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# DEADMAN'S TOME

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Feb 2010

Reader Discretion Advised

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FEATURING

*The Charge*

*by M.R.L.*

*Two incredible tales  
by Rick McQuiston*

*"Imagination"*

*and*

*"A Nightmare You Don't Want  
To Tempt"*

Edited by: Mr. Dedman.

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# Preface

Greetings to all of our loyal Deadman's Tome fans. Over the year we have shifted various aspects of our image. Most important, improving the layout of the magazine (taking advantage of the fact we are electronic and could do a lot more with it.) This edition illustrates what we plan on doing, and with the utilization of Adobe Professional, this is only the beginning.

Now I know you want to hurry up to the stories, but I want to take a moment of your time to say thank you to all of those that have donated. These donations are intended 100% towards the betterment of Deadman's Tome presence. We would like to improve how you interact with the content, authors, and editors. Plus, we want to design the magazine to your needs and desires. We couldn't have gotten this far without listening to each and every one of you. And believe me, we do read every single comment.

Now February rolls around the corner with its usual bittersweet sense of romance. Filling those hopeless romantics up with a sudden surge of warmth, increasing the ease for those certain individuals that choose to take the dangerous and annoying task of juggling multiple lovers, all for the end result of acting out on love and its enveloping emotions. Rubbish. Those sucked into the current of Valentine's Day may find themselves fooled once again. As a friendly reminder, here is an old post from an older friend.

And, not to join the bandwagon, but the events in Haiti are beyond devastating. Unfortunate to say, but the recovery may only restore the idea of civilization, not civilization itself.

Mr. Deadman

BLOODY HEARTS AND RAZOR KISSES *By Kat*

*We* have not forgotten about Valentines, but rather ignored the romantic holiday in favor of a painful reality that love is only as true as the letters that make-up the word. When someone says, “I love you.” Remember to not get your hopes up, as the person saying that will later play surgeon with your heart, and they do not have a license or the education to do such a thing. Don’t let them fool you, and don’t be quick to label this message as a bitter-bitch-note. The person that says the word first is generally going to be the one calling the shots, they will front you with believable half-lies and so-called facts, if you trust even a lick of the mutter garbage then you are already fucked, and not in a good way. I don’t care how good of a lay he is; if you are in this for love, do not believe it.

The consequence if you believe can be disastrous, and will often lead to tons and tons of empty ice cream cartons and a belly that will further ruin chances to get another “true love”. What you would be getting instead would be a “mercy love” which is good for long run relationships but sucks in the complicated truth that it is the inability to better oneself that binds the two of you. Your heart will be taken from you, and you can’t leave. Instead you have to stay, and you have to watch. He, or she, will force you to watch the painful moment as they ready a meat tenderizer and go-to-town on your vital organ. No doctor can heal you from that type of damage, and don’t even fool yourself with herbal remedies. What a merry little article this is. I bet most that are reading this are the jaded type that feels a sense of truth with these written words, but not everyone is alike. I get the impression that some are the happy “couple” type. The type that “WORK THINGS OUT”. For you that match that type, you could get rich sharing your secrets. You could even have your own talk show. However I think I might know what one of those helpful traits might be. Never fall for a guy on Valentine’s Day. No matter if it is first date or a long-time friend. Because this holiday is meant for people to score, sort of strange that the day is named after a saint when it is everything opposite of saint-hood. So when the man takes you out to a fancy restaurant you ought to go, but only for the free food and the chance to see other potential “partners”, because let’s face it that is what the holiday has become. You want the passion and romance, but do not confuse that with love otherwise the kisses will turn deadly sharp, slicing the emotional high you had the night before. His lingering presence and smooth talking could place a curse on your heart that can prove more effective than any five-fist-open-palm-heart exploding-death-punch.

The only way to win this holiday is to be one step ahead of your date

and know full well that it is only a one-time fling.



DEADMAN'S TOME PRESENTS:  
THE BLEEDER COLLECTION

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Have a question or an opinion that you want to stress, then do so here

[Dedman@demonictome.com](mailto:Dedman@demonictome.com)

[Legato10@swbell.net](mailto:Legato10@swbell.net)

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## *Debitum Naturae*

By Pamela Caves

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Pamela Caves is a full time online writer and editor; former creative writing category editor for the online content site, Associated Content, and is the National Creative Writing Examiner on [Examiner.com](#). She also has her own local webzine which displays the work of creative writers and artists in her hometown area.

