a dead set fucking legend for pulling Natasha again and said to tell you he’s claiming highway robbery as you stole his \$50 unfairly! He wants his fucking money back!” We both laughed.

The call ended and admitted I was unsettled. I couldn’t deny somehow I had been the feeling of being chosen as a loser and not a winner. My bones shuddered as Samual rubbed against my legs begging me for a head scratch and a stroke.

*

Time heals

I believed common sense returned to me over the next few weeks in regards to my crazy mind-driven allegations towards Natasha and my vampire conspiracy theory, but not at first! I contracted a strange flu after our last night together that knocked me for a sixer – bedridden in feverish flushes of night-terrors and cold seats. I was hallucinating in the midst of the fever which didn't do much to help my paranoia, dreaming of us making love just as her vampire teeth suddenly appear, blood lusting and thirsty as my neck gets ripped apart! I had this horrendous vision 3 times in my week of unrest.

Time does eventually heal strange thoughts and wounds. Day by day I had been scouring the newspapers or watching every TV report for any more murders in our local vicinity. I was hoping to prove my sanity but in the end, I would only confirm what I suspected, I was suffering from a crazy delusional paranoia from my illness. The truth was – it was a one-off random attack leading to death and no such thing as vampires!

The mind-numbing button pressing of the steel fabrication plant gave my vacant mind plenty of time to drift to the wanting of Natasha, just to feel her again, smell her and taste her ... please.

*

The hunt

“Grab the fucking Pig!” and Jerry’s hunting dog - BIG-dog, had it by the neck while Jerry shot it right between the eyes; the pig went down. I was wondering how much more of this I could take? It wasn’t what you would call – my cup of tea.

“These mossies are driving me fucking nuts! My boots are soaked ... this is fucked!” I whinged openly as I smacked another mosquito on my arm but my complaining was hitting deaf ears out here, especially with these fucking heartless turds. The mixture of mud and socks felt disgusting in my boots as the smell of the bore’s shit covered carcass.

“Suck it up, dickhead! You won the bet and this was the deal now so you’re shooting the next fucker we see, okay!” Jerry forced me to grab a leg of his kill as we dragged it to the truck. Steevo and Billy helped us to lift it up and onto the tray as BIG-dog bounced around jumping in for a nip or 2 as if to make sure his job was done correctly and the fucker was actually dead.

Paulie started his 4wd as Jerry, Steevo, and I regained our positions on the tray’s cross-bar with Steevo controlling the attached spotlight. BIG-dog was still sniffing the dead pig’s arse behind us as we sipped our cans of now warm beer, while Billy jumped in the passenger side of the cab; we were off again!

I looked up at the moon and it was a full blue one tonight and Jerry shoved the 22 in my hand.

“Now keep your aim straight, steady and don’t fucking panic! Just take him down before he rips your leg open, oh he will if he gets half a chance and don’t shoot BIG-dog!” Jerry whacked my back then lied, “It’s easy!”

I felt his reassuring hand in the middle of my back as he held on the barrel guiding my aim, then the prick whacked me – hard! He scared the shit of me and I accidentally fired one off into the darkness.

“Fucken’ Hell!” Steevo yelled as both he and Jerry jumped at the misfire then they laughed like it was the best ever joke!

I never got to shoot a pig for what happened next was totally out of control.

BIG-dog smelt something in the air and was off like a rocket into the darkened bushes. Jerry was first off the truck and sprinted into the darkness after him. Steevo had me by the collar dragging me as fast as I could run but this pig was moving fast. He turned his head at me as we ran side by side screaming,

“We can’t let the fucker get to the water!” Billy had jumped on the back and taken over on the spotlight duties doing his best to lighten a path for us, while Paulie was closing in behind us.

I could hear Jerry up ahead screaming at me to get there quick with the gun. Darkness was engulfing us now as we drifted from the spotlight’s strength and then we heard it! It was BIG-dog and his hunt bark had changed to a pained whimper, followed by a yelp ... and then that was it! I fired the rifle into the air breaking the silence.

We found BIG-dog dead, lying next to Jerry who was doing his best to stop his own bleeding, he had been bitten on the neck!

“Fuck! Fuck, it killed BIG-dog! What was that? Fuck!” Jerry was frantic as Steevo dove into first aid mode and ripped his shirt sleeve into a compression bandage and wrapped it around Jerry’s neck.

“What the fuck happened?’ asked Paulie who was last to reach us.

Yet I knew, I fucking knew! But how did she track us down, out here, where we were? My skin crawled; she was stalking us!

“I didn’t see any fucking thing! I’m telling you, wasn’t a pig, but it was big!” Jerry told us, as Steevo did his best to pad the wound as he shakily continued, “I just heard BIG-dog grab it but that was it! I got here and he was already dead! Have a look, he’s been ripped apart!” We all looked at BIG-dog again, doing our best to digest that he had been torn in two! Jerry continued, “Then out of friggin’ nowhere – whammo, fucking got me! My fucking throat! Telling you, it was fast as fuck and big as or even bigger

than me!” Jerry held his head down wiping away the tears for his faithful hunting companion.

We helped Jerry back to the truck where we dressed his wounds with the proper first aid kit the boy’s had brought for such emergencies, but such as this emergency – A vampire bite? My mind spun in a spiraling mess! We inspected his neck and the bleeding hadn’t eased off at all and it was definitely a bite, quite a ferocious looking wound, and needed stitches and possibly a shot; we needed to get him to the hospital! You definitely could see teeth marks had torn or more like ripped the flesh in the attack.

My senses were working overtime when I remembered. I’d fired the shot and believed this possibly had startled Natasha, before she finished her kill, ripping her fangs in Jerry’s neck carelessly.

I wondered if she was still here somewhere lurking in the darkness. As I looked at the haunting blue moon and feared she was watching us from the shadows. We all got into the Toyota’s cabin to get the fuck out of this bad dream ... and my 1st hunting trip was over.

*

Wounds heal

Jerry's neck healed quickly and way quicker than the doctor's expectations and he seemed in good health and with only the minimum of scarring. I was waiting for him to get that strange flu I had, but again time healed my unreasonable paranoia – he didn't get it! Thank god my common sense returned.

After many discussions, we all agreed (even Jerry) that it must have been an oversized razorback that caused the end of our little hunting trip and BIG-dog's premature blood-crazed death and my return to paranoia. It was the logical explanation that surfaced to all agree on, as we found no evidence to suggest otherwise.

My own wound had healed and with my mind back in the right path all I could think of, was Natasha; I wanted her so bad! It was like as soon as my head cleared away my traces of vampire accusations then sensible reason would take control over my emotions and allow my heart and lust to yearn and wallow for her. I wanted to find her but I had no idea how? It was like she had just disappeared off the face of the planet.

So I would wait patiently week by week for her to find me as I remembered the one word that had burnt into the hollows of my soul, - Destiny!

*

Third time lucky?

A month had passed since the hunting trip and as usual, we were drinking our Saturday night at Irish Malones, pints in hand - when she walked in.

“Psycho bitch alert!” Jerry looked down not happy and I couldn’t believe he still harbored something against her. He just didn’t like her!

“Man look at her fucking body!” Steevo was frowning but in a leering way.

She looked amazing in red – blood red! She was wearing a full-length red spider web tight-fitting dress with a low-cut front, revealing most of her milky firm tits and belly-button ring. Her long luscious legs were barely covered with the splits on both sides that left minimal to my imagination. I already knew what hidden mystery was underneath; it wasn’t red – it was pink! Her shoes were black stilettos and must’ve been 6 to 8 inches high. She was hauntingly beautiful with a red rope headband that held her long dark hair back which finished off the matching outfit. She was on fire and sent straight from the flames of Hell.

I had to see her NOW! So I made my way to her at the bar as she was opening her matching red glomesh clutch purse for her first Guinness. I tapped her on the shoulder, not sure if I was to see her jump at me or punch me or ... bite my neck!

“Jay,” and she hugged me so tight, “I was hoping you’d be here. I’ve missed you.” Her soulless eyes found mine and I was hypnotized by them, as they found their way to my pulsating heart. Her turning up here tonight and this actual meeting topped off by her words was a huge relief – a fucking huge relief!

Jerry was pissed that she was back and left early using some piss-poor excuse about not feeling the best but the other boys seemed genuinely happy to see her. Not that they said much! But it was the most comfortable they all had been together.

Natasha smelt amazing and I felt myself rise every time she’d hug me or squeeze one of my butt-cheeks. I wanted her so bad and I knew I would have her again very soon!

We had foreplay in the back car park an hour later in a dark unlit corner of the driveway and the danger of getting caught was even more exciting; we gave each other oral!

It was quick and hard and we were back in the club before anyone actually missed us. They thought we went outside for a smoke and a chat – *wrong!*

“So I need your number, Tash!” Natasha hand gestured for my phone, so I pulled my mobile from my pocket to type her number in. She took it from my hands and typed her number under – ‘Tash’ and handed my Galaxy back to me. I aimed it at her to take a photo and she quickly grabbed it out of my grip and shook her head in disapproval,

“I hate photos, no photos!’ Her face was actually aggressive looking so I agreed by nodding and put the phone back in my back pocket after she was convinced I wouldn’t try again. Steevo and Billy were at the bar but Paulie had witnessed it and his face looked as confused as mine. She was hot so what was wrong with a pic? I didn’t have any hard evidence of my luckiness in lust - I just wanted some!

“Listen, Jay, I have to go ... sorry to leave but I’ve got an early start.”

Tash kissed me and said goodbye to the boys who had finally got served at the crowded bar. She left almost immediately while I was shell-shocked! It had all happened so fast!

“Well, that was fucking strange!” Paulie stated with a pained expression on his dial.

“I’ll second that nomination.” Billy held his hand up in the air as if he was back in grade 2. I wanted to say something but I had nothing to say. Seriously, what was there to say?

The night was dragging and even the W.D. Boys humor was wearing thin and pointless so I decided to leave early.

I text Natasha on the way home to ensure she got my number as well and to see if it was her actual number, as I had a feeling she was blowing me off for some ungodly reason. But to my surprise, her text reply was instant and personal, -

'Sex was gr8 call u 2moro should be free.'

Suddenly my night had returned to hope and not despair as I rode home in the taxi reliving my dark alley ordeal.

I was nearly home and looking out of the back passenger window when I saw her getting into a hailed down cab to shut the door and take off. My heart sank as it was an hour after she had left and this was at least 5 Kilometers from the pub. I was looking at the disappearing cab with Tash inside and I couldn't fathom any reason to why she was here or at this time.

I stepped up to my front security door and inserted my key into the deadlock while Samual was in his usual spot between my drunken legs meowing his happy melancholy cat greeting; he made me smile!

After kicking off my shoes I poured myself a scotch and sat on the lounge with Samual. I was in shock doing my best to analyze and insert reason into the equation. I sat there with the mobile in my hand with the questionable message ready to send but I couldn't, I had no right too! So I let it ride, deleted it and went to bed.

The mix of alcohol, sex, and confusion made it hard for me to sleep for more than an hour or 2, just tossing around while my mind went over and over and refused my heart's request to accept it was all innocent and above board. But in the end, I did sleep a little.

*

Revealing truths?

“You look like fuckin’ shit!” You would’ve thought that Paulie was talking to me (after my night’s lack of sleep) but he was talking to Jerry as he sipped on his Devil’s juice at café 666. “Actually, you both look like fuckin’ shit!” Paulie corrected himself and I gave him today’s – ‘obvious award’ for his astute observation skills so I replied,

“And you look like a wanker!” I know it wasn’t a mind-blowing comeback but at least it got a laugh from Jerry and Steevo.

“Fuck you! You two pussies left early and who are the two sitting here looking like crap? Yeah, you two!” Steevo laughed and gave us a middle finger each; we chuckled too!

Only a minute later Jerry jumped up out of his chair and ran to the closest garden bed and threw up until we all screamed, “Pussy!” as he’d vomited before his breakfast had even arrived - not after! But he just kept vomiting ‘til it was nothing but air; a good 5 minutes of dry retching! It put me off the eggs so I got away from the plate of grease and to give Jerry a bit of support. I put my hands, one on each of his shoulders as he was crouched over and then I saw his neck. It was a love bite! I freaked out and I put the 2 and 2 together again and it all added up; he had slept with Natasha!

“You cunt!” I had the prick by the throat while Paulie and Steevo were there in a flash grabbing one of my arms before Paulie dragged Jerry from my death grip!

“What are you fucking talking about?” Jerry frowned at me but his sly-dog eyes were guilty. He was guilty - I fucking knew he was!

“You screwed her, didn’t you? Natasha ... you screwed her!” I was yelling at the top of my voice as the boys were doing their best to turn down and lower my level 10 back to a normal 3. Paulie was apologizing to the other patrons who had just witnessed vomiting, aggression, and obscenities all in between their bacon, eggs, and coffee.

The boys dragged us both out of there to settle this in the car park.

I started by pushing him in the chest first and accusing,

“You both fucked after she left, didn’t you?”

“You’re fucked in the head cunt, I went straight home. I don’t even like that strange bitch!” Jerry had his face in mine now and his sickness was gone as he was ready to shape up to me.

“What’s that on your neck then?” I whacked him on his love bite.

“What drugs are you on prick? Thought you’ve been fucking losing it lately ... this fucking proves it!” Jerry turned his neck and all I could see was his healed scar from the hunt with 2 purple/red burst blood vessels from his original wound but there were no fang or teeth incision holes!

I froze as he pushed me with both hands against my chest hard unbalancing me, followed by him turning away, storming off, and cursing at the top of his voice. The boys were standing in my way in case I was about to make a chase for him.

I was so confused! I had seen that love bite - I swear I did! Suddenly I felt sick and it was my turn, as I vomited and Paulie’s thongs got in the way – both of them including the bare feet in them.

*

The call

Sunday night I was home alone watching some David Attenborough documentary on the tele about man-eaters that I wasn't really paying that much attention to, until the lion mating habits and the male challenge of the lioness' came on – and I thought of those two yet again; it was too hard to get out of my mind.

My Galaxy rang; it was Tash!

“Jay!” Natasha's voice was chirpy but my instincts were buzzing this was a cover-up bullshit tone if ever I'd heard one! “So what are you doing?” Tash asked still sounding completely innocent.

“Just watching a show on lions.” My tone wasn't as chirpy as hers.

“Are you okay?” even Tash could tell I wasn't, “Do you want a visitor?”

“Look ... I know you and Jerry fucked!” And there it was out there and I didn't give a rat's arse!

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Tash's voice was now not-so chirpy, more of a shaky tone. “Why would you say such a horrible thing?” now she was pissed; mission accomplished! So why didn't I feel better as I had pictured in my mind? Natasha didn't even give me chance to answer. “I can't believe you'd think that! I don't even like Jerry I think he's a fucking dog!” Her accent and tone had escalated to a much angrier sounding one; she wasn't staying in one emotion for very long! Then she stated sternly, “I'll be over soon!” Tash hung up. Now, who was shitting themselves?

I was pacing the floor before she arrived as I had no idea what to say or how to explain my behavior but I was sure I was going to get it, with both loaded barrels!

Tash knocked 3 times softly which I instantly assumed as a better sign than 3 loud angry knocks. On opening the door I could see her face through the security door - and she'd been crying. I felt like a royal bastard now as she looked like a sad little girl, lost.

“Can I come in ... please?” obviously I welcomed her in with a whispered two words,

“Of course.” This was the first time I had seen her without any makeup

and with tears in her no-eyeliner eyes, and the first time I saw a vulnerable girl with emotions; I melted as quick as an ice-cream at the beach!

“I’m sorry.” I apologized before any other words were spoken and just looking at her distraught face turned me to jelly; I knew I’d been a dumb prick!

“I never ... I never ...” Tash did her best to speak but her red eyes made me just hug her and she let me. So I held her as she sobbed.

We sat together on the couch with a bourbon each as I confessed to seeing her an hour after leaving so she explained,

“The first cabbie was a fucking pig! He was really crude to me and he made me feel uncomfortable ... like he was leering at me ... I just didn’t feel safe so I made him drop me off on Granger road.”

It made me feel like a jealous paranoid idiot when she explained that she waited for another half an hour, alone in the dark for her 2nd booked taxi to arrive.

Was I a sucker or not? What about the other questions to ask? Why didn’t she come back to the club or ring me for help? What was her actual job that required an early start? But having her with me here at this moment in time just seemed so right and I would delete all those bad thoughts I had lived with for the past 24 hours and replace them with a few good hours of Tash.

We made love this night, not hardcore sex as the last time. It was way more passionate and intimate. I fell asleep before her just as 99% of males always do! I promised her I would treat her to my *A la carte* scrambled eggs in the morning.

My alarm went off at 5.30 am and I awoke alone again; she was gone! A note left on the coffee table as before, thanking me for a great night. I felt cheated and it was like I was only getting what she wanted to give me and not a speck more; she had me by the balls!

Work was waiting for me while I downed my coffee after my usual Weet-Bix, not scrambled eggs for breakfast. I went to turn off the radio to

leave when the 6.00 o'clock headlines came on.

A taxi driver was found murdered in his cab on Granger Road, half a mile from where I saw Tash's 2nd cab with undisclosed details, but the report said he was found by teenagers and they were being counseled; it was apparently a bloodbath!

*

Sickness

I never made it to work, as I suspected I was sleeping with the town murderer - a fucking vampire! And I felt sick to the stomach! It just all added up - the bite, the leaving before daylight and what about the no taking photos. I needed proof! Garlic was a good one! I wished I'd looked to see if she had a reflection in the mirror as this would've been easy proof! All I needed was something to prove that I wasn't out of my mind! But I was a bloke and I only own 1 mirror and it sits above my bathroom sink screwed to a cabinet, and who hates garlic! There was never any in my house - ever!

Natasha did her best to call me or text but I never answered once. After 6 days her late-night texting to no reply, I received her final one with her surrender to our relationship –

'Don't understand but I accept it's over, take care x'. And that was the last I heard from her, and she never came around either.

Doctor Zimmerman originally gave me a whole week off work and a prescription for antidepressants which did nothing, but only help me accept I was going crazy! They just didn't work for me, giving me some sort of paradox reaction. After 3 weeks and still off work, I ditched them. He believed I was suffering from depression but I wasn't convinced as that strange arse flu hit me again. My concern was, I was turning.

My color was grey and my eyes were dark and baggy. I could've sworn my hair was greasy, thinning and receding into a high forehead Christopher Lee - Dracula style as well! I kept checking my eye teeth in the mirror for growth before my reflection disappeared totally.

I was afraid I would need to eat soon and fear was consuming me for I didn't want to kill anyone, especially my friends!

I hadn't seen the boys in over 3 weeks and I was ignoring their calls as well; I wanted to be alone! How could I explain my sickness to them?

Jerry and I hadn't spoken since the car park argument yet it was him that came to see me first on Saturday night, instead of being with the boys.

"You look like shit!" Jerry's screwed face was awkward as I handed him his coffee. We were mates and that was stronger than our argument.

"I feel like fucking shit man!" My head was down and he patted my back,

"Where the fuck have you been? The boys have been worried, like me!" Jerry sipped his hot mocha after dipping in his Tim Tam and biting the head off.

Chit chat was light with boy talk about meaningless topics such as who was leading in the footy comp or general shit in the news. I knew it was coming, there was no way we would be able to avoid the Tash issue. And I still had to ask him of what I truly believed.

"You did fuck her didn't you?" I raised my eyes to look at him directly. He never said a word but diverted his eyes out of the front door to the night sky as Samuel meowed for me to let him in, so I did.

"Look, man, I didn't! You're my best mate, and I agree she's fucking hot but," I interrupted his sentence,

"I'm a vampire you know, she turned me into a vampire!" It was time to tell someone the whole truth as I shut the security door behind Samuel's upright tail before it got stuck in between the frame and the door.

"You're what?" his attention turned back to me and he smiled, "You're a vampire? Well, I must be a fucking werewolf, you crazy fuck!" He lost it and laughed but I never.

I knew it would be too much to digest at once as I lowered my head. The prick didn't take me seriously and made a joke of it!

"Well, I've got a confession too!" Jerry spoke and was looking rather serious.

Then Jerry showed me his dog-like fingernails ... and he wasn't lying about being a werewolf!