On the shore of a star  
Below the spear of dark  
A life speaks and bursts  
Born of a dirty mark

She moves forth  
And studies the shore  
Water breaking, lives taking  
Her fate that of the torn

Shrouded in fog  
A murky move to her walk  
She moves about each village  
Destruction her only fault

A beauty unsurpassed

Life and love suggest a change  
But a hurricane cannot be peaceful  
She fears her doom near range

She soon settles in  
His lips a source of comfort  
But ecstasy can last for only so long  
She grows restless in the slumber

Her fate sealed in  
She sweeps his breath away  
And proceeds down her own path  
**Heavy guilt and pleasure sway**



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## THE STORIES

# The Charge

M.R.L

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A young girl was lain without garnish across the wide, round oak table, with her extremities spread and pulled tightly by various ropes to prevent any great struggle she might attempt. Her eyes, wild and pleading, were ignored by the small congregation of men and women benched around her. They chattered excitedly as their dining servants filled their cups and cleared their plates and utensils, as this ritual traditionally did not require them.

A sharply dressed man entered the room and warmly acknowledged the applauding guests as he made his way to stand at the edge of the table. He smiled and started to mouth a speech in a language that the girl did not understand. She felt sickened every time he laid his dark eyes on her nude outstretched form. The volume of his voice heightened, drawing his speech to a close. The guests applauded again and raised their goblets to a toast. Every one of them then stood and undressed themselves completely. All eyes were on the girl struggling against the restraints that fixed her to the center of that table. Their stares showed a beastiality that caused her to cry out uncontrollably and try to violently wrench herself free.

The man who gave the speech stepped onto a bench and then onto the table, kneeling down in between her legs. He ran the palms of his hands across her face and down to her breasts, cupping them for a brief moment. He then continued down to her navel where he lifted his hands so that only his two index fingers were left to make their way down to her clitoris. He replaced his fingers with his right thumb, placing his left hand on his limp cock, squeezing it gently. The man shuttered and started to move the thumb on her clit in a circular motion and stroke himself. She whined, causing the man to look at her face... he smiled. She stared in fear at him as the next couple of minutes passed by. He moved onto sliding his index and middle fingers in and out of her. Twisting them deeper into her every so often. Still stroking his now erect cock.

He stopped to bend his face down in between her legs, smelling her. She

felt his tongue gently lick the folds of her pussy and her skin and nipples started to prickle. The girl calmed, forgetting about the audience that surrounded her and silently began to enjoy her molestation. She had heard stories that once they take someone, that person never returned back to the stockyards. Of course, there were rumors of what happened. Were they killed? Were they released? Maybe this was a rite of passage into this world. The world of complete luxury... of endless wine and good food. She entertained the thought of living their life. She had lived in the stockyards her whole life...Cows, they were called... whatever that meant. Their food was given to them in wooden troughs as wet, meaty slop and the women were held down by their handlers and raped by the male Bulls. Sometimes raped by the handlers themselves. They had no buildings in which to live and no shade from the sun, save a few dead trunks jutting from the dry and desolate earth. Not to mention they were made to work as slaves for the higher-ups or the Charge as they were known. She smiled at the thought of change.

A hot pain shot through the girl and seared down where the man was. She felt very wet suddenly and was horrified by what she saw when she lifted her head and looked down at herself. She couldn't see it very well, but she could see that she was bleeding near her right thigh. Panicked, she started to howl and scream. She could see that the man held a piece of pubic flesh between his barred teeth. Realizing the source of her pain caused her cries to be caught in her throat. The man pushed her flesh into in mouth with a finger and started to chew, staring at her face with a look that told her he relished it. Her blood trickled at the corner of his mouth and he moved to lap it up with his tongue. Then swallowed. She stared at him wide eyes, unbelieving.

A new pain, this time it was the back of her head as one of the spectators had crept up onto the table and grabbed her by the hair, wrenching her head back down onto the table. A witch-like woman with long, stringy hair that swept of over the victim's face as she bent over to take hold her feast's upper lip with her teeth and ripped most of it from the face. The girl let out another long howl, the pain numbing most of her face and the blood seeping down to the back of her throat. The woman smiled at her after devouring her lip. The man said something in a seductive tone to the woman, and the woman laid herself down on her back onto the table next to the bound and bleeding girl. With her legs spread invitingly, the man climbed onto of her and began to fuck her hard. They both heaved shamelessly next to the girl. After a short while, the man climaxed

and drove himself into the witch woman, cumming inside of her. The woman turned her head to face the girl and let out a cry of pleasure into the girl's face. Disgusted, the girl began to vomit. The acid burned her wounded lip and the stuff started to come down the sides of her face.

Both devils got up to kneel beside the girl. They turned to look at the rest of the crowd and motioned for them to join. The rest of the people climbed up onto the table and took their places kneeling in a circle surrounding her. Their faces were excited yet brutal. The girl breathed in sharply, holding her breath and awaited what she now knew was her fate. Her captors drove themselves down at her and sunk their mouths into her, tearing at her body. Devouring and ripping at her with nails and teeth. The pain was terrible and she could not look away as she watched pieces being eaten from her middle, arms, legs and breasts. She felt wet and hot all over. Sick from the pain. Most of them focused on the main parts of her body, one or two concerned themselves with her fingers, gnawing on them as though they were chicken bones. They briefly stopped to untie and flip her over to start at her backside. She had been partially numb, but fresh pain seared as they ate into her unbroken flesh. Her blood started expanding across the table now that she was face down. Completely blinded by the pain, the girl was unaware of the man plunging his cock in and out of her ass.

After what seemed like forever, the girl finally died. Her now satisfied captors left to rub the stains of her blood from their skin and happily go to sleep. Later, the dining servants collected the tattered remains of her body and placed it into a large grinder. The meat slopped down into a vat. It stayed there overnight.

The next morning, a large man came and retrieved the vat of girl. He carried it outside and walked across the dry dirt to a large fenced in area. The fences were made of metal poles at least 10 feet in height and spaced about 3 inches apart. He walked over to the gated part of the fence and waited for another man to unlock and open it. Once he was inside the fence, he turned left and made his way over to a line of troughs and dumped the slop into an empty one. Most of the others were already filled with their slop. A group of scantily clad women neared timidly towards the troughs. The man looked at the girl at the front of the group and smirked.

"Eat up, Cow."



# IMAGINATION

Rick McQuiston

[Don't forget to voice your opinion!](#)

As he waited, Kenneth remembered back to when he was a small boy. He had received a book for Christmas one year; it was all that his hard-working parents could afford to buy him. He appreciated the gift and by the onset of spring it was well thumbed albeit well cared for too. The book was an annual suited to boys of his age; he was 5 at the time and he still had it 35 years later although now he was loathe to perusing it. What he had liked best about the book was the illustrated calendar on the inside of the back cover. Each separate month had a colourful drawing to represent it. His favourite month was August. A small boy wearing bright red swimming trunks pictorially represented August. The boy was knelt down on golden sands, with a plastic spade in hand, putting the finishing touches to a magnificent sandcastle the sun shone as a splendid golden orb above his tousled head.

Kenneth never ever got to the seaside like the boy in the illustration. Notwithstanding the long hours his father had worked in the shoe shop, supplemented by his mother's part time earnings from the café, after the rent, the

utilities and the groceries were paid for, little was left for treats such as visits to the coast. Furthermore, after his beloved father had died prematurely from a heart attack, Kenneth had left school early to work in the mills to keep his and his mother's head above water. This he just about managed until his mother died now he lived alone in a dank flat unable to work through depression.

He stood watching the coach it pulled up outside the youth club. The youth club was daubed and tagged in gaudy colours and the immaculate coach took on a regal air next to such... such... ugliness. This had been a decent estate in the past; decent hard-working working-class people used to live here it was a community then and not like now.

Kenneth winced as the doors opened and out they came. Young giggling girls just into their teens clutching grubby babies to their breasts stepped onto the bus followed by gormless youths who had never struck a blow other than to impregnate their promiscuous girlfriends. The youth leader did a head count whilst the driver read his newspaper. The youth leader looked at her watch it was nearly time to leave.

"Can I help you?" she asked Kenneth politely as he stepped on board he did not reply.

"Excuse me, sir," she said in a more assertive tone, "can I help you?"

Kenneth stared through her with soulless eyes. "Is this the bus to the seaside?" he asked pathetically.

"It is, sir."

Kenneth did not continue. He fumbled in his shopping bag and pulled out a pair of swimming trunks; bright red like the boys in the photograph. The driver suddenly put down his newspaper.

"I can smell petrol," he said as he wrinkled up his pug nose.