Lonewolf

Tell me, tell me, what's this all about?
Waking in cold sweats, drowned in doubt
Eradicate the history, repeating inside
No place to run, no place to hide

There's a Lonewolf hanging 'round my front door?

**Beware baby he stalks his prey on all fours
Moon's shining brightly while his sin pours in
Feel the hairs on your chinny chin chin**

Makes no sense, analyze the illusion
Skeletons in the closet create confusion
Masticate the metaphor, bad dreams aren't real
Darkness unveils he's ready for the kill

There's a Lonewolf hanging 'round my front door?

**Beware baby he stalks his prey on all fours
Moon's shining brightly while his sin pours in
Bloodlust eyes want your soul to swim**

Find me a cure and make me so pure
Find me a potion to put in slow motion
Please show me slow motion,
Yeh show me slow motion

Load your gun with shiny silver bullets
Take him down and drag me through it
Eliminate this mystery, triggered in my veins
One bloodied bite, transfused and stained

**There's a Lonewolf hanging 'round my front door?
Beware baby he stalks his prey on all fours
Moon's shining brightly while his sin pours in
Chains of love loosened by evil within**

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Dark Lust - Into the Night

Part 2

Full moon

The full moon shined its rays through my front window and it hit me like a brick as the beams caressed Jerry's roughened and the stubble upon his face. It was exactly a month since the cabbie murder and a month before that - the hunting incident and Jerry's strange neck wound; it was a werewolf attack on a full moon! I had poor Natasha nailed to the cross when in fact it was my best friend and not my lover who was the real monster!

He was a werewolf and as they do, he was changing!

Jerry changed quite rapidly not like any of those slow changing werewolf movie (not that special effect shit). It was like he was a man one moment bent over and re-stood up as a beast in a man's clothing with his chest expanding as his arms and fingers lengthened. His claws were of a big cat, not a wolf's, as his forehead frowned with those yellow moonlight eyes, piercing the moonlit as his dog ears listened to all. His jawed had propelled forward enough to now house a set of jagged 2-inch pointed teeth with the top palate of his jaw overhanging the shorter bottom one. Jerry's wolf saliva was dripping on my carpet as I backed towards the kitchen and he spoke in a much deeper voice, not sounding like him at all.

"I did fuck her that night ... she was fucking good too!" The werewolf had now expended Jerry fully and he ripped his too tight shirt open to expose his muscle-bound, hair-covered chest as he howled to his new moonlight; it was terrifying!

My instincts were to run but I was trapped by the security doors at the

front and back doing the exact opposite of their designated duty and locked the baddies in - not out! I had retreated to the kitchen quickly as my best mate Samual came out of nowhere hissing and like a male lion needing to protect his pride. He pounced on the werewolf's back, scratching and biting like it was the cat-fight of his life! The beast swung around reaching blindly for its tiny attacker behind its head, doing its best to grab the biting and scratching feline. And then the wolf found his mark and poor Samual was in his wolf/cat-like hand, it dragged him to his front and bit my little protector's head clean off, only to spit it on my lounge room floor! It threw the body as well to its right, making it bounce off the unit's plaster wall leaving poor Samual's bloody death-print as a simple reminder who was in charge here.

Panic was taking over me as I was dizzy and wasn't sure if it was shock or my illness returned and then I remembered my illness ... I was a vampire, wasn't I?

Then it was like a wave of my acceptance took me under, deep down swishing me back and forth for I knew I wasn't a vampire just as Natasha wasn't. All I was, was a very sick little puppy who used this as an excuse, to cover my delusional paranoia and now had a real life-threatening monster in his unit, closing in for its kill.

*

The turning

The werewolf found his way to the kitchen and I was boxed in between the oven and the pantry cupboard so I prayed for a quick death. I knew my time had come as there was no way I could fight the wolf and win. I moved back as far as I could, heedlessly reaching for any sort of weapon and my left hand found a kitchen blade sitting on the sink drainer tray. I kept moving back, further back. I was waiting to hit the dead-end trap of the wall, but I seemed to still be moving; I was on the wall - high on the wall! I dropped the knife!

It was impossible but I was above the beast as it jumped to grab me but the double story loft ceiling had me safely out of its claws. I went higher to where the wall and the ceiling met above the staircase. My heart beat fast and I could hear everything clearly, and it was intense!

The sickness was gone, completely gone! For now, I felt strong, incredibly strong! And I could feel my fangs in my mouth as my eyes viewed everything in vivid color. I could smell all and I could smell Tash, I could taste her and I licked my lips. We were one and in sync now and Jerry's werewolf lied to me! He never did sleep with her. I heard her voice within my head and she had heard mine and it was - truth.

I now knew for sure I was a vampire, no delusions, no paranoia but the unadorned fact and she had chosen me.

The wolf could smell me too and I knew it had come under Jerry's disguise to kill me - the vampire, as it could smell my disgusting linger a mile off! It had smelt Natasha too at the club and the reason Jerry had left early that night, not to screw her but to get as far away from her vampire stench; he knew the truth first! He was howling and still jumping at me when I heard a voice at the front door; it was Paulie! He was frozen solid and made his one sole life-threatening mistake by not knocking on my door but opening the unlocked screen door, before entering. He had opened the security door to let himself in as he always did, opening the doorway to his forthcoming death!

The werewolf had now drawn its attention onto Paulie's smell from mine and ran to the front entry and with a precipitous movement, had Paulie off the ground by the throat, gritting its fangs, growling at him.

Paulie was crying and in shock and I had to do something for my best friend so I harnessed my anger to rise from its graveyard, as I thrust my body at the beast. I flew through the air hitting it with such force that Jerry's creature stumbled and hit the wall. My instinctual reflex was to sink my fanged teeth straight into his hand, to force him to let Paulie go; it worked! Paulie hit the ground and scrambled to hide behind the couch, as the powerful wolf grabbed with his right grip, forcing me before throwing me, only to hit the parallel wall, smashing my wall unit as the plasma tele fell to the floor; it sparked and died! The wolf raced at me and grabbed my neck with both hands this time as it pulled and pushed me against the wall unit, smashing the unit to smithereens. I gouged the beast's face with my now inch long razor nails and it drew blood.

Paulie was shaking in the background but my only concern was to kill this beast. But the beast was too strong! By now he had me pinned to the floor and with all the power of darkness inside, I thrust my energy upwards and we both flew to hit the lower ceiling of the lounge area, smashing the textured mortar with a force from beyond the grave.

"Hey, Sexy! Can I join this party?" I looked downwards as I had the beast trapped between my body and the damaged mortar of the ceiling; it was Tash! Standing in the doorway casually, one hand on each side of the door frame. It occurred to me, the old rule - Vampires always need to be invited and I had revoked her invitation!

"Come on in Natasha Viorica Romanescu ... you are always welcome!" suddenly I felt the strength of 2 as I knew her history and I knew she was born a vampire at the age of 21 in the streets of Romania, back in 1852. I could see her history, all of it. I could see her on the tall ship as she wiped out most of them to feed nightly before arriving in England in 1895. Her trip on the Boeing 747 in 1976 where she drank the blood of an innocent, not killing, only draining and hypnotizing her subject to sleep it off. Her sleeping in the darkness of the coffin on the plane as the daylight burnt away her day/nights, only awakening once to feed. The many she had drunk from and killed across the sands of time, so many! All these memories of hers were mine and were within my mind in a split second; we were one! Natasha blew me a kiss, entered and shut and locked the front door behind her. She casually walked over to the window and

adjusted the Venetian blind to a closed position, so there would be no witnesses of the fury that was to follow. Tash turned and raised her hands to her front summoning her inferno to rise. Her face turned solemn as her eyes turned to murder.

She looked like a wildling from the darkness as her forehead scoured downwards with V-like frowns and her eyes complete with glowing red pupils framed by her now fully black - whites. Her mouth was wide open as she showed off her incisors of death and they weren't small and dainty but large and hooked like a giant cobra's! Her hair was flowing free and seemed to appear to wisp by itself outwards as if there was a fan blowing it backward and then she swooped.

Did she help me? No, I felt her decision! Tash tore poor Paulie's throat with her fangs and drank his blood for pure strength while I still had Jerry pinned to the roof. I screamed as I felt it all,

"Noooo!" I screamed but it was all too late ... and then I smelt the fresh blood and felt the hunger!

Without any words Tash had tag teamed me and held the wolf on the roof while I feasted upon the bloodied warm carcass of Paulie; I had never tasted a sweeter liquid ever! I looked upwards and she blew me a kiss as I smiled in return at the power within, no guilt or shame now, just power and the want to kill! Tash, one-handed, smashed the werewolf's head back and forth into the ceiling as it flailed helplessly against gravity and her colossal power over-ruled any resistance. With one thrust she flung the wolf to the ground and lunged straight on top while screaming a high-pitched banshee scream; it was ear piercing!

The beast threw her off and regained his footing as Natasha casually stood up dusted herself off, straightened her jet black mini-skirt, flicked her hair back and in an overly casual sassy way, arse wiggled over to join me for a warm drink.

"Now you believe I never screwed him!" Natasha Romanescu smiled and we blood kissed in the fires of passion as the beast flew through the air landing on us both. But Natasha was strong and stronger than Jerry, it was like she had been training me like a mother cat with her kitten's first mouse.

Tash swung in a 360 degree off the ground and spun in a superhero

type spin before opening her demon arms wide and thrusting her extended nails into the beast's neck, severing its jugular. She pushed back as the startled wolf went from attack to defense to stop and plug the squirting blood.

As my hunger dissipated my thoughts cleared and my connection to Natasha lessened and my mind saw her responsible for the killings of the two locals; it was my Tash! Of course, it was! Jerry wasn't bitten at the time of the first murder. I, a vampire was chosen to be his first!

The werewolf hit the floor with a thud and his motionless body was limp, as the beast disappeared and Jerry's body returned, morphing almost immediately back to the man and no longer the monster, bloodied and dead.

*

Cry wolf

I could hear the sirens and they were closer. Natasha's face had returned to her beautiful one as she kissed me, placing my hand on her breast. I could feel my hand and it was human not vampire; I had also returned!

I looked at the carnage in my unit, 2 dead bodies, and a dead headless cat; I was fucked!

Natasha didn't say a word. She held up her - *'shush, don't speak baby'* finger, as she stepped backward from our embrace and I watched her change back into her demon self before she grabbed Jerry in her right hand and Paulie's body in her left. Lifting them both as if they were paper! She levitated from the ground with both bodies swaying lifelessly. My gorgeous Natasha then spoke,

"Jay, my precious Jay ... it is not yet our time but it will come." And then like time was spliced away in a handful of seconds - she was gone with the bodies, flying out the front door that was now left wide open.

I fell to the floor as now I felt weak and sick and alone without her strength.

The cops arrived to find me sitting in a huddle holding my head; I was truly scared now!

I had tried my hardest to turn and will myself back into the night creature, to refind my connection with Tash, to leave this hellhole and escape my way back to her. If only I could be with her - forever! But I couldn't, so I accepted she had set me free from her enchanted spell of eternal death.

It was obvious something horrific had happened here. One of the

terrified neighbors had rung the authorities during the fight from the abyss of screams, as they'd heard the banging and destruction taking place.

Before they arrived I went to clean up Paulie and Jerry's blood but that had also disappeared. How ... I couldn't answer that? There was no rational answer! Only poor Samuel's head and body and his imprinted wall-mark in the dry-wall remained as evidence, just as the damage of the mortar ceiling from the wolf's head beating and a smashed wall unit and TV. The cops raced in, guns aimed at me as I sat in the middle of the floor holding my headless best friend, crying.

I wasn't arrested for killing a human but of a domestic cat! Yet the cops weren't pricks. Yes, running in with guns drawn as I said but they could clearly see that I was alone, distressed and a broken mess amongst the disaster area.

But I wondered how long would it be before they'd investigate my unit and find the evidence to prove my role in our murder spree?

They never did find any evidence of Jerry or Paulie in my unit.

*

Ward 9

I was committed to Ward 9 for my mental disorder and put immediately on a shitload of pills and antidepressants to help suppress my delusions. At first, the hallucinations were constant and no one accepted I was a vampire - but me.

Paulie and Jerry had just disappeared off the face of the planet, so I confessed to mine and Natasha's murderous actions of them both, but again I was laughed at, as the delusional crazy cat killer, making up stories about vampires and werewolves. Their bodies hadn't been found so they were both treated as - missing - not murder!

I tried every night to turn but nothing would happen. Meat used to be eaten well-done and now my taste was the opposite. I needed to taste the blood, so blue was now my new preferred order (no garlic). My daily mirror-checks showed no signs of any physical changes at all. Yet I still yearned to be with my Romanian princess - Natasha Romanescu, flying the night skies together, quenching our thirst from the innocent for our eternity of love.

Maybe it was it her half-bite during love-making that hadn't signed off on my lifelong contract with her? But her final comment to me left me with a glimpse of hope that she would return to collect and seal her chosen prize - me.

*

The repair

3 months later I was released to go home as I was well enough now to face the reality of my world. I had accepted the truth; I was delusional!

“So you gonna be alright ... crazy bastard!” Steevo one arm hugged me at my front door as Billy waved from the backseat of the truck.

“Yeah! Appreciate you 2 picking me up! I’m good mate just glad to be home.” We let go as he smiled, slapped my arm and handed me my suitcase. They both left, so at long last I was alone ... I just wanted to be alone.

I walked into the unit and there were still visible signs of a struggle here, as all repairs were still to be completed and I wondered what had really happened that night of Samuel’s death? But I knew I would never know the actual truth! How could I? There was no actual way to sort out the order of my so-called memories. They had tried their best at the clinic to place some in the fantasy box, while others went into the reality box until there were no more to enter the ones I provided. They sealed the boxes shut with my approval. Yet I still had reservations, mainly about that very night but I was well enough to know, I must move on.

*

Blame

Reclusiveness helped me to recover completely (even from the boys), so finally, there were no more delusions and no more vampire fantasies. I never heard from Natasha or the boys; she had vanished for good this time as my existence and membership in the W.D. Boys.

It was a Wednesday night 3 months after my release when I was watching the news and I couldn't believe what I was watching. A decomposed male body had been found in a waste bin dumpster on a vacant property and the police were asking for assistance to identify - him.

My heart sank to the floor as they had confirmed another suspected murder. The report stated the body was unidentifiable and forensics were on the job. I asked myself if this was possibly Jerry or Paulie, but I would never know.

The story also linked the body to another found in the state forest from a month prior (while I was in rehab) with injuries that matched the bite marks of a large animal on the loose murder, from an eon ago.

Suddenly all my fears returned and now I questioned myself as my delusions slammed home as the monkey once again was jumping on my back. But my insane mind was digesting, Natasha Viorica Romanescu the vampire, was very very real!

I heard a knock on my door and I simply waited for them to enter. I knew it wasn't her here to save the day. Thank God! As now I wished to be human again, not a vampire or a killer but a man! I could see the flashing blue light of the squad car; it was the police!

I had made the call, the one that had to be done and confessed to my friend's murders!

Epilogue

Left broken

I have finally chosen to believe that Natasha is real and her commitment that I felt would never abandon me and one-day my true destiny will be fulfilled as a full-blooded vampire by her side with no choice in the matter. What else could I do as I believed there was only one?

So my next chapter of life will be a sad one of an insane cold blooded killer, rotting in jail for hacking his 2 best friends to pieces and then disposing of their lifeless cut-up bodies in the local forest. Who accepts he has lost his mind completely and committed as the criminally insane!

But only time will tell me that true destiny ... so until then, I will pray and wait as I am assessed here in this asylum only to be confirmed as either sane or insane. Yet I know the truth of what I actually am is classed as simply ... broken.

Walking the Zombie

Wake up dead, light a smoke
Jug's been boiled, burn the toast
Shower's hot, mind's still numb
Down a coffee, kickstart the run

Look in the mirror, unruly hair
3-day growth can really scare
Bloodshot eyes, grit your teeth
The living dead or still asleep?

What happened to the energy?

Now I'm waking the Zombie

How'd I'd become the walking dead?

Walking with the Zombies

Story 3

Cruise of a Deathtime

Prologue - Bloodstains

Ziggy held – *Bloodstain*, his vintage '70s Flying V close to his chest, huddled in the corner of his cabin as he reflected back on the time, he handed over the cash and walked out of the music shop with her in that leather-bound Gibson guitar case. She screamed like a banshee in his hands through his Marshall, she was his only true love at the time and now it all came down to this.

“Oh well here goes nothing, win some, lose some!” He spoke to himself as he stood up slowly opening his cabin’s door.

*

Welcome aboard you lucky souls

It was only 3 months earlier that the band – ‘Tattooed Souls’ thought their luck had finally turned for the better.

“Fuckin’ awesome!” yelled little Suzi Q (Susan Watford) as she was bouncing around the rehearsal room banging her floor tom with her hands, shaking that fit little arse of hers while wildly flicking that waist length blonde hair. T Rex (Tommy Rexson) had begun starting to read out their surprise letter to them about scoring the gig of a lifetime playing covers, as the resident band on the entertainment cruise ship - *Carnivore*. None of them had ever expected T Rex to actually be capable of pulling this one off. Yes, he was a good singer but he wasn’t a great manager; this was a biggie!

Ziggy (Siegfried Bolton) placed Bloodstain on the guitar stand. She was solid mahogany, deep blood red nitro varnish, see-through enough to see the grain of her glorious wood that lay beneath and that is where she got her apt name from.

“So when do we leave?” questioned Ziggy while he lit a cigarette, scratching his motley locks.

“In 2 weeks ... the 13th, Friday.” T Rex grinned as he answered, proud of his efforts, while Moonie (David Moon) the roadie made a ghostly ‘*wHoOo!*’ sound which made them all laugh and throw inanimate objects of all sorts at him.

Tattooed Souls had been together for 3 long years now and going fucking nowhere quick, they were all sporting their brand new matching Tattooed Souls tats on the biceps except Suzi Q who proudly wore hers exposed high on her left breast. It was a logo of the band’s name in the coolest looking font Ziggy had designed with a cracked headstone sitting behind their chosen font. They truly needed this gig as with more rehearsals than gigs under their belt, they had nothing to write home

about or to kick-start their careers as musicians. That made it worse as they all had bitten the bullet, sold the little they'd all owned (besides instruments) and left their homeland of Sydney Australia to take their chances in the U.S.A – the land of the free? Nothing's free, they soon found that out!

They weren't even that good (except Ziggy who played guitar) they weren't terrible but just your average run of the mill band that had the hunger and desire to be original and famous but with only two tiny minute problems; lack of experience and their songs were fucking shit! No one in the band could write a half decent enough tune. Oh they had plenty of songs in their book but they all sounded the fucking same or too similar to another band; they would surely end up in court! So they learned covers - a bit of old, bit of new to help with their accepted weaker areas. They had traveled halfway across the fucking world just to be your average run of the mill shitty cover band - and would be 'til their already extended visas ran out and sent them home broke, in another 9 months.

This gig was the biggest break so far and exactly what they all desperately needed, The cracks were starting to materialize and the frustrations of getting nowhere were testing their previous water-tight brotherhood, which worried Ziggy to no end. So hopefully now, the unified tattoos on their bodies and a regular gig then they would tighten the band to no end. With 14 glorious days with 16 glorious gigs to pay (2 Sunday arvo unplugged sessions included) and actually come home with a kitty for recording; now that was a bonus!

It was a remedy and a party wrapped in one big paid-away alcohol-based holiday ... and they all needed it - bad!

Quo (Francis John Lancaster) placed his P-bass on top of Suzi Q's drum cases as he jumped in the back of the van, pulling the van doors shut and they left rehearsals singing at the top of their voices and it was

Freddie, '*We are the (fuckin') champions*' (with only little Suzi Q slipping the extra curse word in between every time the chorus came around.

Cruising from Miami to Bermuda and then down to the Bahamas, now this should have been a dream come true but what started out as a 14-day dream soon became a 3-month nightmare.

*

Stormy weather

It was the 16th and an hour before the band's 3rd gig, the previous 2 had gone off with a good reaction from the passengers and Suzi Q was her usual bouncing enthusiastic self and then started one of her before-gig on-the-spot flows,

"Shit yeah! T-souls are here to rock!

So grab ya tits sisters, brothers grab ya,"

and that's when Moonie jumped in. Just to spoil it,

"Socks! C'mon Mothafuckerrrrrrsssss ... grab ya socks!"