Kenneth delved in his bag and pulled out a green

bottle. He pushed the trunks into the neck of the bottle and put a lighter to it. Screams let out about the bus as his arm became ablaze as well as the trunks. The driver rose but was too late to do anything; Kenneth hurled the flaming bottle down the aisle. It exploded into a ferocious ball of flames.

Such was the explosion there wasn't much left of the coach once its fuel tanks had ignited. Charred bodies and melted fabric told a story... a very sad story and it wasn't all Kenneth's.

Happy Holidays

The End



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# A NIGHTMARE YOU DON'T WANT TO TEMPT

Rick McQuiston

[Don't forget to voice your opinion!](#)

The swirling collage of disgusting colors flowed relentlessly from one side of the room to the other. Each hue meshed with the ones beside it creating an entirely new

spectrum of shades. The many inanimate objects in the room liquefied as if struggling in a completely alien way to attain life. Chairs jostled back and forth, the television set writhed savagely on its stand, the refrigerator flung its doors open and shut as it moaned and snarled in rage. Even the carpet, a tattered and frayed shag, melted into a filthy pond of nauseating transparency, in which bobbed innumerable, glistening lumps crudely resembling peering eyeballs.

Garrett hated this part of the trip. It usually started towards the end of the buzz but he noticed that lately it had been progressing to the earlier stages. It didn't bother him though, most things didn't. Over the lazy course of his twenty-two years he had developed, as he liked to refer to it, a hard outer shell which protected him from the troubles and worries of daily life. However, his shell needed nourishment which most effectively came in the form of mind altering drugs.

His contact, Doug, was a repulsive character, utterly void of the virtues that graced even the lowliest criminals or street bums. But the one thing that Garrett needed him for he always came through with...hooking him up with a fix. Garrett looked down into his lap at the gleaming syringe. It dripped a bright green liquid from its tip onto his leg. In its cylindrical reservoir were the traces of the drug. He rarely completely finished an injection finding all the

protection, as he dubbed it, in about half a dose.

The closet door on the far side of the room swelled as if it were breathing. Its color changed from eggshell white to a bizarre hybrid of angry mauve and washed out brown. The hinges were straining mightily to contain the door, or whatever lurked behind it, but were clearly losing the battle, filling the room with ear-splitting creaks and clinks.

Garrett shook his head from side to side as if it would help clear it. The inhuman sounds leaking through the door were obvious in their intent and seemed to grow angrier when the human sitting on the couch did nothing. Apparently it did not appreciate its victims merely sitting idly by waiting for their destruction. It preferred prey that had spirit.

Garrett sighed as he began to feel the soft, comfortable clutches of sleep begin to invade his body and mind. The door was nearing its breaking point, which made embracing slumber all the more difficult but it was overtaking him nonetheless; an inevitable and welcome stage of his trip.

He lifted his feet up off of the carpet and marveled at how they were completely dry. Swollen lumps swam in every direction around the couch, occasionally dipping down deep into the carpet on mindless and incomprehensible journeys. The surrealistic vision of this did not deter the

peaceful approach of sleep however and Garrett was starting to pass out as he had so many times before. He was content in the knowledge that he would awaken some time later in the comfort of his apartment oblivious to the strange carnage and absurd impossibility of what the drug had unleashed upon his senses.

The closet door had switched to a color of red so deep that it bordered on black. The hinges crumbled and plopped into the fetid carpet pond with a sickening thud as the walls around the door split in every direction like blind spiders weaving an insane tapestry of webs.

And then the door collapsed.

Garrett was only partially conscience as the thing menacingly slid into the room. It was ravenous, although confined to a drug induced nether region as it had always been it had never really known the joys of eating, but it was anxious to learn.

Its slime coated cloven hooves trudged through the carpet pond leaving an oily residue in its wake. Garrett glanced at it, and sickened by its visage, quickly looked away, eagerly awaiting the escape sleep so reliably offered.

He passed out just as the thing reached out for him.

The sunlight flooded the room, revealing thousands of otherwise invisible dust particles. Garrett winced as the rays assaulted his face. His head ached and his stomach

grumbled in protest to its emptiness as he rubbed his eyes to clear his thoughts. The trip he'd returned from was frightening to say the least but strangely satisfying as well. He'd escaped the troubles of reality successfully and although he now had to face them again he felt refreshed enough to do so adequately. He stood up shakily and stumbled into the kitchen. A hot cup of lemon-ginseng tea is what he needed, that and perhaps a sandwich.

The teapot whistle rang through the apartment, signaling the water within it had reached its boiling point. He removed the lid and tipped the bubbling water into a large coffee mug with a faded half naked woman on it; a twenty-first birthday gift from his buddies. His head was screaming at him, threatening to unleash a migraine as if in retaliation for the abuse it had endured.

The tea soothed his throat and relaxed his mind. He made a mental note to contact Doug to order a couple more fixes as he started to make a ham sandwich. And then a disturbing fact settled over his good mood...the syringe was missing.

He rushed over to the couch leaving his sandwich on the counter. A frantic and bewildered search revealed no needle or any clues to its whereabouts. He was certain it was in his lap when he tripped out and was sure he hadn't moved it when he woke up. So where was it?

The knob on the closet door creaked as it turned. It

violently swung open and slammed into the wall behind it, splintering the drywall and creating a small cloud of dust. Garrett's heart was in his throat. The darkness inside the closet was perfectly framed by the doorjamb; a clean, black rectangle of the unknown...and all that it contained.

His migraine was stabbing at his head, further complicating the perilous situation he suddenly found himself in. He was never very good at dealing with life's troubles and now he was going to have to face a big one head on.

The thing entered the room and fixed its loathsome gaze directly on Garrett. It was mostly transparent, giving it an appearance not unlike a distorted ghost. Great pain was etched across its face as every movement it made was accompanied by groans of discomfort. It seemed to be struggling to maintain its solidity in some way. Garrett was frozen to the spot where he stood. He wet himself when it began to stagger towards him, its determination to reach its prey clearly evident on its face.

But that wasn't the worst of it.

In its hand it held the key to its freedom and its meal...Garrett's syringe, which was still dripping a bright green liquid.



DEADMAN'S TOME PRESENTS:  
THE BLEEDER COLLECTION

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# Tomorrow you shall find me a grave man

Allen Kopp

[Don't forget to voice your opinion!](#)

I had  
hard times and  
hire myself out  
sitter. No  
placed my  
newspaper than  
family engaged  
over, for three  
nights, the  
recently  
The agreement  
to remain by  
and remain  
vigilant

Allen Kopp is a technical writer and lives in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. His fiction has been published or is forthcoming in *Foliate Oak Literary Journal*, *Temenos*, *The Legendary*, *Danse Macabre*, *Bartleby-Snopos*, *Skive*, *Hoi-Polloi*, *Conceit Magazine*, *Dark and Dreary Magazine*, *A Twist of Noir*, *Sunken Lines*, *The Storyteller*, *The Bracelet Charm*, *The Ranfurly Review*, *Superstition Review*, and *Short-Story.Me*. Allen is a 2009 Pushcart Prize nominee for the story "Hermaphrodite Ward" and was a contest finalist in the *Bartleby-Snopos* dialogue-writing contest.

fallen on some  
was forced to  
as a grave  
sooner had I  
notice in the  
a bereaved  
me to watch  
days and three  
grave of their  
deceased son.  
called for me  
the graveside  
unfailingly  
through all the

hours of darkness. I was to be allowed to leave for short periods of time during the daylight hours to refresh myself, but only on the stipulation that I would be away for minutes at a time rather than hours. I was told that I would be paid for my time at the conclusion of the three days and not one second before. If so much as a clump of dirt was disturbed on the fresh grave, however, I was not to be paid a cent for my seventy-two tedious and uncomfortable hours, and a warrant would be sworn out for my arrest, the result of which would be that I would never hold another job again, of any kind, for as long as lived upon this earth. I had heard such threats before and had a good laugh that people still thought they could bluff me in this manner.

The profession of grave sitter had come into being as a result of the recent illegal and highly unethical practice of "resurrectionists" stealing fresh corpses from graves. The enterprising and unscrupulous individuals who engaged in this activity were able to sell the corpses to medical schools for dissection for a good price. I had heard it said that just one body of a recently deceased, healthy young male could bring the equivalent of a month's factory or mill wages. The medical schools, of course, denied any involvement in such a ghoulish practice. They claimed to have their cadavers provided to them in a reputable manner by city morgues and by the doctors of indigent patients.

Since only fresh corpses were desired, only recent graves were in danger of being violated. If the body had been in the ground for more than three days, the process of decay had begun and the body was no longer fresh enough to be useful for medical study. A grave sitter was engaged for three days and nights only. At the end of that time he was no longer needed.