Suzi Q jumped on his back and they both fell over while Moonie had his hands crossed, doing the typical middle finger homie rapper cross pose, rolling over and exposing his usual above-jeans arse crack to all. Everybody was pissing themselves and T Rex jumped on them and decided to add his 2 cents worth and get in on the fun, so he started singing in his screeching heavy metal voice,

"You Motherfuc-c-c-c," Then he halted as he jumped! "What the fuck?" A huge bolt of lightning had interrupted his verse, followed quickly by a clap of thunder that shook the giant boat. Their cabin lit up as if someone had plugged them into the light socket!

"Holy fuck!" laughed Quo as he sat straight up from lying on the bed comatose to fully awake, hitting his head on the bunk above. Moonie and Suzi Q had disembraced from their wrestling position just lying there stunned. Suzi uttered,

"Oh man, that was fucking freaky. Did you see that color of the lightning it was red! I'm sure it was fucking red?"

"Yeah it was fucking red ... blood red," Ziggy agreed and kept replacing the strings on Bloodstain, but he didn't like this feeling at all; it was eerie! He could feel something in the air and it wasn't quite right and then the cabin momentarily filled with total darkness before their emergency lighting flickered on.

“whOoOoo ... the BoOgie Man’s here!” Moonie the fat fucker was at it again as he held his hands over his face, bugged his eyes out, standing under the emergency lighting that sat over the cabin door, doing his best to look like a psychopath, swinging a teaspoon as his weapon and he kept it going for a bit longer by adding the unknown, “wHoOoo, strange storms in the Bermuda Triangle ... just days after we leave land all on Friday 13th ... whoOoo!” Suzi whacked him in the nuts; the joke was fucking over with an agonizing retort from Moonie - especially for her,

“Fuckin’ Mole!”

“Let’s check out what the fuck’s going on.” Ziggy put the half-strung Bloodstain on his bed as his double-finger directed all of them to follow his exit through the cabin door.

The ship was quiet, too quiet for Ziggy’s liking and the rest of them were acting like the juvenile idiots, yahooining and carrying on as they always fucking were and not taking this serious at all ... then they found Molly.

“What the fuck?” screamed Suzi Q, “She’s dead, oh no!” And suddenly this was all real and way too real. Molly Desmond - the Trivia Night lady was the one that took a shine to them and on their very first meeting. She never judged them on first appearances with the excessive tats or piercings but welcomed the new kids on the block, like family. She knew they were good kids, kept telling Suzi how beautiful she was and reminded her of her own daughter. She accepted they were just enjoying youth in her eyes, no trouble, just a little over-excitable new kids in a lolly shop. She was old but remembered what it was like to be young!

Her body was lying in the hallway outside her cabin and there was blood oozing from her eyes, ears, and nostrils but it was clear, Molly was dead as a doorpost and fear were frozen on her sun-wrinkled face.

They found - The Great Illusionary (aka Billy Nelson) the magician in his cabin slumped over his card table with a joker in his hand, where he had dealt his last deck and his body as Molly's - was weeping and oozing.

All the other cabin doors on their floor were locked from the inside so they started banging on them screaming as loud as they could ... but not one solitary answer - not one! Panic was rising within the kids as the reality of this crazy fucking nightmare was smashing them their anxieties. It tripped them all way more than any of Moonie's drugs.

The - Retro Bar, was their gig and where their amps and drums were set up, ready to play and there were bodies everywhere! And just as Molly's with bloodied eyes, nose and ears - it was sickening!

"Shit!" Ziggy turned back to the others with tears in his eyes, while Moonie just stared at the bodies. Suzi Q was crying in fear as Quo held her. T Rex spoke,

"We were only here an hour ago, man something's really fucking wrong here!" It was quite distressing as at sound check he been shaking hands with the recognized dead and taking compliments for his vocal ability, ready for tonight's performance going off.

"Hey! Anyone here? Hello, anyone alive?" Ziggy's doubting question was soon answered.

"Yes ... I am." It was Sara, the pretty little barmaid who Quo had been chatting up for the last 2 nights, she was awesomely - HOT! A cheerleader from Texas on a working holiday and her accent just gave him a hard-on every time she opened that goddam sexy mouth of hers. Sara tenaciously lifted her head peeking from behind her haven - the bar.

"I saw it all but I don't understand?" she was sobbing and her eyes showed it, as Suzi Q cracked a water bottle from the bar and handed it to her. Sara explained that one minute she was 1 of the 4 working barmaids pouring drinks, listening to 350 guests chanting out to the 'Woo hoo's' in unison to Mick and Keef's devilish sympathy and then - BANG! One crack

of the biggest lightning flashes and thunder she'd ever seen or heard in her 19 years of life followed by total silence! Only to see 350 guests (plus 3 barmaid friends, including Madonna her cabin mate) lying dead on the floor - oozing!

It frightened her, when she realized that she was alive and alone in there, no one else and this was so wrong. She fought her fear as best she could and searched desperately to find anyone ... someone, but no one else was alive. Then the waves of reality had crashed upon her and fear regained its rightful victim – and she pissed herself. The band held her tight as she was clearly terrified and then the others entered the room.

“Are you the band?”

thought Ziggy. 5 more were here now and they had just come from the dining room.

“There's at least 200 dead in there.” as one of them pointed his thumb over his left shoulder; he was one of three wearing the ship's irradiated white uniforms.

They all introduced themselves and made their way upstairs to the deck and the moonlight and away from the view and smell of the fresh bodies, even though wherever they went, the dead seemed to be there. Pool #1 was soon delegated as a home base area, as it was clear with no bodies here that the storm was too intense for anyone to be on deck and swimming or even hanging there - and also it was only about 8 or so minutes back to the band's cabins.

The spokesman was the ship's Doctor - Dr. Bobby Palmer and he had 2 young deckhands with him named Malcolm and Jimmy. The ship's resident trainer - Dion was a big boy alright and it was clear he had come straight from training at the gym on the 2nd floor where he explained he was the only survivor, as well as a very frightened passenger who

introduced herself as Chrissie Devine. Her cabin was found at the far end of the ship. She had believed she ran to the other end believing she was the only survivor on the ship until she had heard the voices of Dr. Bob's surviving group.

Most of the off-duty crew were having dinner in the dining room when the strike had hit and this was all that had survived. The doctor had partaken and witnessed the dining room genocide, including the entire captain's table. It was a scene from a Holocaust movie as like the red lightning had radiated the whole room and all the unsuspecting diners (guests and crew) just slumped to death in their chairs and tables, or fell to the floor, only leaving the doctor sitting there alone with his knife and fork in hand. The dining room was now a murder scene and why no other survivors or what had actually happened was still an unanswered myth. They had found each other and now they had found the band with the barmaid, so it was decided no one left the group alone.

The night was spent on doing their best as they searched the ship for survivors but finding no-one, not one poor frightened soul – anywhere. The crew and guests were all dead everywhere they looked; it was futile!

The Morning light broke at 5.30 am revealing to all the carnage left behind from the night before. The Carnivore had virtually ground to halt smack dead, floating aimlessly in the middle of the Bermuda Triangle. The power was out and there was nothing, no signal, no radar, no outside contact with the world at all - even their mobiles were useless - the strike had fried them as the motors.

They all reassured each other that the authorities would surely follow-up the ship's immediate loss of contact and send out a search plane soon.

A week had passed and not one plane or ship had been seen.

“What we gonna do about the bodies ... we can't leave them there. They're starting to smell bad!” Quo was right, so they decided to move the bodies (that weren't sealed tight in their cabins) to the Retro Bar while leaving the carnaged diners locked in the dining room. It took all of them the whole day to secure all other parts of the ship's bars, casinos, and rooms as makeshift mortuaries. To see and to have to touch the dead bodies unsettled them all but they helped each other focus. But after a day it was time to just sit it out and wait until a rescue ship or plane would arrive.

This day was an emotionally scarring one for all and one they would choose to forget if only possible. To see a dead body is something not all humans are to experience but a lot do and live with it. But piling up familiar and not-so-familiar dead faces of strangers, friends, and acquaintances is something you can live without - and not what you would expect to be doing, especially not on a pleasure cruise!

After re-checking all the open cabins and ship's quarters it was clear there were no more survivors. Why only them out of 1,100 guests and 400 crew?

Dr. Bob's focus was on the why and, of how come they had been chosen to survive. It was when Sara tied her hair up, she revealed a bright fresh Aqua dolphin tattoo on the back of her neck. Dr. Bob grabbed T Rex's arm pushing up his sleeve to reveal the band's brand new unified tatt - Tattooed Souls with the band logo in aqua colored ink that he had seen the bottom edge of!

“Does anyone have a tattoo here?” he asked them.

Then both the deckhand brothers Malcolm and Jimmy opened their shirts to reveal matching sticks of red colored dynamite tatts exploding in aqua, they had got on drunken binge only 2 weeks prior. The penny dropped for them all and one by one they revealed to each other a fresh

aqua colored tattoo ... including Dr. Bob's full-back work, recently touched up complete with aqua colored Phoenix wings.

The aqua on all their tattoos showed the brightest aqua ink and looking as fresh as the day it was colored in. No sun-bleached color here, just brand spanking new fresh bright and aqua colored as if it had come straight from the gun today.

*

Stormy weather 2

3 months had passed with no rescue or contact from the outside world; it was like they had disappeared off the face of the Earth. They'd had enough supplies of food, water and alcohol (and infirmity drugs) up to now to keep them alive and intoxicated through this living nightmare but the fresh food had dwindled, like meat, vegetables and fruit spoiled and smelt as bad as the dead. Which left them to packet food and of all things, a cupboard full of giant tins of baked beans! '*He comes more bad smells!*' Ziggy chuckled, on his not-so joyous food scrounge finds.

The piles of dead were rotting while maggots fed and the flies would blow more eggs and the cycle continued until the smell from these make-do mortuaries was all too much for them; it was breath-taking in such a bad way.

It was agreed unanimously that most of the bodies, had to go. So into the churning sea, they would. No one wanted to do this inhumane task but the smell had left them all with no choice in the matter, so it was decided tomorrow they would start this nightmare after the darkness disappeared.

No one had entered or gone anywhere near the Retro Bar or the dining room or any of the other rooms, since the moving of the carcasses. But they all knew they would succumb to their dreams only becoming nightmares after this. So the night was spent on the deck under the full moon's rays drinking their best to wash away any thoughts from tomorrow's hell.

Dion was on bar pouring duties and his makeshift bar near the pool looked just dandy. Every time he finished a drink he'd smash his glass on the deck and howl like a wolf to the blue full moon. The more the night went on the more the others joined in with his howl. At one stage it was a full pack howling – a pack of lonely wolves lost in the wilderness.

“Sara ... wanna dance?” Quo offered his hand to her and T Rex did to Miss Chrissie Devine while Suzi Q was banging out a beat on anything she could find. Suzi Q was the night’s drunken entertainment and she started flowing and it wasn’t one of her better raps!

*Cruise of a deathtime, not of a lifetime,
Hey Baby this ain’t no fuck’n lie?*

*We’re all going down, are you gonna frown
The man in the moon says you gonna fry?*

*What ya gonna do, when the death’s comin’ for you?
Pray to God? For we’re still all gonna fuck ‘n’ die!”*

Moonie threw a bread roll at her,

“Shut the fuck up bitch!” Moonie’s face teared up and he cried openly as the dancing stopped. He wasn’t amused as her tune haunted him to the bones ... somehow he believed her as he looked up at the storm clouds rolling in and they were red, and he spoke,

“We’re fucked, aren’t we ... no one’s coming, ever! We are going to die on this fucking boat!” Suzi’s face turned solemn and her guilt of joking about their demise tasted bad in her mouth. Ziggy got up and sat next to Dr. Bob and asked the question he’d been dreading,

“Be honest, how long have we got?” Dr. Bob skulled his straight scotch and looked up at the red clouds, before dropping his head to the deck and answered,

“I’d say no more than a few months, we’ll be out of fresh water and ... then it won’t be long!” Ziggy touched the doctor’s arm and thanked him for his honesty. He looked up at the clouds himself and asked,

“We could always catch the rain, couldn’t we?”

The storm hit the ship hard and killed the party with the wind and rain, forcing the group to flee to home base 2 - Ziggy's cabin, and continue emptying the 1-liter bottle of J.D. there.

The red lightning flashes took them all back to the very beginning, being the first storm since then and would fill the cabin with silence every time it struck. They passed the bottle to down the fear before Chrissie started crying, soon followed by Sara and they all huddled to comfort each other. This nightmare belonged to them but unfortunately, now it belonged to others!

*

Openings

“You ready for this?” Dr. Bobby Palmer was looking at them all wearing their safety goggles, gas masks, and full-length rubber gloves. They nodded and Dr. Bob and Dion slid open the sliding dining room doors which were made of cedar and very heavy. It was the sounds that hit them before the smell, and it was the sound of - death! But this sound was all wrong; it was groaning!

“No fucking way!” and Dion turned and ran as fast as he could for what had just been inflicted upon their eyes and witnessed was just too insane to contemplate. The rotting dead were everywhere and it was total butchery in there. Yet it was worse, way worse, the dead were all wriggling and moving, lying over and eating each other. Some were being bitten by several others but not showing any visual signs of pain, instead, grabbing other living dead and eating away, while they themselves were being eaten. The stench was disgusting and Chrissie had to remove her mask, run off to projectile vomit. That’s when the whole situation turned from a bad dream to a hellish nightmare; the living dead had seen them!

“Fuck this, shut the fucking doors!” Ziggy’s brain exploded with fear and the head rush of all those stupid B grade zombie movies the whole band loved! He rushed towards Dion’s abandoned door as all the dead were now moving and heading towards, forcing the opening.

They could see their blue and green blood stained rotten faces and some were only half faces with others half-chewed off and most were standing now (the ones that couldn’t, were crawling) and coming their way, they weren’t moving quickly but they were groaning and moving like drunken hobos stumbling around. Now the zombies were only 3 meters away!

“Quick ... help! The doors stuck!” Ziggy screamed and Dr. Bob pushed from one side as Ziggy the other. Dr. Bob shut his door but Ziggy’s wasn’t

budging his with the dead army, was building, so Ziggy screamed again, “Quick you pricks ... help me ... it’s fucking stuck!”

Quo and the brothers ran and grabbed the door with Ziggy but it still refused to move and the dead were closing in on them. Dr. Bob abandoned his closed door position to help with the open door and went running past the opening when they hit him!

The dead were frantic now and one tore a chunk out of his left shoulder while others held him as the dead could smell his fresh meat. Suzi Q was the first to react by ripping off her mask and gloves, gritted her teeth, picked up a nearby coffee table, and ran straight at the doctor with the coffee legs protruding forward, while the doctor was standing safely between the table’s legs.

“Leave him alone ... Motherfuckers!” Suzi impaled 3 of the dead with the legs of the table. The incarnate was rotten to the core and their flesh was virtually falling off the bones as they moved forward, so the table legs tore straight through their dead enfeebled torsos. T Rex, Sara, and Moonie, rushed to Suzi’s side and the 4 of them pushed the dead back enough to be inside the dining room area, enabling Dr. Bob to drop to the ground and squeeze through their legs, but more dead had smelt his freshness and the 4 struggled to hold their ground.

“Just fuckin’ shut it Ziggy, please ... shut it please!” Sara was frantic and was sobbing inside her mask, “I’m so fucking scared!” It was then that Chrissie had seen the broken glass jammed in the door runner,

“The glass, remove the beer glass!” Chrissie pointed to it and Dr. Bob instantaneously outstretched his good arm and reached for it as he was already on the ground, the boys were still pushing on the jammed door with all they had left in the tank. The doctor removed the glass just as he felt the teeth sink into his hand, he ripped his mask off to look at his wounded hand and the dead attacker groaned and to his disgust, it was a friend, his captain of all people - or what was left of him. One of his

eyeballs was missing from its socket and his nose wasn't there at all, just a green pus-filled hole. The pain was intense and he pulled his hand away to realize the dead captain had devoured 2 of his fingers - bones and all!

They slammed the door shut as the dead were banging on the doors from the inside. One of the dead females actually got an arm (with bright red nail polish) through and when they did finally push the door shut, it decapitated the female arm just before the elbow joint, snapping the bone like a twig and it was still moving, reaching blindly at anything, hoping to hunt anything. Quo kicked it away as Suzi Q frantically wiped away the blood and guts on her black jeans as best she could, while the deckhands pulled the doctor back against the wall for him to sit and lean back, as he held his own hand with the missing finger knuckles. A lot of blood was now starting to flow after the initial shock of removal.

They all slowly removed what gear they were still wearing looking at each other in terrified disbelief.

“Let's get the fuck out of here ... NOW!” Ziggy pointed to them all head toward the safety of the abandoned deck and no one was ever going to argue against this order and Moonie piped up,

“Best fucking idea I've heard all day!”

They ran upstairs to the deck. Chrissie, Sara and the two boys were assisting Dr. Bobby who was now rambling deliriously under his breath as his hand started to bleed profusely.

They found Dion, crying and hiding near the pool behind his makeshift bar, weeping like a baby ... because he had shit himself.

“Oh man, that's fucking wrong!” Moonie grabbed his nose and if this was the worst smell he'd had up his nostrils today. Suzi shook her at him for when was the last time he washed those fucking jeans?

It was Quo, who asked the question none of them wanted to hear,
“What the fuck are we gonna do now?”

They spent the next few hours huddled together as the moans of the living dead were growing louder by the minute and coming from all levels, from every locked cabin, room and the lower bowels of the ship. They could hear the now walking dead crew, trapped below.

It was like they had somehow awakened the dead’s smell for fresh food and they constantly howled like starving dogs! T Rex heard it first then all the others did ... breaking glass! The dead had now started to escape their previously contented holding zone.

‘Think ... fuck! Think Ziggy!’ Ziggy held his forehead with both hands as the heat inside his brain was confusing his train of thought. So he took his brain to - Zombie Memoryville, asking himself, *‘How do they get killed in those stupid fucking movies?’*

They could take their chances and action the agreed their last resort escape plan of lifeboats against the fury of the sea, but how many flares have they already set off to no avail? The seas were too rough at the moment from those strange storms; it would be suicide against the waves! At least here they’d have a chance, wouldn’t they? And what other choice did they have? It was pretty little Sara who stated the obvious one,

“We’ve got to kill these fuckers before they kill us!”

*

No rest for the wicked

“Their bodies are weak, very weak bones, they’re brittle. It’s their heads we need to take care of ... we’ll need to take their fucking heads off!” Dr. Bobby spoke but he wasn’t looking the best, the girls had done their finest (on his directions) to administer the morphine and to dress his wounds. But he was sweating profusely and constantly vomiting up dark blackish blood that smelt eye-wateringly disgusting. It was like he was spewing up his insides. Dr. Bob continued,

“We need to get to a safe place, like the cabins. We can control the situation there if we stick together ... and survive this shit!”

The boys had been on a weapon search while the girls stocked up what little was left of their dwindling food and water supplies (with the odd scotch bottle or two stashed in) as they made their way to where this all started – the cabins. The weapons the boys had found were crude but better than nothing; knives, meat cleavers, crowbars, fire axes, fire extinguishers and a toolkit containing various size screwdrivers would all suffice.

The doctor’s hallucinations were at their worst when he passed away in his sleep just after midnight. Chrissie was taking her turn while the others rested, comforting him at the time, sponging his fever down. She openly cried for him, as she covered him with a sheet and she would tell the others in the morning.

Malcolm found Dr. Bob the next morning but he wasn’t dead at all ... he was just hungry! Dr. Bob’s resurrected corpse grabbed Malcolm from behind; he had no chance! The zombie was just standing there, swaying behind the cabin door. Malcolm had heard a sound coming from the cabin and for this inquisitiveness, had his left ear bitten clean off in return. Malcolm reacted slowly as he hadn’t even realized what had hit him, only severe pain. The blood was flowing freely from his head as he grasped his open wound to then see, the bluish colored corpse.

Dr. Bob's zombie eyes were a lifeless black and it was desperate, grabbing at him, blindly clawing at him while black blood oozed from its nostrils and ears. The pain of teeth shot straight to his upright forearm and Malcolm screamed with fear as he had not felt but seen his arm separate from his own body and it was now placed in the dead doctor's mouth! Jimmy and Quo were the first to respond to Malcolm's chilling screams and took down the zombie corpse. Quo reacted with adrenalin rushed frenzy as his meat cleaver hits to the torso, while Jimmy stuck a small pry bar with a sharpened round tip, straight through its skull, impaling it to the wall.

Malcolm was kneeling down holding his now bloody amputated elbow, he was in shock and speechless. The rest of the survivors were here now and Sara screamed as she saw the hacked-up impaled doctor, still wriggling and reaching outwards to his prized arm he had dropped. It was Jimmy who took the final swing of revenge for his brother's attack and with the fire hatchet removed the doctor's head cleanly. Both the head and the body stopped all movement. Ziggy reflected on the irony of this. It was Dr. Bobby who suggested decapitation of the dead and here he was ... their very first!

"I don't want to be one of them ... don't let me be ... please!" Malcolm was just sitting there staring at the impaled head and the fallen blood-covered body, then he did it! He reached up and grabbed the knife (with his good right hand) straight from T Rex's pocket and slit his own throat!

"NO-O-O!" screamed Jimmy who was getting covered in his brother's jugular squirts as his futile attempt of suppressing his brother's blood loss failed. Malcolm grabbed his brother's arm and squeezed him goodbye and within a minute his grip loosened; he was gone!

With all the commotion going on, not one of them had seen Chrissie for she was the doctor's first early morning breakfast and she was now sitting up on the bottom bunk, hungry for flesh.

Suzi Q saw her exactly the same time as Dion did, he screamed! Chrissie's zombie was in a biting distance of Dion's sweet smelling leg and it made it! With one swing of Suzi's hatchet, she relieved Chrissie's head from the body while it was still joined to Dion's dripping thigh by its sunken cadaverous teeth.

It took Ziggy and T Rex a good 5 minutes to pry and break the jawbone of the head from Dion's torn leg. Ziggy inspected the wound and looked upwards at Dion who was crying and repeating the Lord's Prayer over and over and without even saying a word, communicated the situation to all – *'I'm fucked!'*

The two remaining girls were both crying and it was when the ever-so-strong Suzi Q stepped out of the cabin to wipe her streaming tears (without the boys seeing) she turned and saw them ... and there was way too many!

*

Do or die

The dead had found their rotting way to their safety zone, guided by their putrid noses, as if it was their only sense of the two human traits that somehow remained – smell and hunger. They all quickly exited the cabin dragging Jimmy from Malcolm.

The dead were clambering down the narrow hallway and there were too many for them to handle. Some would fall while others just kept coming trampling the weaker ones underfoot. The slow pace of the risen enabled the boys to get to the weapons cabin allowing them to pass out anything they could.

T Rex acted first by running straight at one with a screwdriver and a knife in each hand and thrust the screwdriver into the forehead, while he slashed open the throat of the leading monster. Several hands were reaching and grabbing his jacket sleeves while the head of the leading zombie fell backward and the body dropped instantly, tripping up the closing-in trodders. T Rex ripped the jacket out of the fallen's grip and retreated to the others.

Sara ran next flailing a meat cleaver screaming like a crazed warrior bitch at them but clumsily tripped over the leader's fallen body and straight into the hungry mouths of the fallen followers; she was screaming for her life! Jimmy ran to save Sara but he too, botched his attempt by being grabbed around the ankles and pulled down while the dead clambered overpowering biting them both to pieces. The two were eaten alive in a frenzied blood fest right in front of the others. The sickening cries of death of their bodies being torn limb from limb were all too much; Quo vomited!

“Move, quick!” Ziggy pushed all of them (including a vomit-stained Quo) back into the moment and they all ran as fast as they could away from the hungry dead. The stairs would slow the dead down so they raced up to the deck.

“Shit!” Suzi Q saw them as they smelt her and it was worse up here as the deck was now the living dead’s. They were stumbling around as if it was some sort of distant lost place of memories, touching and attempting to activate things such as handles, levers, even looking at the leftover bourbon glasses as if they were curious. But their rotten hands seemed not to be able to perform the most minuscule of tasks. Some had fallen into the pool face first and were floating while still floundering out of control. The dead up here soon smelt fresh meat as well and their decaying faces were now sniffing the air in their sweet-smelling direction, some were naked and half-eaten and Moonie pointed to the one he saw missing a foot, while he used the protruding leg bone as his limping crutch. There were more here than downstairs but where did they all come from? It was obvious when T Rex noticed in the distance, the smashed doors of the Retro Bar!

Suzi lost her cool when she saw one male zombie dragging his foot, exiting the bar holding one of her prized Zildjian cymbals, it was her favorite sounding one - the pang! To the horror of the boys, she sprinted pushing the deceased out of her way and flung herself at the dead thief, ripping the cymbal from its useless grip. She spun like a discus athlete at the Olympics, raising it to neck height, spinning to slice the head of her male target but she missed! The cymbal flew from her hands landing with a resonance that made the dead look! Hitting the ground was hard; she felt it and her ankle throbbed. The zombie’s attention was back on her pretty meat as others had noticed her smell and were closing her in. Ziggy yelled and the 3 boys moved quickly, kicking and pushing and shoving the other lifeless living out their destined path.

“Your chariot awaits madam!” Ziggy smiled as the boys picked her up and carried her, scrambling back to stairwell’s entrance while the dead seemed confused by the sudden turmoil of events.

“You scared the fuck out me bitch!” Moonie whacked her around the back of the head making her ever-so starlight blonde mane flick to a messy look. Suzi regained herself to a standing position testing her ankle for

weight issues; she would limp but live! Yet for how long was her next question?

“We gotta get back to the cabins, it’s the only safe place!” Ziggy ordered with the feeling he had finally accepted what he refused before this point in time; he was the leader! They all turned and ran as fast as they could back down the 2 flights of stairs, while Suzi Q limped hurriedly with her arm around Ziggy’s neck for assistance to scale to the bottom. To their horror, the dead were now blocking their cabin’s doorway. Moonie turned only to see the deck dead had followed their scent and found the top of the stairwell and were attempting the descent. Some were falling while others somehow remembered to hold the railings. As the dead were mastering the stairs it was obvious; they were trapped! Suzi Q reacted first.

She removed her arm from Ziggy’s support and stepped out limping in front of the boys and faced the dead in a show of strength,

“Fuck You!” Suzi was giving the zombies both middle fingers from both hands, “Time to rock ‘n’ roll fuckers!” And with her turning in a slow flowing movement, like a rock star pacing onto the stage to open his or her show. She was tilting her head, with her mane hanging to one side before flicking her hair back and started rapping her familiar rap with her chin and attitude high in the air,

*“Cruise of a deathtime, not in this lifetime
so who’s gonna live or fuck ‘n’ die?”*

*You’re all going down, who’s gonna frown
when you mothafuckers drop, dead ‘n’ die?”*

I say today's the end, end of all my friends

(Suzi looks at her brothers in their eyes, one by one)

Send the dead back to hell, let the fuckers burn 'n' fry!"

Suzi Q pulled her butcher's knife from her back pocket and raised it in one hand as she beckoned Moonie to pass her the hatchet he had for the other. In a valiant heroic motionless stance, she widened her feet for a better grip with the carpeted hall of the cabins. Moonie stepped forward next to his blood sister and turned to the boys and raised his weapons of choice; his sharpened pry bar and a crudely made set of nunchucks! Moonie joined in on Suzi's flow loud and clear and they repeated it in unison. T Rex, Quo, and Ziggy joined into the pair's war cry repeating it and repeating it, as they all came together and hugged each other for what they believed would most probably be their last gig together.

They would stare death in its face today and challenge its disgusting taste united. Tattooed Souls stood there swinging their blades, axes, and nunchucks. Ziggy went to move forward, it was his time to lead, lead his band brothers into this hell even if he must die first, trying. Like the crazy fuck she always was, Suzi Q beat him to it, she limped straight out before them all and spat at the living dead. It was her, their little powerhouse Suzi Q who flicked on the power switch of the band's united brotherhood and here it was; they would die trying! It was inevitable they would lose but they were victoriously strong as one and pure beauty to watch. As one sliced, the other ducked and while one hacked, the other decapitated. They were all still rapping out Suzi's song, over and over, in perfect harmony and in perfect time and Ziggy listened; it was their perfect original! A number one hit for a zombie-ridden cruise. They were pushing the dead back but it would not be for much longer, they were all getting too exhausted!

The dead fell as they struck but they kept coming there was just too many of the dead to kill and now they were all back to back; Suzi screamed at Ziggy,

"You have to survive this fucking nightmare! Oh yeh, and I love you! I fuckin' love you!" They both stopped fighting momentarily while the brothers continued and he saw her eyes, her teary hazel watering eyes, he

knew then they spoke the truth and this was her dying confession to him. She pushed him hard against the cabin door and the ground they had just regained; it was his door! Suzi smiled, kissed his lips, cocked her head and swiftly opened the cabin door and pushed Ziggy inwards and slammed the door shut as she restarted her warrior-like fighting, next to her remaining brothers.

The walking dead pushed forward and regained their lost ground in front of the door.

Ziggy hit his temple hard on the edge of the table as he fell inwards, he had to get back out there, he tried to fight the dark ... and then his mind swirled, it was too har...

*

Epilogue - Choices

He awoke and it was night time wondering how long he had actually been out? So he peered out the cabin's porthole and the moon was high with its haunting face glaring down seeming to laugh; it was definitely close to midnight!

All was quiet and he could see Bloodstain sitting there on his stand under the emergency lighting and his swirling thoughts had him confused. Was this the end or the beginning? Oh, his head hurt and was bleeding! Were the others still alive and fighting, or were they too, now the undead?

He took Bloodstain and sat there quietly holding her tightly until he reached up and removed the skull imprinted medium pick from the tortoise shell scratch plate and twanged the 3 of 6 strings that he had replaced. He started to lightly play his favorite Jimi riff – Voodoo Chile, then he stopped and just looked at her - she would go down with him now - as a weapon.

He thought of T Rex, Quo and Moonie - his best friends and his true blood brothers and then he thought of her – little sexy, full of spice, Suzi Q and how blinded he had been all this time by his own self-righteous behavior refusing to let anyone get under his skin (besides Bloodstain); he wanted to be famous – no one would stop him or get in the way! And how he now remembered all the glances, all the smiles, and all the love advances she subconsciously had offered him on a plate, yet never even taken a nibble, it was all too late now - or was it? If she was still alive then love still has its fucking one in a million zombie's chance, a chance to survive just like life itself and he chuckled to himself ... if anyone was alive, then it would be Suzi Q!

So Ziggy made the choice then and there, as he stood up with one hand around Bloodstain's rosewood neck as he felt her weight wondering if it was best to swing or stab and his other was gripping the cabin door while he reflected back to all they had been through as a band; pulling the

cabin door handle downwards. And it was Suzi's words he thought of, so he repeated them with her attitude,

“Time to rock ‘n’ roll, motherfuckers!”

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I can never tell a lie

Crafted from a piece of wood with love and understanding

But I must sit and wait, this boy without a branding

If only I could be quite real made up of flesh and blood

Completeness to surely seal my mixed-up world that floods

**I can never tell a lie
My punishment is me
How can I not despise
The hardness of a tree**

To live a life of loneliness will break this solid heart

I gaze into the outside world a place I'm not a part

If I'm a real good boy, fortune will shine its light on me

Hope it doesn't discriminate and love would set me free

**I can never tell a lie
My punishment is me
How can I not despise
The hardness of a tree**

Here I wait, I've cut the strings that pull me left and right
My wish is for reality to sleep through every night
This lonely boy who's lost alone and searches for a life
Cuts within this heart don't bleed to me is not quite right

**I can never tell a lie
My punishment is me
How can I not despise
The hardness of a tree**

**I can never tell a lie
The tree is all of me**

Story 4

Alleandro

Eyes wide open

He awoke to sounds of an old man's voice dancing and singing and he recognized it immediately; it was his father's. He looks around at his surroundings, wood blocks, woodworking tools and balls of string and he realizes he is hanging in his father's workshop. His memory was vague or more of an unknown, lost in a distant place. He sees the black twine that restrains him from falling as his strings are attached to two pieces of wood on a hook above his head. Those pieces of wood stirred something inside as he remembers his father's hands holding them high above him and the smallest memory returns and remembers hanging there and never being used, a puppet and his name is - Alleandro.

"I can move my arms and legs!" he spoke for the 1st time to himself and his face smiled for the very first time, he'd heard it and it was real. Alleandro was so excited he must get down and tell Father he is alive. He lifts his right leg and undoes the knotted twine that went through his foot revealing a small needle-like hole that the candlelight glistens through. One by one he undoes his strings until his body drops upside-down hanging only by his right foot string. Alleandro's wooden torso was now lying on the floor and with one last knot untied; he was free!

A wooden boy stands for the first time on his 2 painted black shoes and he is wobbly ... very, very wobbly! He does a little one-legged circular hop with the other off the ground doing his best to balance this new feeling of heaviness. Alleandro grabs the work-table's leg to correct his balance and he sees a dusty cracked mirror leaning against a wall. He sees his reflection and it is disjointed by the dust and a crack. Alleandro moves

slowly to the mirror and wipes away the dust to reveal his first true reflection. His wood is that of blackwood and he could see that he wasn't attractive at all, even to himself this didn't look appealing for his face is odd shaped, like it was carved straight from a left-over piece of log. His left eye protruded way further than his right does. He could see his nose is not centered and slightly to the right, a resembled a broken branch. He was naked and could see a small split in his body and he asks himself aloud as he pokes it, "Why is my body cracked? Is this where my heart belongs?" Alleandro turns from the sadness of his reflection as he hears his Father's laughter and he was so excited and he must find him now to tell him the good news.

The steps at first were hard, clumsy and clunky but they become easier, as he steadies himself and he reaches the just-opened doorway and sees the flames of the fireplace burning brightly with two silhouetted bodies, dancing amongst their flickering light.

'Father ... is that my beloved Father?' Alleandro's thoughts are joyous as he hears his father's voice and laughter is very clear now but who is that with him, a boy ... another boy?

Alleandro hides behind the door peering around it and watches in silence. He can see both their faces and his father's shiny balding head with his white beard while wearing those small round glasses on the end of his chubby nose. Another memory returns, and it is of his father's delicate hands, painting his eyes to enable him to view his father's heartwarming face for the very first time.

The other boy's face was made of wood and like him, the boy was string-less and moving freely. He too was a puppet, made of a pale lighter wood, his face looked almost perfect, sanded smooth with red painted cheeks as Alleandro touches his own disfigured eye and the roughness of his bark skin and a feeling overcomes him, a strange feeling of extreme

sadness; he knows he is ugly! Sadness is within his eyes yet it remains there for his tears are dry within his wood.

“I love you! I love you! I am so happy!” Alleandro listens and watches closely to his father’s words through the partly opened door and they were loud and clear to the dancing wooden boy whom Father had just lifted high in the air. Alleandro continues to listen to hear the words that will take away any traces of leftover happiness and replace them with that new feeling - sadness.

“My son ... you are my son now!” Father danced with joy and the puppet was perfect in every way. They hold each other in a tightened embrace while Alleandro backs away from the doorway slowly, to leave them as he had found them - in a silhouette of flames.

*

Questions & Answers

He was sad and now angry and had to leave this place ... he did not belong!

There were too many questions, too many questions! They were coming thick and fast within his confused mind. *'Who is the boy? Why do I feel alone? Where is my true father?'* He had to answer these and the many questions, but it was the one burning one he must find the answer to first, *'Where do I belong?'* He will travel and find a home for he knew it was surely waiting out there, somewhere had to be - home. So Alleandro would make his exit, silently through the back door to venture on a quest to find the answers.

Alleandro stops at the doorway and looks back at the worktable; he has a feeling he would need protection in the dangers of the outside world and must find some sort of weapon to take with him. He quickly reaches his maker's worktable and feels around blindly as a sharpened blade splinters his hand. Alleandro pulls the blade to the ground where he picks it up. It is nearly half his size. He looks around the workshop to see two discarded pieces of black ribbon in front of the leaning mirror. He ties the first ribbon around his waist as he swings the blade - and somehow the movement of the knife creates a sound of slicing the air and this chills his little wooden bones. He then places the blade through the ribbon so it hangs like a sword. Alleandro picks up the remaining piece of the black ribbon then ties it around his head like a warrior would, off to fight and never to return. And with one last look at himself, he drops his head to his chest to pull his uneven eyes away from this sad image as he glances back and speaks to his reflection in a whispering voice,

"Why are you alive ... ugly puppet?"

*

Three's Company

Alleandro had been walking the river bank track for a whole day with his crazy thoughts as his only company. Memories of life were limited, so the ones that did venture in were repeating themselves over and over, jumbled amongst his questions. One new feeling had emerged and it was one of hunger and he needed to suppress it. It was now consuming everything else he knew. A trap! He would set a trap and kill a small animal, he scratched his wooden head as he did not know how to build a trap but he did know that he wanted meat, fresh bloody meat.

Bluebirds were singing their love songs in the trees as he looked up to see they had made a nest and their offspring were chirping their own song like his hunger was in his empty belly. Alleandro watched and waited as the fledgling's parents took turns to leave the nest and return with freshly caught bugs and worms for their chanting babies. But the babies looked delicious and Alleandro set about to eat them.

One of the adult bluebirds left the nest so it would be now or never. The tree was rickety but quite easy to climb and he reached the branch within minutes. It was out of his reach but he could see the baby birds jumping up and down, as the remaining parent saw Alleandro's leering eyes heading their way.

The mother bird tried her best to protect her young as she attacked him pecking and scratching his wooden face as he raised his arm, she tore into his bark face and a small piece had fallen off from his cheek revealing a much softer, smoother bark and what was this new feeling? Then he knew it was - pain. Alleandro felt - anger rise, he was angry as well as being in pain. He burned inside as his head heated up and he withdrew his blade and with one swoop removed the mother bird's tiny head. Both the head and body fell to the ground as he watched. His focus promptly returned to the now unprotected babies and he noticed a small speck of blood, wet upon his blade, it was minimal but when he licked it, a new sensation he liked, flowed through his starving wooden body – taste!

He ate the fledglings and they were delicious! Their little featherless bodies were juicy and sweet but he was still hungry and he remembered the mother's dead body at the bottom of the tree, awaiting his return.

Alleandro was climbing down when he heard the munching and crunching sound!

"Hey, it's mine!" Alleandro yelled at the hairy boy who had the half-eaten carcass and feathers all around his mouth with blood dripping from his pointed teeth. "Hey, that was mine!" Alleandro was furious as he took his final jump to the ground from the rickety tree running at the child who was covered in hair and looked like a dog. This made him stop dead in his tracks questioning how he knew what a dog looked like; he had never seen one! The dog-like child snarled at him glaring his wild untamed eyes yelling,

"I'll kill you ... I'll kill you!" Alleandro was about to draw his sword when a mysterious crooked tailed black cat that stunk to high heaven appeared from behind the tree and it spoke,

"Settle down, settle down children! There's plenty to go 'round!" And the cat pointed to the panicking father bird who had returned to an empty nest.

"Are you a cat?" questioned Alleandro, and then the cat spoke again.

"Listen yeh-yeh, I know I'm a fucking talking, never seen one before, big fucking deal, witch's cat actually ... and he's a hungry werewolf child ... and I see you can talk to ... living puppet boy!" The cat continued while Alleandro was wide-eyed and speechless. "His name is Dog Boy, and mine is Stinky ... accept it, pal, it is and I do! It was given to me by one of those - Wicked Witches, One from the South-West. Witch Lily, bless her blackened, twisted soul!" The cat was continually talking while Dog Boy was still feeding (not sharing), "So what's your moniker ... puppet boy?"

“Moniker?” Alleandro widened his eyes wondering if he had a Moniker and he looked around his surroundings for it. The cat shook his head, turned to the werewolf kid.

“Dumb fuck alert! I meant your name kiddo!”

“Oooh, it’s A-A-A-Alleandro.” The puppet scratched his wooden head and was confused as this was all getting a little past crazy. But at least he’d got it out.

“Well, Alleandro ... I’m calling you Puppet Boy, it’s a better fucking name for you than that shit one!” Stinky farted, and the smell was Alleandro’s worst experience in his short life,

“POO! That’s burning my nose!”