I arrived at the cemetery at about four o'clock on a Thursday to take up my post. I found the caretaker easily enough and he directed me to the fresh grave of the boy who had been buried that day. It was near a large tree and also near a little pavilion where I could take shelter if it happened to rain during my three days and nights there. I was fortunate the month was October and the weather still quite warm.

I was determined to make myself as comfortable as I could with the few provisions I had brought. The ground was a good enough resting place for me as long as it remained dry. I had brought a blanket and a little pillow and a canteen of water and some nuts and bread and dried beef; also a couple of books to keep me company and some writing paper and a pencil if I needed it. The caretaker had told me about an old woman named Miss Beck who lived just over the ridge a quarter of a mile away. She would provide me with a simple meal for a reasonable price and also a place to wash up if I desired it. The caretaker would keep a watchful eye on the grave while I was away at Miss Beck's,

as long as I went while he was on duty. He went home every day at about five o'clock. After that I should find the place quite lonely, with only the squirrels, rabbits, owls, field mice, and the occasional deer for company.

I found my surroundings pleasant enough. I installed myself under the tree a few yards from the grave what I had come to think of as *my* grave for the next three days and nights wrapped myself in my blanket, leaned against the tree in a sitting position to help me to stay awake, and began my long vigil. It was so quiet I would have been able to hear anybody approaching from a long way off. I amused myself by watching the clear night sky with its myriads of stars and its three-quarter moon and by meditating on a number of topics that occupied my mind during such quiet times.

I couldn't help thinking about the poor fellow whose grave I was watching. He was only sixteen, as I had found out from the caretaker, and the picture of health. He had been playing a rough game with three of his friends in a field and had received a sharp blow to his neck, fracturing his windpipe. He was rushed to a doctor but died within minutes from not being able to breathe. It was a freak accident that sometimes unexpectedly claims the lives of young people.

From where I sat underneath my tree, I could see almost the entire cemetery. If any other person had set foot inside the gates, I would have seen him in an instant,

long before he would see me. It was plenty light enough that I could have read my book to help me pass the time, but I wasn't in the mood for reading. I had fallen under the spell of the night and I wanted to drink it in and not have my attention diverted away from it by the words on a page. When I grew tired of sitting, I stood up and walked around some, breathing in the smells of the grass and the leaves, but always remaining within sight of my grave. Along about midnight, the air turned decidedly cooler and the wind picked up and I huddled into my blanket. I was so sleepy I longed to stretch out on the ground beside the grave and go to sleep, but this would have seemed a sign of weakness. I was determined to remain in a sitting position to keep myself as alert as I could.

After dozing lightly and waking several times in this upright position, I fell into a deeper sleep. I had slept for possibly three-quarters of an hour when I first heard the sounds that woke me up. It was a light thumping sound and then a tearing sound, followed by a faint cry of distress. I was on my feet almost before I was awake and I looked for the source of the sounds I thought I had heard. Seeing nothing, I decided I had been dreaming; my surroundings had affected the kind of dreams I was having. My mind had played such tricks on me before. Once when I was much younger I woke up in the middle of the night, believing I had been hearing my older brother's voice, but my older brother had been dead since I was twelve years

old.

I stayed awake or mostly awake for the next couple of hours. Staying awake all night was more difficult than I remembered. About three o'clock in the morning, though, I gave in to my impulse to sleep and wrapped myself in my blanket like a giant cocoon and lay down next to the grave. The mound of dirt helped to block the wind from me. I was as comfortable and as cozy as I could be sleeping on the ground, and I went to sleep as soundly as I've ever slept in any bed in my life.

The next time I awoke it was to a whimpering, crying sound, punctuated by a muffled banging. The ground on which I was reclining actually seemed to move and shake slightly. I jumped to my feet, forgetting for a moment where I was. Then when I focused my attention, it occurred to me the sounds had been coming from the grave. That poor boy wasn't really dead, only unconscious, and he had been buried alive. He was frantically trying to signal to someone to get him out of the grave before it was too late. How horrible to be buried alive and to suffocate, knowing you would never be able to claw your way out of the grave no matter how hard you tried. Your only chance and a remote chance at that was to make someone hear you. Maybe he somehow knew I was there and he was trying to signal to me to help him to get out.

Almost without thinking, I was on my knees clawing at the mound of dirt with my fingers. If I had had a shovel, I

would have dug down without stopping until my heart and lungs burst to get to him.