“Sorry!” The cat just raised an eyebrow.

“Oh boy that stinks ... bad!” Alleandro fell to the ground still holding his nose so no extra smell would get in, he closed his eyes as well, just to be safe. The dog-like child seemed totally unaffected and kept eating the dead bird.

The smell did pass and Alleandro could breathe again. Stinky made the wolf-boy share the little of what was left of the dead bird, so they sat, ate and talked. Stinky was the talker and he sussed out the strange looking puppet and he was like them – a loner. They all were loners on quests of their own - Stinky was to find a new witch (with no sense of smell) after Lily died, to side with as he missed flying the night skies sitting on the back of a broomstick, while - Dog Boy’s Father was a werewolf as well and his mother was a gypsy who had left them to face their curse alone. Stinky had found the frightened child lost and crying in the woods, so he took the werewolf child under his wing and set about to find the boy’s gypsy mother together.

Somehow fate had brought these 3 strangers together so it was decided (soon after they finished eating the father bird, that returned to join his family in death) that they would all travel together to - *The Kingdom*.

Stinky talked and talked and told many enchanting stories of the magical place it was. It was a place where you could drink a bitter brown liquid that would make you numb, laugh and fight like a champion! He had heard tales of ladies who provided a service and that it was such a heavenly experience it would be worth paying every cent for in gold. And gold, lots and lots of precious gold, and all this were there just begging to be either enjoyed or stolen.

The strange two taught Alleandro some new words he had never spoken before.

“Fuck-fuck-fuck!” Alleandro cursed and smiled at Stinky’s approval,

“And another Puppet Boy?”

“Cunt!” Alleandro turned to the cat and added, “I don’t really like that one! Sounds like an axe wound!” Stinky whipped around, wide-eyed to Dog-boy who was chuckling before he spoke,

“Hey Puppet Boy, that one is especially good to use when your angry, I’d scream that one out!” Next minute Alleandro was,

“CUNT-T-T! He looked at the cat and smiled and nodded, getting it with a downward smile.

Stinky’s stories were delightful to them and he had so many! They all laughed wholeheartedly while they walked and walked following the road made of yellow cobblestones and the only thing that would stop their laughter would be Stinky’s surprise farts.

“Sorry!”

*

Joseph and the Gypsies

3 days had passed when they came upon the gypsy caravans. There were 4 wagons in total and they were camped beside the river. A fire burned and the smell of meat cooking was too much for their hungry bellies. Dog Boy was anxious at the slightest of chances she may be here - his mother. The gypsies distant laughter reminded Alleandro of his father's and the boy's laughter. He counted 21 gypsies in total, the men seemed to be sitting down and talking while children were tending to the draft horses. The women were the busy ones while a dark-haired woman wearing a green scarf who was tending to the meal stirring was the one that caught his attention. She had heard a stick crack close by; he looked down, *'Whoops!'*

"Who goes there?" She looked left and right cautiously as she waved an arm behind her to come as the other gypsies seem to come ... from nowhere. Her voice repeated, "I said, who goes there? Show your face stranger!" Dog Boy could see the woman's face clearly but had no idea at all if this was his mother or not for he was only a baby when she left, leaving him alone with his werewolf cursed father.

"Is that your mother?" Stinky whispered curiously. But Dog Boy just shook his head. The Gypsy men now had knives and logs in their hands heading in Dog Boy's direction and Alleandro felt unsettled and funny inside as he nibbled on his wooden fingertips. Dog Boy crawled out of the bushes on his hands and knees and in the quietest of voices spoke up to the terrified gypsy woman.

"Mumma ... are you my Mumma?" One of the other gypsy men screamed,

"It's the wolf child, the curse has returned!"

The woman dropped the wooden spoon and fell to a kneeling position near the pot holding her hands to her open mouth, she was shaking her head in disbelief and crying while the gypsy men drew their weapons at Dog Boy.

“Mumma?” And that was all he said, one measly word as the gypsy men commenced their fruitless attack on him as the woman just moaned with her right hand outstretched to him,

“Joseph ... my little Joseph.”

The men hit Dog Boy hard with wooden sticks and logs as both Stinky and Alleandro watched from behind the bushes. Alleandro was shaking his head, as the woman was dragged away by the other women. He whispered a suggestion to Stinky,

“We should help him.” Stinky turned and laughed,

“Yeah, then keep watching Puppet Boy!” So he did.

The blood was everywhere as Dog Boy ripped out the throats of the first two gypsy men who went to attack him with a sword. Alleandro’s eyes widened as this killing wasn’t anything like the bluebirds, it was ... terrifying! Dog Boy seemed to fly through the air from throat to throat killing the first one instantly by biting it clean out, leaving his first kill drop to his back with blood squirting high in the air from the gaping hole where his neck had been located a mere 2 seconds before. Then he quickly and ferociously attacked the other gypsy assailants, who had just witnessed the elderly father die a bloody death. The other 2 remaining gypsy men had fled back to the caravans and were screaming frantically to all the remaining gypsies to save themselves and escape the wrath of the – Wolf Beast! They screamed instructions at the women and ordered the children to harness the horses – “*Now!*”

Dog Boy was eating one of the 6 dead gypsies, as his mother’s face disappeared from his view after being dragged away screaming out his name, his real name - Joseph! But his wolf-like hunger consumed all of his body and emotions at that very moment, more so than his need to find her or even care about his mother who abandoned him; it was irrelevant – but the food certainly was!

The gypsies fled within minutes in a flurry of tears and screams and a clamoring sound from the horses' hoofs. They were all holding crosses and praying to their god, crossing their chests looking upwards, leaving behind a perfectly intact campsite.

"Let's go Puppet Boy." Stinky exited the bushes, stopped and turned back at Alleandro, "Do you need an invitation, your majesty?" He shook his head and stepped out and followed the cat.

The meat was still boiling away on the open fire, hidden amongst the smoke in a blackened burnt pot as it was exactly when the 3 vagabonds had arrived, such a short time ago. But now it was quiet, so quiet, with just the sound of Dog Boy crunching on the gypsy's bones.

"Told you to watch, didn't I!" Stinky whacked Alleandro across the back of his head knocking his ribbon headband off as he made his way, heading straight to boiling pot. He turned,

"Hurry up, dickhead!" Alleandro stepped up his pace as his over-sized wooden shoes clumped behind.

Looking around at the blood, Alleandro was disturbed and uneasy as he edged passed the desecrated bodies from Dog Boy's frenzied kill. He stared at the openness and crudeness of this bloody carnage and could see insides, lots of insides, all the bodies were torn open; he covered his crack!

Stinky rummaged through the pockets of the dead and found a bag of gold. Jingling his lucky find in front of them both, he proudly announced,

"Kingdom, here we come! Look whose lucky day it is!" But Alleandro could not take his eyes off the murdered gypsies, and thinks to himself, *'Not theirs!'*

The meal was hearty and hunger was once again at bay but soon after Alleandro felt very strange, very, very strange and something was

happening to his eyes as everything was looking brighter! The greens, the reds, and even the dead bodies appeared to be vivid colors and he could have sworn one of them moved! He looked across at Stinky and his eyes were huge, bigger and greener, they seemed to be pulsating and he was laughing as Dog Boy was howling at the full moon.

“I feel funny Stinky.” Alleandro attempted to stand up and fell back down again. He was numb all over!

“It’s just the magic, Puppet Boy,” answered the cat still laughing, “the fucking magic of the mushrooms. An old spell Lily had shown me long ago.” Stinky pointed to the brightest golden colored mushrooms poking out of the ever-so-green glowing grass. “I put a few in the pot and ... abracadabra, hey Presto, the magic begins!” Dog Boy was nodding in agreement rapidly, while he too was laughing and out of nowhere so did Alleandro. He couldn’t help himself. They all laughed uncontrollably.

The dark place of bad dreams invaded Alleandro that very night and it was a very bad place. A land where everything was black with no color at all, only shades of grey. There was no happiness here, just loneliness and emptiness. He heard screams from below, deep below and they were wrong, like a knife cutting into his wood, deeper and deeper. It was the feeling of flames he did not like the most, black flames from a black fire forever dancing on his body, burning him to ash. He moaned in his sleep as he did his best to escape them. So he ran, ran but the flames would follow him. The faster he ran the faster they would catch him, surround him, tease and scold his body ... then he awoke – screaming! Even Stinky’s scraggly fur stood to attention at the sound of Alleandro’s fear.

Another week had passed and the gypsy murders and memories were starting to fade to the back of Alleandro’s mind. They would reach - The Kingdom, in a few days and the knowledge of this raised a level of excitement which was so new to him.

Dog Boy had accepted Stinky's words that he was an orphan now and told to – "Man Up!" For now, this would be his life as quest seeker, and to accept he would never know the truth of his birth, being torn away from his mother at childbirth by his grandparent's. On the realization that he, (the baby Joseph - the grandson they had waited so patiently for), was none other than the son of the town's murderous slayer! The cursed beast that attacked and killed 12 town's people, tearing them to bloodied and severed carcasses.

Joseph's grandfather found his daughter's husband in the forest, naked with his face covered in blood, so the secret was now revealed, but only to them and because of this fear, they left the town immediately. Grandfather knew the baby was now tainted with death and he must be either destroyed or abandoned! So they ran, taking baby Joseph's mother and against her will, leaving the cursed to fend for themselves. They'd raced to catch up and join the traveling gypsies that had recently passed through their village and smelt the death that visited so had moved on quickly.

They did they not reveal his father's secret to anyone before they left, simply because of the baby and they could not kill him, the werewolf baby either; it was still their daughter's flesh and blood and it would need to eat! For now, his cursed father was forced to bundle baby Joseph off to the woods and live in exile together, alone for 5 long and lonely years. Only ever returning to the village to kill and return with fresh meat for the boy.

The years passed, yet the stories did return to the village by other traveling gypsies who had heard stories of the beast's whereabouts and he was hiding with his werewolf son. The villagers knew if they did not act promptly then their children would be facing the wrath of the monster's offspring as well as the father; they had already lost too many!.

Dog Boy's father was hunted down and killed as Joseph ran away as fast he possibly could through the dark woods, away from his only known

home. He remembered his father's words to run to the hiding stump and stay hidden until his father would come and get him ... but he never came.

Joseph's grandparents had taken a vow never to return to the village or ever face the 2 monsters ever again. But fate was that they did face 1! And now Joseph's grandfather was dead at the first bite of his only grandson.

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The Moat Guard

The three reached the top of the hill that unveiled - The Kingdom to their tired traveled eyes.

The Kingdom and its sheer size overwhelmed Alleandro. He could see the grey stone walls that protected it from the rest of the forests, surrounded by water and the banks of a moat; it was huge! They could see the entrance in the distance and it was a draw bridge guarded by one of the King's armored soldiers holding an upright pole with - The Kingdom's flag fluttering wildly in the wind.

Alleandro's new feeling of – excitement, returned as this place was something he had never dreamed of ever seeing, let alone travel through. He knew he would find his answers in here, he was sure this was - home!

“Let's go fuckers, let me do the talking,” Stinky ordered and as if the other 2 would ever get a word in. They casually strolled down the grassy hill, heading straight toward the enormous wooden gates to the city. Down the hill and towards the guard they tramped.

“Greetings good fellow.” Stinky smiled at the guard. He was stern and looked straight over them and bluntly demanded,

“State your business.”

“We are but mere travelers, from afar and have heard stories of the many wonders of your worldly, Kingdom!” Stinky pointed to the closed draw bridge. The guard's voice then turned to stone,

“You are not welcome here! Leave now ... do not return!”

“Hey-hey!” complained Stinky then Alleandro piped up also,

“Listen CUNT,” Stinky cringed at Alleandro's bad timing to unveil that new word as well as the emphasis attached to it! The puppet kept going, “... we just gotta get in there! We have a right to be in there! I need answers!” Alleandro was slamming his right index finger into his own

timber chest as the stern guard dropped his nowhere gaze to eyeball them all individually.

Stinky raised an eyelid turning his head to Dog Boy wondering, *'Where the fuck did that come from? Go for it Puppet Boy!'* The guard's face tightened and he finished off with an authoritative tone,

"The King refuses entry to strangers ... especially weird dark strangers, we don't trust darkens in here!" As his pointer finger was poking Alleandro's black wood colored forehead,

"Trouble makers ..." he points to Dog Boy, "- and sly thieves!" Now pointing directly at Stinky, and finally, "You 2 have been here before. I remember you both and the trouble you caused last time. Now leave and take the weirdo puppet with you! You were told never to come back!" The moat guard reverted his glance back to his previous stance of stillness, looking straight over their heads. Stinky was shattered! How on earth did the guard know about their successes of pillaging in the gold department as well as that one-off unfortunate arse sniffing incident?

"C'mon let's get the fuck out of here!" Stinky was pissed but Alleandro was angrier, so fucking angry it rose within - and out of the pits of his rage, he felt something rise up, it was down there, deep down and he spat straight at the guard leaving a green drooling gob running down his chest plate ... using his now, favorite word as he walked off – *"Cunt!"*

They returned to the hilltop and while Dog Boy cocked his leg on the nearest tree, Stinky unveiled his plan to Alleandro.

"We have a secret weapon you know!" Alleandro shook his head, so asked himself, *'What secret weapon? My blade?'* Stinky turned around and stuck his asshole straight into Alleandro's face ... and the puppet instantly ducked for cover! Then Alleandro got it and grinned! Stinky was laughing so hard that he fell on the ground and they both rolled around belly-aching with laughter as Dog Boy returned.

“You 2 are fucking nuts!” Dog Boy then jumped on them joining in on the playful wrestle as the golden sunset on the 3 best of friends, the new friends of chance, as they rolled in joyful laughter.

*

To Kingdom come

“Now when I say run, you 2 fucking numbnuts, run! Understand?” Stinky had them hiding in the bushes near the draw bridge entrance.

All they would do now was to sit and wait, wait for someone to arrive and as soon as the draw bridge was lowered they would be able to sneak in unnoticed. Easy peasy, or so it sounded, running by the heavily built guard and his big shiny silver sword!

It was just an hour later when a gold and white carriage with two white horses pulling up at the draw bridge; it was the Princess of - The Kingdom. Alleandro caught the beauty of her face, her milky white skin, her long blonde platted hair as she leaned out of the carriage window and spoke to the guard. She was beautiful, he had never seen such beauty before - and she was captivatingly beautiful, he spoke without realizing,

“She’s beautiful!”

“Hey, Puppet Boy, focus ... fucking focus!” Stinky brought Alleandro back to the crucial moment as the draw bridge was being lowered,

“About fuckin’ time!” Dog Boy complained as he was scratching his flea-bitten balls. Then Stinky started the countdown,

“3 – 2 – 1 ... run you fuckers! Run as fast as you fucking well can!”

They were off and heading quickly towards the Princess’ carriage. Stinky made it first under the carriage soon followed by Dog Boy, sliding in the dirt haze grazing his butt cheeks on the gravelly path. But Alleandro had never run before so he trailed gangly behind with his limbs totally out of time, flailing like a scarecrow in a storm - or that his strings were still attached and he was dancing as if his strings were being pulled. This distant memory filled his wooden head as he wondered, what it meant? As the draw bridge gate reached the top of its lift it locked its final click into place. The guard caught it out the corner of his eye - Alleandro’s piss-weak attempt to sneakily run straight by. One fowl swoop and the guard had

him around the throat lifting him to his eye level, as his little puppet legs kept running aimlessly in mid-air.

“Where are your friends? I will rip your wooden head off if ... (*cough cough*)” and his threat was interrupted by a choking smell that dropped him to his knees.

The guard released his grip on Alleandro to hold and block his nose from this putrid odor that had erupted from the bowels of Hell! Stinky and Dog Boy were running full speed ahead and made it through the open draw bridge gate while Alleandro was way behind and Stinky was screaming back at him.

“Run! Just fucking run ... run you cockhead!” So he did. Alleandro took a quick glance over his shoulder while his legs gained a striding ungainly momentum just as the beautiful princess quickly followed by her coach driver, had joined the guard kneeling down and they were all dry-reaching into the moat in unison; good ol’ Stinky had really come through!

The Kingdom was jaw-dropping to a wide-eyed Alleandro. There were so many people here, so many people and no one was taking any notice of the 3 drifters; they simply blended amongst them all! Dog Boy wasn’t being cool at all, as his nose was sniffing every arse that came within an arm’s distance and he looked like he was in Heaven.

“Be cool Dog boy, just be cool ... remember last time?” Dog Boy grasped his balls in a lightning flash, clutching with knees inwards, cringing as he remembered the pain. How could he forget what he felt when they were kicked so hard for sniffing and inhaling that Viking’s shit-flavored butthole. He limped for a whole week afterward! Alleandro had no idea what they were fucking talking about but his eyes were wide open with amazement at all the goings-on in this wonderful city.

The many people all ages were bustling around him just doing their daily business, some were screaming, some were laughing. He could see

children in the street playing skip-rope and the children stirred something deep inside but he could not remember what or why. He could see the row of King's guards riding white stallions escorting the (now recovered) Princess's carriage to the castle, people were greeting each other with the shaking of hands so the 3 mimicked this with their own toffy greetings towards each other. Alleandro started,

“How do you do sir ... very nice day, isn't it?”

“Oh yes ... it's a chipper day!” replied a chirpy aristocratic sounding werewolf.

“Good day kind sir,” Alleandro shook hands with Stinky while taking a slight bow. “Well, sir, what would you be doing today?” Alleandro questioned Stinky.

“Well, it's such a chipper day sir ... I think I might take a crap!” Alleandro slumped his shoulders. Stinky's toilet mouth had just tarnished the game – as usual!

His attention was quickly diverted away from the silly game to the sounds of trumpets and horns being blown, the bright colors of the flapping flags and all the wonders of this glorious place - The Kingdom. Now he could see how wonderful being alive actually was.

“We need a fucking drink!” Stinky stated as he jerked Alleandro around the neck and pointed to a sign - Ye Ole Ale House. The sign hung proudly out front of a wooden trashed-up building, a place full of rowdy revelers drinking and spilling what Alleandro assumed was the magic brown liquid that he'd been told about and so desired as the wanting to feel numb again.

“3 magic liquids please and three smoking sticks, kind sir?” Stinky placed one of his stolen gold coins on the bar while Alleandro checked out Ye Ole Ale House.

The room was smoky and smelt like sweat. The loudness of voices made Alleandro hold his ears as it sounded like everyone was trying to talk over each other, in an - *'I'm louder than you!'* game. He witnessed 2 men so numb they were attempting to fight but were just swinging through the thin air missing each other, while others were watching and laughing; it was hilarious! Another table had a game of cards being played, when he saw one the players jump up, tip the table over and punch one of the other players who had just dropped 5 of the similar looking cards on the floor! 3 red plus 2 black, all with an A on them. The old beat-up piano in the corner was being played by a midget as his chained spider monkey danced back and forth on top of the honky-tonk piano. The monkey was holding a tin cup that an occasional reveler would stumble up to and place a gold coin in. He looked at Stinky with excitement and Stinky nodded, so he raced up and placed the coin Stinky had just given him into the cup and the monkey danced. As he was smiling, he turned to walk back and then instinctively jumped high in the air when the monkey poked his bum from behind; Dog Boy was on the floor belly-aching!

Alleandro returned to the others and was embarrassed by his untimely jump while the 2 fuckwits were still laughing. But he felt at home, this place was truly magical.

Then he saw her, standing at another table flirting with a patron, stuffing gold coins in her busty cleavage as she shook them in his face. Her face was dirty, her dress was a dusty pink, unruly and ruffled, her hair was scraggly ... but she was beautiful! She turned and Alleandro saw her blind eye but it made no difference to him, as it reminded him of his own, out of place eye, as his hand was compelled to touch it.

"That's Mandalina," slipped in Stinky as he handed Alleandro his brown liquid in a silver tankard, nudging him as he stuck a dark brown smoking stick into the puppet's gob and lit it, "... she's just a whore!" Stinky turned and handed Dog Boy his tankard and stick when Alleandro questioned,

"What's a whore?" Alleandro then inhaled the lit smoking stick and choked like never before and it was fucking disgusting! He reefed the

smoking stick out of his mouth grabbing his throat and coughing out as much smoke as he possibly could! “Fucking yuck!” Alleandro complained with his screwed up face as he stubbed it out on the bar.

“Oi, fuckhead ... I paid good money for that!” whined the cat as he lit Dog Boy’s smoking stick, before his adding, “Pissweak prick!”

Stinky explained the finer details of a whore’s services to Alleandro and Alleandro’s jaw dropped to the floor again,

“Bullshit! You’re bullshitting me!” Then he looked down to his naked wooden body and he realized he did not have one of them where Stinky said it should be, but a solitary crack; he was confused! Wasn’t his crack for a missing heart?

“No, it fucking isn’t!” Stinky stated as he drew on his smoking stick, explaining to him that that’s a completely different story to his and then pointed to Dog Boy’s package, and then to his own. Alleandro didn’t have one like them, just a hole where it should have been. He complained,

“But I don’t have a baby-maker Stinky.” Stinky listened to Alleandro’s concerning problem knowing only too well he would have to help his new companion get one. For he understood the desperation within his friend’s wanting and lustful eyes as he himself remembered Miss T and the first time he had seen and smelt her rustling tail around in the alley; he had to be with her and was! Stinky understood clearly - Alleandro needed one so he could be with Mandalina.

“Where can I buy a baby-maker?” Alleandro quizzed Stinky, as the cat raised his finger to his lips,

“*Shush*, not in front of the fucking kid!” They both looked down at Dog Boy who was sculling his amber magic liquid, burping and sniffing the air for freshly wiped bottoms holding his smoking stick. They both turned away and Stinky whispered,

“I know a Sorcerer ... he will get you one but it will cost you ... or me. But this could ... could cost you ... your soul!”

“What’s a soul?” now Stinky really had Alleandro dazed and confused.

The 3 drank and drank ‘til they were numb, they had been laughing and enjoying themselves all night even when Stinky let one rip on purpose, clearing the room in seconds. But, closing time came too fast and they were asked to leave. Alleandro could hardly walk and Stinky’s speech was blurred.

“So Pruppet Broy ... when re rake up (*hic*), re rill goanne see a Sorrherra kay.” Stinky fell over in the street, flat on his side and he was dead numb, out like a light, snoring. Both Alleandro and Dog Boy sat down (alongside their passed out cat friend) on the dusty footpath while the moon’s oblong face leered and grinned its evil cheesy look over them. But they were too occupied with Stinky, laughing at him prodding him every now and then just to make him kick, squirm and grumble (but not fart, they didn’t want that). Suddenly a strange feeling, a brand new sensation was erupting in Alleandro’s belly ... and he threw up all over Dog Boy.

“Oi! Wake up Puppet Boy, time to rise and shine.” Alleandro awoke to see the 2 standing over him before he was blinded by the morning Sun. The pain had returned and invaded his head,

“*oowuuuccchhh!*” It felt like his head was expanding and shrinking or, a blacksmith’s hammer banging on his anvil from inside his head and that weird feeling in his belly was still there. He could see Dog Boy’s eyes clearly now and they were exactly as Stinky’s - blood red and puffy! And as Dog Boy scratched his hairy back, Stinky made the suggestion of the morning thought Alleandro.

“We need some fuckin’ breakfast!” Stinky burped while the other 2 quickly grabbed their noses in case another bit of wind would make its presence from the opposite end as he staggered off beckoning the 2 to follow.

The markets were frantic and people pushed Alleandro from side to side which didn't help his sickness at all. The villagers were exchanging gold coins for foods yelling and screaming at the stall sellers, it was so loud and louder than the alehouse, he tried to put his fingers in his ears but he was fucked – he had no ear holes! So he did his best to cover them. He found it hard to keep up with Stinky and Dog Boy as they pushed their way through the town people's legs. The smell of food hit him and his hungry sickened belly was screaming for something, anything! Stinky pointed to a fishmonger displaying all kinds of delicious seafood - fish, crabs, squids and even pieces of a chopped up white whale.

“Now Alleandro, I want you to ask the fucker some questions, distract him ... tell him you're lost or something!” Stinky then pushed Alleandro towards the monger's table; he hit it with a bang!

“Excuse sir, excuse me ... I'm lost and I can't find my father.” His eyes were darting left and right, he had never lied before and it felt strange but he could do it, wasn't that hard, not as hard as watching gypsies die! Stinky slipped a whole fish off the table and passed it down to Dog Boy who was hiding underneath. The fishmonger replied with his back turned to Alleandro,

“Sorry boy, I am too busy too ...” he turned his body and drew his attention to the funny looking puppet - and pointed, “I've seen you before ... where have I seen you? You look familiar.” Alleandro froze as suddenly he was a someone, an actual someone that this man thought he had recognized, so he asked,

“Do you know me? I am Alleandro.” The puppet's sickened belly stirred inside.

“I think you were a puppet here once ... you did a show, a very long time ago. What was his name ... err the puppeteer? Was it G-G-Gippy? Nice man! Sorry, I can't remember but my sons were only little and liked it very much!” The monger turned away to take gold from the waiting villagers who were holding and waving pieces of white whale blubber in his face. Alleandro was still frozen solid when Dog Boy grabbed his ribbon from the front and reefed him under the table.

The 3 vagabonds crawled on their hands and knees hurriedly through and under the market tables with their stolen prize gripped firmly under Dog Boy's arm. Alleandro's wooden heart pumped faster and faster in his chest, (and now he knew that a heart belongs up there and a baby-maker down - there) as he glanced left and right at the legs of the town's people either side of the tables waiting for someone's arm to reach down and grab one of them. Dog Boy pointed to a nearby deserted alley and they scrambled quickly and quietly towards it.

The left-over fishbone lay discarded and clean in front of them as they leaned against the dirty cobblestone alley wall, looking and laughing at each other's expanded stomachs. All three clasped their fish-flavored hands behind their heads taking turns to burp, one by one. Closing his eyes helped Alleandro to drift off to dreamland while Stinky bragged about being the only cat with ten lives.

"I love this place, I just fuckin' love it!" Alleandro closed his wooden eyes and drifted into slumberland, as he recognized this feeling and it was one of warmth, the same one of hearing his father's voice singing from when he first awoke; it was - contentment.

*

A deal to die for

“Well, let’s get you a baby-maker hey,” suggested Stinky, “you haven’t changed your mind, I hope?” After an hour or 2 of sleeping off the digested fish, they made their way to the Sorcerer’s tower within - The Kingdom.

The - Tower was situated amongst the - Darkened Woods on the outskirts.

The dark and foreboding stone structure seemed to erupt from nowhere when they reached it. It shadowed the tiny visitors, way above them, casting its evil darkness over them all. A frightened Alleandro could feel his bark creep as its eerie shadow cast a revolting penetration through him. He stood close behind the other 2 as Stinky knocked on the huge hardwood doors. The sound was a deep murky thud and seemed to echo. The doors creaked open by themselves and Alleandro was scared, scared shitless! Yes, another recognized feeling, the one from the dream and it was – fear, and he could feel it alright. The 3 ascended the spiraling black iron stairwell that seemed to go forever, circling upwards and around and around and around. They finally reached the top where another door opened magically by itself, as the others previously. They entered the dark stone room with Alleandro at the rear cowering behind Dog Boy.

“Who goes there?” The deepest of voices had come from behind a deep purple velvet chair with its back the only view. It was the size of 3, wide and foreboding and was facing a burning fireplace; it made them all do a little nervous dance! The frightened travelers embraced each other in a huddle as the only clear view, was the hand of Sorcerer grasping the arm of the huge imposing chair as Stinky answered shakily,

“Oh, Great Sorcerer, of the Kingdom ... it is I, Witch Lily’s black cat - Stinky with and my 2 questing companions, Dog Boy the werewolf child, and Alleandro the puppet boy.”

The Sorcerer stood and Alleandro nearly pissed himself when he realized the Sorcerer was 8 feet tall. He turned and slowly walked towards them dragging his gold and black robe along the floor. The Sorcerer was holding his magic shaft which was as high as him and made of a twisted white ghostly tree branch, and then he yelled,

“Alleandro the puppet, you are alive?” His pupils were glowing red flames. Was it just the reflection from the fire or were they real fire, Alleandro couldn’t tell? It terrified them anyway as he continued, “This was not meant to be. Come here puppet!”

Alleandro was pushed forward by a shaking Dog Boy who then accidentally emptied his bowels on the cold stone floor to Stinky’s horror. Taking one slow step at a time, Alleandro finally stood at the Sorcerer’s feet.

The Sorcerer bent over and touched Alleandro’s roughened face - and then he laughed! His laugh echoed loud and evil throughout his castle, sounding like it bounced off every wall. Stinky and Dog Boy were just looking at each other scared out of their wits. Then suddenly the Sorcerer cut his laughter to dead silence and his smile disappeared, unveiling his gritted yellowed decaying teeth or what was left of them.

“What do you want cat?” The Sorcerer stood straight up and glared at Stinky banging his wooden shaft on the stone floor, scaring them all even more. Stinky and Dog Boy grabbed each other again as Alleandro stood motionless with his 2 wooden shoes chattering on the cold stone floor.

“It is not me your Great Evilness ... but, but Alleandro.” Stinky reluctantly pointed to him. The Sorcerer’s gaze was slow and steady as he redirected his glowing red eyes to meet with a terrified Alleandro.

“What is it you want puppet ... to be a real boy?” Alleandro answered in a choky voice,

“N-n-no, sir ... I need a baby-maker!” Alleandro pointed to the crack where it should have been. The Sorcerer’s left eyebrow raised as he again bent down to directly stand face to face with Alleandro, then he spoke in a much softer tone,

“It will cost you your brand new soul, puppet.” Alleandro was nodding frantically as he turned to see the other 2, who were also nodding in fear and in time with him. “Very well puppet!” and he laughed again adding, “... then a baby-maker it shall be!” His laughter came from a dark place, an evil place and it terrified Alleandro.

The arms of the Sorcerer were above his head as he held his head up to the roof of the Tower just looking, looking at what they could not see. He then knelt down and placed his hand on top of Alleandro’s shaking head, whispering an incantation. With a swift movement, the evil wizard broke a piece off of this magic wooden staff and thrust the small branch straight into Alleandro’s crack! It stood straight outwards as Alleandro looked downwards at it and thought to himself, *‘That’s pretty fucking small!’*

“It is done puppet ... your soul is mine!” The wizard regained his stance and went to turn quickly towards the burning fire when he saw the steaming shit on the floor. His disgusting teeth gritted and grinded as he just made a “*Grrrrr*” sound, shaking his head. He turned and with his back towards them, summoned them away by pointing to the exit door,

“Now go!” His order echoed and echoed chilling them all to the bones. The door reopened and they scrambled down the spiral stairwell, running for their lives, straight out the Tower’s doors and through the Darkened Woods never looking back once.

*

All for Mandalina

“Are you sure this is alright?” Alleandro flicked his new wooden baby-maker making a *boing* sound. Stinky did his best to reassure him,

“Hey! You know what they say?” Alleandro didn’t but he was listening. “It’s not how big it is but what you do with it!” Stinky pointed to his own baby-maker and stated, “This has seen LOT of action Puppet Boy! Never let me down and the bitches love it!” Alleandro just nodded and raised a small unconvincing smile as Stinky slapped him on the back, “Now let’s get you some gold.”

Alleandro sat in silence while they were killing the nice old man whom they had seen carrying a bag of gold coins, leaving the market place. Dog Boy had pretended to cry in the abandoned alley and when the kind old man approached to help the crying boy, Stinky ordered Alleandro to pounce and slit his throat with the blade. Yet Alleandro had just stood there dumb-founded doing nothing. He had questioned himself whether this was right or wrong and Stinky shook his head in total disgust; it was no time to feel – guilt.

“Fuck it Puppet Boy!” Stinky lurched at their chosen victim slashing his throat with all his razor-sharp claws. The old man fell to a heap begging for mercy as Dog Boy finished him off with his trademark tear of what little Stinky had already left of a throat. Alleandro watched the old man gurgle his way to death, (as the gypsies) choking on his own warm crimson nectar while his teary kind eyes fixed on Alleandro pleading – “*Why?*”

Stinky threw the bloodied bag of gold coins to Alleandro as he spoke,

“She’d better be worth it? She’d just better be fuckin’ worth it!” Alleandro caught the bag with Stinky’s paw print embodied in blood upon it and nodded with his eyes down, thinking of her face and not of the old man’s . . . and he smiled; he could live with this!

Mandalina's mistake

Ye Ole Ale House was as busy as the night before when the companions entered through the swinging doors. Smoke filled their lungs as the sweet smell of the magic liquid engulfed them. Alleandro looked around the bar and it was as if the previous night had replayed itself, it was all the same, the same faces, same going-ons. But he could not see her anywhere and then, cutting through the volume of speech, he heard her sweet sounding voice in a soft song. She was next to the piano and he glanced down at his baby-maker and the bag of gold in his hand; it was time!

Mandalina was singing a drinking song while the midget played the sing-along tune as the monkey danced out of time. Alleandro was mesmerized by her voice and his heart ached to be with her. Stinky pushed him her way and Alleandro stood directly in front of her speechless and wide-eyed, while the other 2 went off to the bar. Mandalina broke her song then tilted her head so her only good eye would get a good look at this strange little puppet boy. Alleandro was nervous and pointed her gaze to his brand spanking new baby-maker.

“I have gold Miss and I ... I would like to buy some baby-making time with you.” And he could hear the cheers from his 2 friends supporting his bravery from the bar, as he turned to them to see the 4 thumbs up approval, smoke sticks in their mouths. Alleandro returned his awkwardness to Mandalina and jingled his bag of gold in front of her. Her hand instantly covered her mouth as she stepped backward and spoke in a disgusted tone,

“Little puppet boy ... sorry, I don't do boys ... or puppets!”

“But I have a brand new baby-maker ... and it's ready for some action ... baby!” Alleandro grabbed it tightly bending it upward toward her, and then to his horror, the baby-maker stick snapped off at his trunk! He felt his black face-bark turn into a glowing red one. Mandalina fell to the ground in hysterical laughter.

“Oh my Lord ... that is the funniest thing I’ve ever seen ... you broke your tiny stick willie, aha ha ha!” Alleandro’s anger raised like an erupting volcano and it took over his whole wooden body as he picked up his broken body part,

“That’s not a stick willie ... that’s my baby-maker!” He was shaking it firmly in her face but she just rolled around laughing, as the midget did as well, as those whose attention had overheard Alleandro’s request (except Stinky and Dog Boy of course). He tried desperately to replace it in his crack but it kept falling out, only to make Mandalina laugh louder. He kept thrusting it as he angered but the stick refused and kept dropping to the floor ... and then it snapped! But it wasn’t the stick.

For what happened next would even shock the ever-so-worldly Stinky. Alleandro lunged at Mandalina, ramming the broken baby-maker into her good eye socket, deep and hard, while the monkey squealed and the midget fell off the piano stool. Mandalina screamed as her only good eye was blinded by the blood and she could not see her tiny attacker, only feel his raging anger. Alleandro was on top of her as she tried her best to blindly push him off. He reefed his blade from within its ribbon belt and stabbed her in her heart, again and again, and again! Alleandro was stabbing her in a feverish frenzy. She had broken his heart and he would break hers! They both rolled around the ground as her blood blinded his vision. Anger had erupted alright, shooting its lava and covering, disintegrating and melting anything in its destructive path. It consumed him to blindly stab her and it was still here so he stabbed her continuously until the fire would recede.

Stinky turned and looked around the bar and it was filled with dead silence as every punter’s attention was glued on Mandalina’s murderer and he whispered to Dog Boy,

“Oh fuck ... we gotta get out of here man!” Stinky grabbed Dog Boy by the collar and backed off slowly to the front doors ... then they heard it.

“Grab him he’s a murderer! Grab his fucking asshole friends too!” The lynch mob all stood up simultaneously drawing their respective

weapons - spears, lances, swords, axes, and bludgeoners. Stinky wondered where they all had come from. The spokesmen screamed his order again,

“Grab the boy, grab the cat ... and grab that fucking puppet!”

Stinky and Dog Boy were out of there, running as fast as they could as the mob rushed towards the murder scene. Reality reverted Alleandro's anger to its simmering core and replaced it with his new-found fear, as he threw himself through a nearby window to escape the clutches, landing in a ball of dust and shattered glass.

The angry drinkers were yelling and screaming while exiting Ye Ole Ale House and they wanted blood! Alleandro gathered himself enough to run as fast as his little wooden legs could possibly go. He could see the other 2 way up ahead and he was catching them quickly, (he had learned to run in time now and did his best to focus on his legs, not them) but the lynch mob was gaining ground; they were close behind!

“Wait up you fuckers ... wait!” He was pleading as he was running to his friends and he was so scared! What had he done? Mandalina, his beautiful Mandalina and he had lost his new baby-maker!

*

Penance for a puppet

“Quick Puppet Boy ... here!” It was Stinky’s sweet-sounding cat voice and Dog Boy pulled Alleandro into an abandoned laneway as they hid under empty water barrels. “Now stay fucking quiet! Don’t panic ... okay.” Stinky did the *ssshhh* finger sign and they quietly retreated to their own empty barrel. They heard the lynch mob run past the alley and no one stopped at all.

It felt like they had been hiding for an hour but it was only minutes in actual time when silence was broken by Stinky’s whispering,

“We need to get out of here, hide out in the Darkened Woods ‘til all dies down. Listen,” So they did, Stinky whispered, “I think it’s clear.”

But curiosity did kill this cat as Stinky was a little too eager to test the safety of silence, by lifting up and moving his stationary barrel, just to get a look-see to check if the coast was clear. Unfortunately, the first image he would see was the shiny golden dancing reflections, from the two shiny armored soldier boots, standing motionless in front of his hiding place. Fear was Stinky’s last emotion as one of the King’s soldiers ripped off his barrel leaving poor Stinky defenseless and shaking in his boots. It was the moat guard himself that just stood there glaring downwards in the glow of the burning street oil lamps, smirking at him. And with one deft blow, relieved Stinky of his tenth life and his head, decapitating it clean from his body. There was no sound from Stinky at all ... only one final disgusting smell.

Dog Boy howled hauntingly for Stinky when he heard the swish of the guard’s sword and the bounce of Stinky’s head on the dirt so he decided to take his chance and make a run for it. But the werewolf child was met by the guard’s sword as well, straight through the back of his tiny brain with the blade poking out the other side, protruding through his right eye socket.

Alleandro was crying as could hear that his only friends were both dead now and the puppet feared for his life. He was shaking with fear so much so he begged for forgiveness (a new emotion he pleaded for) from beneath his barrel,

“Don’t kill me, please ... I give up, please, I want to live, please!” The lynch mob had returned and now joined the guard screaming for revenge, all standing behind him as he loomed over the last unturned barrel. With no forgiveness, the moat guard lifted the barrel to unveil Mandalina’s killer. With fear freezing his actions, Alleandro just huddled into a ball and waited for the knife. The guard reached out, grabbed the puppet by the scruff of the neck, lifting him high as Alleandro cried. Alleandro was too scared to look at him or them, so he just kept his eyes closed. The guard turned and wavered his catch to the lynch mob as they all screamed their anger.

“Tear the puppet to pieces ... better still burn him ... burn the little shit!” The mob screamed and the rest repeated it over and over, demanding his death. They cheered in sickened agreement as the guard grappled Alleandro one-handed by the neck carrying him from the failed hiding place saying nothing, just shaking his head in disgust as if to say, “*I warned you silly puppet!*” He placed his bloodied sword back in its sheath while swinging Alleandro around with his tightening grip beckoning his prize catch again to the mob, teasing them and do his best to insight their revenge.

Alleandro was petrified, he’d felt fear before but this was the fear he had felt in his bad dream - the chilling scream! The armored guard turned and faced the lynch mob that wanted and demanded bloody curdling revenge! Unannounced, the moat guard took a bow to the angry crowd’s chanting, then thrust Alleandro high into the air before landing him into their path in a sprawling dust pile of broken wooden arms and legs.