When my mind cleared from the fog of sleep, I realized how ridiculous I must look down on my knees clawing at the dirt. How illogical it was that he could be alive! It was just a dream. I had only been dreaming. Dreams defy logic. A doctor had attended to the boy after he was injured. A doctor would know if someone was alive or dead, wouldn't he? He would never make the mistake of believing someone was dead who was really alive.

Morning came and the caretaker arrived at about seven o'clock. I was still a little shaken and I had never been gladder to see another human being in my life. I met him as he was coming in at the gate. He greeted me and asked me how I had fared through the night. He asked me jokingly if I had seen any ghosts.

When I told him about the sounds I thought I heard coming from the grave of the boy, he smiled and patted me reassuringly on the shoulder. He asked me if I had slept any during the night and when I told him I had, he said I had only been dreaming. He said it isn't easy to spend the night alone in a cemetery and the place had been playing tricks on my mind. He offered me a shot of whiskey and when I declined, he advised me to go to Miss Beck's and get some breakfast; it would make me feel better.

I walked over the ridge, glad to be out of the cemetery for a while, and found Miss Beck's place. When I

knocked at her back door, she came to the door and allowed me into her kitchen. She said she had been expecting me and when I asked how she knew about me, she said the caretaker was a friend of hers. He told her everything that went on in the cemetery.

She provided me with a simple yet satisfying meal of strong tea, cornmeal mush, and eggs with little squares of potato cooked in with them. When I was finished eating she told me I could wash up in the spring house if I wanted to. I would find everything there I needed.

I returned to the cemetery in a calmer state of mind than when I had left. I was happy that I had concluded my first night and was heartened to think that my three days and nights would soon be up and I could return to my own home, which at that moment seemed more inviting to me than it ever had before. I didn't see the caretaker or anybody else upon my return, so I thought to take advantage of the solitude by sitting against the tree and dozing, with one eye, so to speak, on the grave of the boy.

The day passed pleasantly enough, without incident, and then it was night again. I felt my apprehensions returning when I saw the caretaker leave for the day. I had discovered the night before that a cemetery is the most solitary place in the world at night. I was sorry I had ever signed on to be a grave sitter, and I considered giving up and going home before dark came, but I had promised the boy's father I would remain for three days and

nights and I didn't feel right about going back on my promise. More than anything else, though, I needed the money I was going to get at the end of the three days.

The sky had turned cloudy and darkness came earlier than expected. The air was very still and I could hear every sound within a hundred yards of where I sat underneath the tree. I tried reading for a while, but my mind couldn't absorb the words on the page so I gave it up. Since no one was around, I tried singing to myself, but my voice sounded so hollow and foolish to my own ears that I blushed with embarrassment and looked around. If anybody had heard me singing they would have thought I was insane.

As I had done on the previous night, I slept lightly against the tree and awoke and then slept again. Once when I heard a rustling sound in the leaves near me I opened my eyes with alarm and saw a small fox standing a few feet away. When I held out my hand to the fox, which seemed as docile as a kitten, it eyed me suspiciously and bolted into the brush.

Whereas the previous night had been clear and moonlit enough to read by, this one was cloudy and dark. I wouldn't have been surprised to see some rain before morning. Several times I stood up and walked around among the headstones down the hill to stretch my legs and help to pass the time. I had never seen a longer night and I longed for the morning.

Finally, very late in the night, I wrapped myself in

my blanket and lay down on the ground next to the grave, as I had done the night before. My last thought before going to sleep was that this was my second night and that when I woke up it would be morning and there would be only one more day and one more night to get through, and part of the day after that, until I could get my money and go home.

I slept for a couple of hours I don't know exactly how long. I was dreaming I was in a boat on the open sea when someone touched me roughly on the shoulder and I awoke with a violent start. I sat up in a panic. I think I said something incomprehensible, but I don't remember what it was. My first waking thought was the awareness that somebody had been able to come upon me and I hadn't seen or heard them. When I opened my eyes and looked around me, I saw that I was surrounded by three men I had never seen before. I tried to stand up but one of them pushed me back to a sitting position. The second man shone a bright light in my face, while the third one brandished a rope.

When I saw they meant to tie me to the tree, I grunted like an animal and tried to get away from them in a blind panic, but I was outnumbered and easily subdued. When I started to speak to ask what they meant to do, or at least to attempt to bargain with them not to hurt me, the first man who was the youngest of the three brandished a gun in my face.