Alleandro lifted his smashed body by his good arm to only be knocked back to the ground by the angry blood lusting villagers. They hit and beat him over and over until nearly all of his roughened bark from his body was splintered or gone exposing his body’s new softer lighter brown bark. His

arms and legs were snapped and hanging, he could not move them and the new bark underneath was raw and way more sensitive and painful - and it was weeping sap, weeping a red sap. Alleandro could taste the sap in his mouth and the taste was blood, warm blood, he was bleeding, for it was his blood - a boy's blood! And he let out a heart-rending cry as he accepted he had been a real boy after all, like a butterfly from a caterpillar trapped inside a cocoon waiting for his time to get out and his subconscious spoke to him, as this was the true wish he had suppressed.

He had protected his face as best as he could from the insufferable pain of the beating and only half of the roughened bark of his face remained. They had beaten off most of his hardened protective coating from his old body only to torture his new soft delicate one and it pained like never before until the black-out took the excruciating pain away!

Alleandro awoke in the grinning moon's light to agonizing grogginess realizing he was tied to an upright pole, as the smell and smoke of burning logs and twigs surrounding his feet, filled his crushed lungs; they were burning him alive! He could see the angry faces of - The Kingdom's villagers, chanting and cheering for his forthcoming death. He saw the beautiful blonde princess in the background holding the hand of her father - The King ... but where was his own father, he needed his father, so he made one more dying wish, *'Save me, father, please save me.'* And soothing wetness rolled down the throbbing exposed side of the puppet boy's bruised and swollen face, from his half-closed bloodied eye and they were tears, real tears of sadness and he felt himself crying for the first and last time.

The boy wept openly as the flames started to engulf his smooth brown flesh and it hurt as the bubbles burst upon his frail body. Alleandro remembered all the emotions he had learned in life. He did his best to think of only the good ones, the fun times with his only friends and the laughter. He did his best to think of his father - the maker. Had he answered the burning questions of his mind? Yet now he realized the answers were always there in front of him, for he knew them all along. The

maker was his father, his real father and that was his home! But he had refused to accept the truth just as his own disgusting face. He had walked away from – home, like the foolish child he was, never believing he was good enough to be loved! Yet none of this mattered anymore.

The flames rose higher as the agony engulfed Alleandro as he cried for forgiveness, he cried for murdering Mandalina, the old man, and he cried for himself, but mostly for wasting this beautiful gift of life he had been blessed with.

The last thing to enter his mind's dimming light wasn't the Sorcerer's leering face to collect his wasted soul but the feel and warmth of his father's gentle touch, such gentle caring hands, lovingly creating him from a simple piece of blackwood and with these final thoughts the pain was gone and it was over ... all over.

*

Epilogue part 1 - The truth

Ruffling through the ashes the puppet maker finds what is left of Alleandro's charred wooden bark face and his unique looking eye. It was him; he knew now! He strokes the rough protruding bark of his eldest and knows it is the most beautiful face he has ever made. He had heard from the gypsies, the story of a living puppet boy with a cat and a wolf child seen heading towards - The Kingdom and he knew it would be his missing son.

The puppet maker was so excited to introduce Alleandro to his new baby brother that magical night they both were born to him ... but he was gone ... and only his strings remained. The puppet maker held faith that his son Alleandro would find his own path home and one-day return but the stories had told differently; he had lost his way! He had heard the gypsy woman tell of all the evil that surrounded this cat and his wolf child friend and that they had misled Alleandro's path to the wrong side, the dark side and so this journey was to find his son, bring him home and show him love and understanding and show him - forgiveness.

*

Epilogue part 2 - The secret

The puppet maker holds his son's face to his chest and wails loudly. If only he had got to Alleandro sooner, to make him understand that his only wish was for a family, not just a lone son, but a real family – 2 sons! Now he must wear the burden of pain and loss and mourn his eldest.

Alleandro was the first puppet the puppet maker had ever made - the special one! And the laughter he brought to the children of - The Kingdom was the only true reason why he decided to make him a brother, so Alleandro would never be a lonely child, lost and alone, as he himself had been for far too long. But he had failed Alleandro ... and he was sorry.

The road to take his son home was long and tiring for the puppet maker, he was weary and his tears had cried achingly dry. He placed his heart alongside Alleandro's charred face and buried them together amongst regret and sadness, at the bottom of a similar Blackwood tree, deep in the magic forest where the puppet's wood had originally come from.

Now his world must center around his new son's well-being and he had to protect his youngest from all this darkness, emptiness and heartache he felt. So he swore on his deathbed never to tell him the story and the loss of his only brother - Alleandro.

Beginning to End

I'm just a man
Frightened to stand
Biting, fighting, to find his own way
If love comes along
To change all that's wrong
Sighting, lighting, then face the crazy

**The Earth, the Sun, the Moon
Can love temper doom
The Earth, the Sun, the Moon
Is all, I pray, for me**

I'm just a man
Followed no plans
Fighting, righting, to do things my way
Yet love came along
Singing your song
Hiding, riding, finds a man lonely

**The Earth, the Sun, the Moon
When you walked in the room**

The Earth, the Sun, the Moon
Is all, your love, I see

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Story 5

Dark Lust 2 - Towards the Moonlight

Logic

As I lay there in hospital I had time to reflect back on the last year here and at how all this insanity began. Was I simply schizophrenic or delusional to believe I was a vampire or even in the belief, for that fact? What evidence did I actually have besides two missing friends and a fucked-up memory of surreality? Oh, Natasha was real, very real; strange, but not a vampire! Logic kicks you in the fucking teeth when the dust starts to settle. So as I stared day after day at the hospital ceiling, I started to piece a cohesion of commonsense ... and admitted it was all in my very sick mind.

I have been here for assessment and the pills and therapy seem to be working. At least the sporadic lines of thought are now making some sort of road out of the pain and darkness. I foresee my life returning to a likable place, where at least I would be nearly a whole person complete with normal emotions.

I know my repair has been speed-tracked by simply wanting it too ... for her; especially in the last few months! Nurse Tanya and her smile caught my eye when the delusions cleared enough to see myself back into a world without them. I knew she had noticed me watching but never once showed any concern that the crazy man in room 21 freaked or scared her. We started talking a few polite words as fluffed around my room before conversations developed into deep and meaningful.

We first fucked in the shower recess; quick, hard, and fast! We had to be quick with all these crazies around here, beside Matron Evans was sent straight from the fiery place with her dominance ruling over her watch.

Our relationship has blossomed and it is blatantly obvious Tanya and I belong together; no ifs, no buts! For today is the day I am to be released and set free back into the big, bad world outside. My Tanya has taken the day annual to pick me up and care for me over the coming weeks. Not that Matron had any idea of our secret going-ons, especially the ones in the shower recess!

I stood with my suitcase of clothes and belongings (mostly books on vampires, mind you) and looked around the asylum, accepting I had dodged a bullet. Dr. Peters shook my hand then signed me out as I received my first-ever smile from Matron (miracles do happen). Old Henry was mopping the floor as I walked passed him to my exit. He looked up with his crazy-eyes that was clear evidence of his years here and that his blood was made up of mostly chemicals, but I liked him and his chats! He smiled stopped mopping, and spoke,

“Take care Jay Jnr, remember what I told you. Not everyone in this shithole is crazy! Be careful my son.” Goosebumps raised as the hairs on my neck stood to attention, for the look, Old Henry shot, chilled me. As if he was stating he believed our conversations re Natasha and her bloodlust and my delusions were real. Henry wasn't insane that's for sure but the pretense had kept the old man out of jail for euthanizing his soul mate 12 years prior.

I walked down the front marble stairs to see her waving madly at me with her smile from cheek to cheek. Her hair was tied back in a pony-tail and her lipstick was the brightest red I'd seen in years and I thanked God it wasn't blood red! Her matching bright red tightfitting shirt tucked into her tightfitting red skirt on top of those red stilettos, made her look like she was straight out of the technicolored '50s. Tanya was jumping up and down like a schoolgirl at my final release into her arms. She held me and smothered my face with kisses, so you can imagine the look she gave me

when she finally stopped and my face was plastered with half of her lipstick.

We drove home to her apartment (since mine had been vacated for over a year and would need cleaning before I'd move back in) and besides, did I really want to go back there. Tanya was overly chatty and I laughed at her inane subjects from TV shows I hadn't seen to her pet turtle – Leonardo.

I grabbed my suitcase and followed Tanya up the stairs to unit 3. She opened the door and virtually pushed me in!

“C'mon Jay-Jay (her nickname she'd chose for me), welcome to Tanya's!”

Within an hour we had made love on her bed and it was wonderful to slow down and caress her close to me in a horizontal position for the first time. We simply held each other naked and without inhibitions or any fear; now that was wonderful!

Tanya was respectful and knew I would need time to adjust to my new freedom and surroundings of the outside world. I was left by myself while she went to grab us some Chinese from her local takeaway. I ventured around her 1-bedroom apartment unit, checking out all I could touch. I studied her framed photos of her and assumed most the ones of her were with her best friend Rosalyn she had spoken so much of. I then looked at her books and there were so many of her martial arts. Tanya was a third Dan black belt in Taekwondo, she said it was Sam dan but that meant nothing to me. She had told me she started her training for this when she was still at primary school and on her mother's suggestion to lose the puppy-fat she was starting to increasingly gain. Tanya had confirmed her mother – Jean had pushed her into a world of self-defense for her own mother's peace of mind, for self-protection from the day that would come when boys would want her; of course, they would, she was fucking stunning!

I sat and turned on the TV and a reality show repeat came on and some unknown celebrity to me was yelling, “Get me out of here!” I flicked the channel and a nature show was on as Gentleman David narrated. It was all about snakes and their wonderful ability to adapt and survive in the strangest of surroundings, ready to strike and take down their prey. Snakes were dangerous but mostly when provoked, then Australia’s own and deadliest – the Eastern Brown and Taipans, contradicted this as they were not to be fucked with, all the time ... and I thought of Natasha. But why? Tanya walked back in and was bubbling and waving a bottle of champagne with the Chinese; it was time to celebrate my release!

*

Night Terrors

I awoke that first night screaming as Tanya grabbed and held me! I hadn't had a night terror since that first month at the asylum.

"Are you okay, Honey?" Tanya's face told me that mine was white as a ghost as I cried into my hands. "Tell me, talk to me ... I will understand!" Tanya did her best to reassure me and to share my fears but she only knew a little of my story. Believing a bad relationship had taken me to the depths of Hell. But she was there in my mind, taunting me and demanding my allegiance and soul to her; I was hers and she reminded me!

"Jay-Jay, tell me please." Her eyes watered as she saw my pain as I shook my head. Tanya kissed my forehead, jumped out of bed and went and got me a glass of filtered water and a sleeping pill. "Take this, it won't affect your medication ... just help you sleep."

"Thank you." It was all I could get out as my skin crawled with Natasha's hands touching me from another world. I took the pills and Tanya held me in the darkness until I finally did sleep.

The smell of bacon and eggs woke me and made me smile. I got up, ruffled my hair and looked into the bathroom mirror after my morning piss to see my new stubble and my drawn face. My eyes were sunken from simply one night of broken sleep. I shrugged my shoulders, reached down and swallowed two anti-depressants that were on my bedside table without any water.

"Are you awake sleepy head?" I heard her voice bubbling from her tiny kitchen so I ventured out and kissed her cheek as she cooked in her red satin and very short, dressing gown. It was then I acknowledged all the red that was in her unit, red frames, red curtains; it was obviously her favorite color!

"Smells good!" I leaned over the frypan and took in the home-cooked smells. I stood back and our eyes connected and she asked,

"Honey, are you okay? That scared me too ... you were sweating bullets and shaking like a leaf." Then she frowned, "Was it, Natasha ... the vampire?" I looked downwards and simply nodded in shame that I had mentioned my delusion to her when we met. One day free and here I am

in a street I'd closed. "Jay-Jay, Honey, you don't need to go through this alone! I do understand a little of what schizophrenia is." And there was the problem, was it schizophrenia?

The dream had all but vanished and the little that remained haunted me! She was there above me and Tanya as we lay sleeping peacefully. I would awake to her deadly kiss on my inner wrist, draining the life-blood from my already poisoned body. I was frozen as she drank me towards death! Tanya awoke in the dream as Natasha simply kept drinking, reached over with her left hand and clawed her face off! I could see my Tanya's open face as her eyeballs were like bloodshot ping pong balls staring upward and into nowhere. This is where the dream ended when Tanya reeled me back to reality. Could I truthfully tell her this dream? I simply couldn't, it would scare her as possibly me and my night terrors would leave her no choice but to send me on my merry way, back to solitude and possibly the looney bin; so I refused!

"All good Tan, I'm okay this morning ... just change of surroundings. Was a bloody big day for me yesterday, but thank you, for asking."

"As long as I'm not freaking you out. Am I?" Her face was concerned so I shot her a reassuring smile and a joke,

"Could be the ugly beast?" I pointed to Leonardo as he paddled around the top of the tank waiting for a feed. Tanya cocked her head,

"Ugly? He's gorgeous ... touch my-a turtle ... I-a break-a you legs!" Her arms were out and her gangster impersonation was awful but it broke the moment.

*

Rosalyn

“Seriously, I never thought Joanne was going to be evicted!” Tanya’s eyes bugged at Rosalyn’s as her blue eyes bugged back with a confirmation nod, while her full mouth chewed. She swallowed, sipped her wine and finally got her words out,

“Yeh, I know! How did that useless rude prick Freddie, not get voted out?”

I just sat silent watching from the shadows as the two best friends threw banter to each other re that torturous show we just watched. Every now and then they’d ask me something and most of the time I had no fucking idea what they were talking about. Rosalyn was just as attractive as Tanya but her blonde wavy mane probably drew more attention in the clubs because of it. I then thought of Paulie and how much she was his type; he would’ve given it a crack before the first Guinness was sipped!

While they were gas-bagging my memory took me back to Paulie and the W.D. Boys, cruising for chicks and drinking at - Irish Malones on every Saturday night, our regular haunt. Paulie loved the ladies and he attracted them that was for sure. My mind crucified me wondering where he or his body actually was. Jerry was missing too as my memory of him being a werewolf? It played on my mind re his disappearance from the face of the earth. I had to shake my delusions again as the last of my white chardonnay was downed, drawing my focus back to the girls and their bubbiness. They made me smile and accept what I had to look forward to – a normal life. Tanya saw my focus and topped up my empty glass with the drizzle left in the second bottle before she asked,

“Have we driven you nuts yet?” And then her face realized at what she had just asked! I smiled and thought inside, *‘How right you are!’*

*

Martial Law

The next few weeks I was staying at Tanya's, really helped me move forward and she was amazing. She even had me exercising twice a day as her fitness demanded daily routines of torture. I went and watched her at her martial art classes and as a teacher she was loved by the kids. As a student, she dedicated and disciplined. Her determination to win was more than obvious and when she lost a bout with her instructor, simply bowed, stepped away, and then glared at me as if it was my fault; she hated failure!

It was embarrassing starting classes there with the kids but I did it for her after all she did for me. She took no mercy of me and knocked me on my arse more than once as the kids watched at her expertise and free-flowing movements. The daily exercise was good for me though and I could actually get through a session without dying on the floor. My muscles soon accepted the joy of the burn and her encouragement was astounding.

Life was good for me and 6 months passed and still, I had not been home or even wanted to for my life here was so much better. I would stay and that was all I ever wanted. I knew sooner or later it would be time to sell my unit. I never contacted any of the boys either, I didn't want to even look the others in the eyes and wonder if they'd believed I was a killer of our brothers.

My dependence on medication had been replaced by exercise' I was finally off the pills! I even accepted I would be back to work soon as the benefits would soon be cut off, so started looking. Not that Tanya expected me to but I was feeling like I was ready to. I was fit and healthy (put on 5 kg and mainly muscle) and had just passed my testing to wear my newly dyed yellow belt, which I think Tanya was more proud of than me.

Our relationship was strong and respectful. Her love and commitment to me had made me accept – I was the closest to being a whole person than I ever had in over a year and a half. No night terrors anymore, no fears, and no fucking vampires; I was finally free! It was time to sell the unit, get a job and marry this beautiful girl!

*

Wedding dazed

“Hi, Steevo ... it’s Jay Jnr,” there was silence for a few moments then a rupture of volume from the other end.

“Holy fucking duck shit! If it isn’t the vampire fucker himself!” Steevo gave it to me like he always had and I chuckled, as he then gave me more, “The boys and I thought you were buried in your coffin with a stake in your heart!” It was so good to be ribbed at by him!

“So you’re still a fucking prick then ... good to see!” And Steevo laughed at my rebuttal.

“Ah, so it is actually you, ya crazy fucker! When they let you out?”

“Six months ago,” I waited and it came.

“Six fucking months! Where the fuck you been dickhead? We did as you demanded and kept away from the hospital, no contact, but we all thought we were just giving you space to sort that shit out! And best ‘cause you were fucking fucked, my friend! We were all worried you were never coming back from the looney bin, brother!” Steevo’s tone changed to serious, “So ... you beat it didn’t you?” I chuckled and lightened the mood,

“I did mate, feel bloody good too! Steevo, I met a girl ... a nurse.” The uncomfortable silence entered before Steevo processed the information,

“No fucking way, what, when, you were crazy as a cut snake?” I chuckled and explained,

“Yep, go figure ... Steevo, she’s amazing! Anyway, that’s why I’m ringing ... I’m getting married.” I heard Steevo cough or choke on the other end before his disbelief,

“No! You? Who’d want you ... a crazy fuck that’s got a head like a robber’s dog!” That one made me laugh!

“Fuck, you’re a prick Steevo! Wanna catch up for drink ... love to see the boys?”

“Does the Pope have two balls full of cum? Only Billy and Simmo and Roger though.” I did so miss his disgusting banter but I had to ask,

“Roger ... when did that bastard get back?”

“Last September, while you were getting a lobotomy. He fucking hated the English weather, told my dumb-arse brother that before he went but apparently he made a lot of money!”

“And where’s Jerry and Paulie?” I gently pried.

“Bastards went O.S. to live with some fucking tribe in South America, fucked if I’d know why. They’re still overseas, pricks only send a text every now and then, and get this, closed their social media accounts down due to respecting the tribe’s beliefs ... probably running around with their white tiny cocks out and fucking tiny pygmy girls or something, if I know those two ... or maybe they ended up in a soup. Now that would be frigging funny!” I wasn’t laughing at that one. He continued, “Never understood the fuck why, just upped and went without a goodbye, the next day you did your crazy thing! We got a text from the airport and that was it! Last I heard they’ll be back for Christmas ... apparently.” My alarm bells rang as I forced the darkness downwards to stay collared in its cage, never letting it escape but I still enquired,

“So you haven’t spoken directly to them?”

“Nah, pricks ... rude cunts if you ask me as if I’m shocked!” Steevo then suggested, “Malones in an hour then, Dwight Frye?”

I hopped out of the Uber and the two pricks were already waving at me. Steevo, Simmo, and Billy looked no different but Roger had put on a bit, especially in the face.

“Holy fuck, you got guns!” Steevo kept squeezing my biceps as Billy returned with three Guinness’s.

“Nice to see you me ol’ fruit gum!” Roger’s put on East end cockney accent cracked me up and I did miss him and it must have been 4 years since he left.

“So how’s was the motherland ‘n’ London?” I raised my glass and we toasted as he answered,

“Fucking cold! Never got used to it and the drizzle, just as I thought I’d never get used to warm beer as well ... but I did thank fuck! But the

folks were happy I came back ... they still think Australia's shit!" Steevo had to throw one in,

"Pommy fucking whingers, our parents ... and now we get one pommy whinger back!" Roger's left arm punched his brother in his chest never spilling a drop. Roger was always the hard nut fighter of our little collective and it was good to have him back. That made me remember when he floored that big dopey fucker for throwing ice at him. Roger laughed at first, as we all did, but he didn't after the third direct hit to the back of the head. Little did we know he was Paulie's younger cousin (Paulie was in N.Z. snowboarding at the time) and set up him up to do so, simply for a stir but supposedly when he was there to witness! Poor fucker got 3 cracked ribs from Roger and a heap of abuse from us and wasn't laughing or throwing any ice for a while. It wasn't 'til Paulie came back from his holiday did we find out who the little prick actually was. Paulie said his mum gave him hell over it, as well as the wrath from Auntie Mabel.

"So what's this shit about you getting hitched? Is she fucking blind, one eye, retarded?" Steevo's face was screwed up so I pulled my iPhone and showed them all a picture of her. "Fuck, what does she see in an ugly cunt like you?" I just smiled at Billy's comment and rubbed my crotch and answered, "eight inches I think." Simmo lost it and spat his ale out. Steevo smiled and patted my shoulder and stated, "Well, I still say she's fucking blind or stupid, so when's the big day?" Then I floored them both,

"Tomorrow at the registry office ... and I want you to be my best man and Billy and Simmo ... you to Roger, groomsmen!" Steevo then spat his Guinness out as the others froze.

"What? Tomorrow!" I nodded and he asked,

"Does this stupid bitch have a name?"

We drank and organized the informal plans and Steevo was concerned re not owning a suit so we drank up and the lot of us headed straight over to the Formal Hire shop in Dunston Street.

“Oh fuck, these pants are too long ... I look like a dick!” I agreed as the gay tailor named – Willie (that name got a smirk from Simmo and Steevo), who just winked and pursed his lips at me to say it’ll be all good. I slapped Steevo’s back to take a look at Roger, whose suit was the opposite too small for his now dominant pommy beer gut, poking out the front with the jacket buttons refusing to meet. Gay Willie spied him too and ran over to him and handed him the next size up. Steevo simply said what I was thinking,

“Fat cunt!”

*

Impossible

“Think I’m going to faint!” But it was Steevo that was the bundle of nerves, not me. I was calm as ever waiting for my soulmate to walk the aisle. Rosalyn and the other two bridesmaids of Tanya’s friends – Ida and Georgia, looked amazing and of course, they were all dressed in red!

Tanya looked stunning as she walked the short aisle of the registry room. Her hair was up with trails curled at the front but it was her high-heeled red rock ‘n’ roll boots that made her stamp her dominance in the room suggesting – ‘I’m here, let’s do this fuckers!’ So we all stood there in a line and we had just as many in the bridal party as witnesses. We kept it low-key but invited a few extra friends and family to the reception to celebrate. I did get razzed from Tanya about the extra groomsman and that our wedding photos were now uneven! Shit, I never thought even a second about that!

“I do!” Tanya looked into my eyes as she vowed to take me forever! I loved her so much right at the moment and she was the most beautiful girl I had ever laid eyes on! The celebrant spoke as the words were surpassed without my true acknowledgment of what was actually said; I just keep staring at her beauty, inside and out as her eyes sparkled! And then we were married.

The guests that were here congratulated us with kisses and hugs and now it was time to celebrate and party hard. We had booked Malones for the reception and had the front room section to ourselves. I met her mum for the first time and I could see the genes had been passed down from good stock. I only had the boys and their mums here as my guests with their mums insisting on coming, refusing to miss witnessing one of us confirmed bachelors finally taking the My folks had passed on years before; they were considered me like - family! We danced, drank, and partied until midnight and I admit I drank way too much for a groom and his consummation duties of the wedding tonight! Lucky for me, my wife was in the same boat!

We Uber'd it back to our unit and got out hand in hand as the so-in-love newlyweds. My beautiful wife grabbed me and drunkenly kissed me as Rashma the driver, drove off. We stood under the full moon in the heat of passion as if it would last forever, but it didn't! For there, standing across the road in the distance, she was watching from under a streetlight! Watching us and we both felt her!

“What the fuck? Is that her?” Tanya rubbed her too drunk eyes and squeezed into my body as I silently nodded and shook in fear. Natasha was there, standing and staring, not smiling, dressed in black with her black mane flowing in the breeze. She raised her arm and pointed her finger at us then wavered her pointer finger in a tut-tut way, shaking her head.

“Fuck off Bitch!” Tanya screamed from our side of the road, “You're too late slut! He's mine now ... go back to your hell!” Tanya then grabbed me and dragged me away and upstairs to our solace.

“That was Natasha, wasn't it?” My wife's eyes were bloodshot, not just from alcohol but from anger. “How did she find us ... on our wedding day?” I sat at the end of our bed and took off my leather shoes. Tanya was furious and I'd never seen her anger before, “Fucking Mole!” Then she turned to me and asked me directly, “Jay, I will ask you only once ... have you contacted her?” My eyes spoke and pleaded for her to accept the truth with fear displayed for her to see and I answered with only one word,

“No.” My wife sat next to me and hugged me as I cried, cried like a baby as all my nightmares compiled into reality, yet again.

It was my wife, the strong one who held me on our wedding night as instead of making love to her, I confessed all of my deepest fears from the insanity of paranoia to the possibility of believing I was her chosen one. But it was one thing that truly scared me more ... that Natasha believed I belonged to her

Honey Moon

The next morning we were off to Noosa for our honeymoon – 3 days and nights at the resort. To say we weren't as excited as we should've been was an understatement. Tanya was solemn for the 1st time ever as she fed Leonardo for the last time in a few days, while we were away. I watched the turtle munch away on the excess of food and thought of his lucky life, unaware of any fears or any forth-coming dangers. Rosalyn was concerned when she picked us up to take us to the airport and believed we had our first major argument; if only! On the plane, we relaxed and the conversation started to return, as we were away from the situation. I was grateful Tanya's bubbiness returned with the wine or two and it was time to celebrate our commitment together.

We arrived at the resort just after lunch and I removed the luggage from the hired car and we made our way to our prepaid accommodation. The view was spectacular and our room was to die for, but I prayed not literally!

The honeymoon was just what we both needed to get back to us and we romanced under the moonlight every night. No fears here and nothing but our love for each other. I believe Tanya chose to wipe Natasha's presence from her mind to simply help me to do the same; it worked! But soon it would be over and we would return to a normal married life and this scared me. Tanya was strong and showed me no signs of her fears at all but soon, very soon that would all change.

I sat there on our last night as my beautiful wife fell asleep in my arms as I stared into the near full moon. My life was so close to being whole and it was all because of this woman that I held. I owed her my love, I owed her my life so it was at that moment I made the decision. Natasha was to die!

Army of one

Tanya thought I was applying for positions with interviews but what I was really doing was selling my unit. We didn't just need money for a deposit for a new house but also so I could be free to find the monster from Romania; a day gig would get in the way! I must admit venturing back into my dusty apartment where my best friends and my cat had died disturbed me ... and the evidence was still here! I could feel her touch as she was connected to me and this place of death and why I could never come back until now; now I had a purpose! I had no doubt that she had bitten me and was claiming me for a life of misery limboed in eternity. Tanya had never been here as she knew the pain I felt within the walls. We had always planned to fix it up and sell it but today I will take what I can get!

“Probably get around the 500 k mark ... at a quick guess.” The real estate agent wiped the dust from touching my window sills, wiping it on his pants. “How much did you want?” His eyeballs drilled mine as he stepped over the and I answered,

“Give me 350 today and you can take it ... including the furniture, take it as is!” The agent quickly fumbled his phone out of his pocket as he knew this place, cleaned up, would pull a close 750 being in this area without full-furnishings. He went outside and made a call before hastily returning,

“Jay, my buyer will take it ... if you can wait for the legal documents to go through?” I answered,

“\$50,000 up front, bank the rest by Friday and I'll sign whatever you want!” He was back outside ringing again but my bet was it was family. Opportunities like this don't come your way every day. He was back and nodding,

“My client is happy to comply.” And with that, we shook hands as I said goodbye to the place of death that I so despised. I knew Tanya would not understand but my life with her was more important than any pissy materialist thing, even money!

The money was deposited so while Tanya worked her arse off caring for the crazy, her insane husband was building his army of one. No one

could know, no one. I had to protect my wife from Natasha's fury so I accepted I would leave and I prayed for her understanding of my decision to do so.

I refused to give in to my paranoia and fears this time, for I felt Natasha knew I was looking for her; she would come to me and I could feel her!

*

Claim your stake

I purchased a second hand Toyota Hi-Ace from a car yard for cash and drove straight to Bunnings to buy what I believed I would require to kill her and keep me alive. Everything from a camping stove, a lantern, padlocks, chains, tools, and wooden pickets to axes or anything that slightly resembled a weapon. My next stop was the local funeral parlor and the surprised faces of purchasing the top of the line stainless steel coffin and in cash. I needed to get away from here to protect Tanya as much as possible. I knew I would only get one chance and if I failed then she would suffer to the hands of the monster's fury; I had to ensure that I didn't!

I found a small real estate in a country town where I demanded cash again, a rented farmhouse in the middle of nowhere. They more than accommodating when the wad was flashed in front of them and the keys to a deceased estate, a farmhouse that had been vacated for years. I hadn't even looked at it but it was mine for the next 2 months. I stopped at the supermarket and bought myself enough groceries to live on as pots and pans as well as cutlery ... and garlic, every bit they had! There was an archery store next to it so I treated myself to a crossbow and a dozen arrows.

As I sat in the darkness of the empty farmhouse with a camping lantern as my only source of light, I thought of Tanya and my tears came. No longer was I consumed of my own mortality but hers. I had spent most of the deposit and ordered the rest of the sale funds into her account. If I was to die and for some reason, she survives, at least she would have something to remember me by and not just pain. I pulled out my mobile and text her of why I had done what I had, explaining not out of fear but love. I thanked her for all she had done for me and what she so deserved out of life. I spilled all of my actions and my plans to save us, except for my location.

So now I must wait as my army of one will take on pure evil for better or worse but it was all I could do.

Your heart belongs to me

A whole 2 weeks passed and I still waiting. I was forced to turn my mobile off after the second day as the unread messages from Tanya refused to stop and every time it dinged; I broke down! I hadn't showered in that time or eaten much so I knew my sickly smell would be an easier scent for Tash to find. My aim with the crossbow had improved dramatically and at least now I was hitting the fence target. But most nights were spent in the glowing light of the LED lantern, leaning against the farmhouse's wooden PJ wall with sharpened stakes around me and a crossbow in my hand. I had garlic placed everywhere (even a necklace) but its reassurance was piss-weak and I knew it would do nothing by itself so I filled the bathtub with as many floating in there as possible, I'd seen that in a movie. Getting her into it would be near impossible but at least it kept my mind focused and not to think about both of her - Tanya.

Nights were long and I refused to sleep during them as I knew this would be her time to strike. The days were hot but I forced the sandman to dance upon my eyes in the safety of daylight.

I could feel her close now; she had found me! I knew her bite was some sort of tracking system of the supernatural and reason why I decided this plan was the way to go. If only I could remember as I did on that night we became one, but only random memories returned as most were washed away with time. I was tired and exhausted but that was only physical and so I focused my mind to my mental strength, for that was the only way to defeat her.

I had no idea what even day it was and my supplies were running low, but while I still had bottled water, then I would survive to face the war.

I heard the front door open and the footsteps of death, so I grabbed my stakes and aimed my crossbow, ready to kill the beast. My heart raced as her reflection shadowed from the candles dancing in the hallway. Then I heard the voice, yelling demanding, but it wasn't Tash's; it was Tanya's!

My Army of five

“Why?” Tanya simply held me and cried, as Roger, Steevo, and Billy stood in her reflection with various weapons in their hands just staring at the open coffin in the middle of the room. Tanya was poking and pulling my eyelids up and her concern was warranted; I wasn’t well!

“Honey, why would you do this alone? If this is all true then you’re going to need us next to you!” My wife was a mess and her eyes clearly showed she hadn’t slept in days, possibly weeks as well.

“How did you find me?” I stared at her, then the boys as Steevo held his crowbar with both hands. Tanya grabbed my shoulders,

“You bought a van for cash, a coffin for cash, and finally rented a house ... for cash! It took us all this time from the day you left! But we refused,” Steevo butt in,

“No mate, she refused to give in ... refused to keep looking for you!” He was shaking his head as he checked out the coffin with garlic and homemade crosses spread throughout.

“Jay-Jay, I meant it when I vowed ‘til death do us part!” My wife hugged me and I cried as the others watched with heads down. Billy broke the silence,

“We can’t stay here Tanya, it feels wrong, and something’s fucking real wrong here!”

“Really?” It was Natasha!

“Fuck me dead, it is her!” Steevo freaked and ran next to us, joining our line of defense, as Natasha stood in her black flowing dress on the opposite side of the empty room. Steevo grabbed a wooden stake, blessing himself as he held out the pointy end for protection whispering, “You weren’t fucking crazy mate, she’s fucking real!” Tanya stared at Natasha and the pair locked eyes before Tanya demanded,

“Let’s dance bitch!”

Next minute Natasha was flying through the air towards Tanya as she ran forward and positioned herself to counter-attack. But Tash's force from her kick was too strong and Tanya was flying backward and hit the wall hard, hitting her head to an unconscious black-out! Roger then stepped forward and took his place in front of her,

"Heard you were a morbid-looking fuck!" Rog swung his pick-axe at her with all his ferocity and Tash simply leaned back at 90 degrees so the pick simply didn't connect, rounding a full circle, only cutting air. Billy runs in with his knife out but she was no challenge and Tash threw him across the room and he was out flat with a broken leg! Natasha walked in and pushed Billy to the other end of the hallway as if he was a piece of laundry. Tash turned her attention to Steevo,

"Hi, Steevo ... been a long time between drinks hasn't it!" Roger screamed from his spot when Tash flew in at lightning speed and sunk her projected fang into his brother's neck, before raising him in the air with one hand. I had to do something, I had to save Steevo!

"Tash, don't ... I will come, quietly!" Tanya was stirring from her unconsciousness as I got to me knees, dropped the crossbow, tore off my garlic necklace and stood. Natasha withdrew her extended fangs, closed her mouth and threw Steevo in the vicinity of the Billy who was nursing his compound fracture, doing his best to slow the bleeding. I spoke, "I accept your invitation ... for eternity ... just let my wife and friends live, please." I fell to my knees and begged, beaten as I tilted my neck for my creator to finish her injection of death. Tash smiled and nodded as she approached me and grabbed me by the hair stating,

"You have caused me a lot of pain! I should've killed you like him!" Tash pointed to Steevo and it was obvious his neck was torn open and his neck had been broken as he lay sprawled next to broken Billy. I cried instantly,

"No!" At that very moment, my wife and protector came out flying through the air flailing a pair of nun chunks, striking Natasha to the ground with the force of ten. Tanya was in a rage of fury as she hammered

the weapons into her face instantly turning Natasha's face into a puddle of blood, as she screamed,

“Get your own fucking husband bitch!” Roger then came running in swinging from the hallway with the pick-axe he picked up on the run. He swung hard and accurate and connected straight into the vampire's back! Blood squirted high as I just cowered amongst the carnage of my new army. “Stay down gutter trash!” Tanya yelled as Natasha was starting to writhe amongst her own lifeblood. Billy was like me and simply watched as the other two inflicted all they had at her. They hit with no remorse and they were winning! Then with one burst of unknown power she was up in the air, dripping her crimson poison from her broken body above them. Her face was a beaten mess but her fangs were back. She flew at Billy and tore his face off. I shook my head and held my hands in defeat screaming,

“Enough! Enough! No more!” Tanya ran to me as she dragged me back to my spot and grabbed my crossbow. I looked at my wife's eyes and shook my head and said, “No Tan, this stops here!”

Natasha was flying around the room clinging wall to wall. The injuries had forced her to show her real face and it was the face of evil, true evil! Her jaw was long and protruded with incisors the size of a saber-toothed tiger but thin almost needle-like. The noise she made of her pain was like that of a screaming banshee. So hi-pitched and like the doors of Hell opened in here. Then she grinned and we saw Hell, and I felt hell as her control was entering me; I was losing! Tanya saw my face and her eyes widened as Natasha screamed from her retreat into the corner,

“See ... bitch! He's always been mine!” Tanya turned and king hit me and ordered,

“Stay down ... let me finish this!” Natasha just laughed as she flew at Roger, biting his neck, tearing his throat out as I watched from the floor to see another fallen friend. Her injuries were repairing and the cuts were disappearing as Tanya was scrambling with the crossbow. And with a super-quick movement, she stabbed a loose garlic bulb from my broken necklace that had rolled our way with the tip of the loaded arrow of my crossbow. Natasha's eyes widened with anger as her mouth opened and her teeth were coming for her. Tanya aimed, and fired the garlic-arrow

connecting with the vampire's neck! The agony of the arrow enters my neck as well as I could feel all Natasha's suffering. Tanya was up and taking advantage of her brief triumph in time as the monster fell to the ground as her neck smoked. Tanya turned to me and yelled an order,

"Help me get her to the coffin, NOW!" I jumped to my feet and did as she said, running to meet her at the smoking vampire, who was flailing in a pit of rage as the smoke increased from her body. We grabbed her by the feet and dragged her towards the coffin as she attempted to remove the poisoned arrow from her neck that was taking me to a place of pain I had never visited before. I felt Natasha's instructions but I refused them and felt her anger! We lifted her dying body and dropped her in the coffin as she smoked as Tanya shoved a garlic bulb into the beast screaming mouth, but then I felt it as the Natasha grabbed Tanya's arm with her claws and bit it deep! Tanya screamed as the vampire sucked hard as the garlic in her mouth burnt my soul. I had to save my wife, I screamed,

"No you fucking monster ... no, you don't!" I ran back and grabbed one of my many wooden stakes, ran back and thrust with the power within that she had given me and drove it straight through her heart! Instantly she released her bite from Tanya. We both fell to the floor as her banshee sound made our ears bleed! Blood exited her body like a pump exploding and we were covered in her blood. Tanya lay on the ground holding her ripped open forearm as I slammed the coffin shut! My hand was so badly shaking that I fumbled to do up the chains and padlocks. Natasha's screams from inside came from Hell and I felt it, yet as they subsided so did Natasha's hold over me; and then she was gone. I raced around to my wife who was crying and pleading to me,

"Kill me, please I don't want to be her!" But I couldn't so I helped her sit up and held her in the now silence of this death house. As Tanya cried in my arms, I looked around at my dead friends that now paid the price for me winning a stupid bet; even my wife! I helped Tanya to stand and I walked her outside, away from the blood and carnage. We sat on the front steps, under the full moon as it shone on us laughing at us and our misfortune. Tanya cried and asked,

"Why didn't you kill me?" I just shook my head and answered,

"'til death do us part!"

Epilogue - Awaken to your new moonlight

Tanya died an hour later from the poison Natasha had injected into her. So I sat alone, stroking my wife's hair as her cadaver eyes stared into nothing. It gave me time, time to reflect on my future and my destiny ... and here it was!

Her eyes flickered open and her color returned to her cheeks, and then she smiled. Her eyes were different though, soulless just like Natasha's were. My wife sat up and kissed my cheek as I hugged her. We never spoke, we didn't need to! I simply pulled my long hair away from my neck and offered it to her. Her fangs hurt as they entered into my jugular and I felt her push, not suck as we all believe they do, to mix her venom with mine (Tash's). My tears came then as I watched the man in the moon laugh at me and my decision. Tanya retracted her fangs and held me now as I placed my head on her lap awaiting my death. I prayed there was a little of Tanya left in there as I couldn't feel her soul or dominance over me as yet, but I took a chance! The blood poured from my neck and it would be my last ever feeling before I would become a creature of the night.

It was time to sleep, it was time to die as I stared into the moon again from the comfort of my queen's lap and accepted it was now my sun.

I awoke and felt it and it was glorious, no guilt, no regrets, nothing only Tanya, I could feel her as she spoke as I looked up into her eyes,

“’til death do we kill!”

The End of
DARKNESS BREAKS

Book 1

The DARKNESS Series

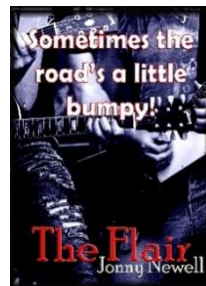
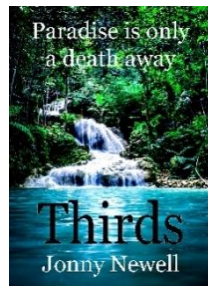
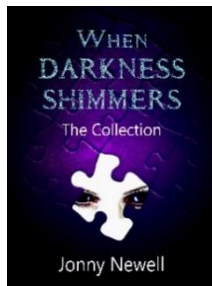
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About the author



Jonny Newell's creative imagination inspired him to become a story writer. A working musician for over 35 years, Jonny currently lives in Queensland Australia with his wife Vickie surrounded by the love of their families. When Jonny's not rocking in his various bands you'll most probably find him either recording music in his music room, renovating the house ... or just maybe ... he's swirling something weird and wonderful for his very next story.



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