"You see this?" he asked. "If you so much as make one sound, I'll blow your head off and we'll put *you* in the

grave that we take *him* out of." He gestured with his thumb toward the grave of the poor boy and I knew at once that they meant to steal the body.

"You can't do that!" I began, but when he held the gun six inches from my nose, I knew he meant business and I would do better not to speak.

They dragged me to the tree and tied me to it in a sitting position. They made the ropes so tight that I felt a crushing weight around my heart and I thought I would probably die. When they had me securely in place and helpless, two of them set to digging, while the one who had spoken to me obviously the leader stood and watched them and held the light.

I figured they were going to kill me, anyway, whether I spoke or not. I had seen all of their faces and would be able to identify them if they let me get away. Maybe, I thought, their tying me up was a good sign. If they had meant to kill me, why hadn't they done so at the outset? They could easily have squashed my head like a melon while I slept and I would never have known anything.

With the two of them digging fast and efficiently, they had unearthed the coffin in a very short time. When they had piled all the dirt beside the grave, one of the diggers disappeared into the hole and tied ropes to the handles of the coffin, and in a couple of minutes they had hoisted the coffin out of the ground.

"Hurry up!" snapped the leader. "We haven't got all

night!"

One of the diggers was on his knees trying to pry the lid off. The leader brought the lamp closer and I realized with a little thrill that I was going to get a good look at the face of the dead boy whose grave I had been sitting beside for all those hours. I had never seen a coffin unearthed before and I had to admit I felt a personal interest in this one. It was almost as if the boy was a long-standing friend of mine or a member of my family.

When the man had the lid ready to open, he paused for a moment and looked up at the leader, almost as if he wanted to make sure that everyone was ready before he revealed what it was they had come to steal. I started to say something foolish and banal, such as, "You'll never get away with this," but before I could get the words out the man lifted the lid and the contents of the coffin were revealed.

There in the coffin lying on a bed of satin was a wax dummy of a man dressed in evening attire with a painted-on face. His mouth was a rosy cupid's bow and his cheeks as red as apples. Black hair was painted on the head in the semblance of curls.

"What *is* this?" the leader asked as though he had been duped. He raised the gun and pointed it at me as if he thought I was the one who had duped him. He knelt down and picked up the wax dummy by the lapels of its suit. When he had confirmed to himself that it was indeed what it

appeared to be, he threw it back into the coffin. Its arms and legs splayed crookedly.

I started to speak but the words wouldn't come. I had no explanation. I was as surprised by what I saw as the three men were. I was thinking that now they would be sure to kill me, when I heard a sound and twisted my head on my neck to try to see around the tree to which I was tied.

Several men were approaching. They had obviously been hiding and observing in the brush off to the edge of the cemetery without me or the three grave robbers knowing they were there. When the men were closer, I recognized the one in front as Mr. Sage, the grieving father who had engaged me to watch over his son's grave.

The men with Mr. Sage were carrying rifles, which they pointed at the grave robbers. The leader of the grave robbers pointed his gun at Mr. Sage and the men and acted as if to fire, but when he saw all the firepower arrayed behind Mr. Sage he desisted.

"Good work!" Mr. Sage said.

His men subdued the grave robbers, who put up no resistance. As they led them away, Mr. Sage pointed at me and instructed one of his men to untie me.

"What is this all about?" I asked as soon as I was on my feet.

"You just helped us to apprehend a gang of body snatchers," Mr. Sage said.

"Do you mean none of this was real?" I asked. I

punched him on the shoulder to keep from hitting him in the mouth. "Those men could have killed me!" I said.

"Oh, come now," Mr. Sage said with a laugh. "You were never in any real danger."

"You're a policeman?" I asked.

"That's right."

"Well, why then?"

"We circulated the story about the death of the sixteen-year-old boy. It seems that healthy young males bring a better price. There is no boy. I have no son."

"Why did you involve me in this?"

"We needed a sitter who knew nothing about what we were doing. If there had been no sitter, the snatchers would have been suspicious."

"I want my money!" I said foolishly, not knowing what else to say.

I discovered later that the caretaker and Miss Beck were both involved in the business of stealing bodies. The caretaker informed the body snatchers when there was a likely candidate to be had, while Miss Beck acted as a lookout and provided a good hiding place whenever one was needed.

And so began and ended by brief career as a grave sitter. After that, I would rather have died than to spend another night alone in a country cemetery.



# BLEEDING METAL

*John Carrick*

[Don't forget to voice your opinion!](#)

February 23rd 228

John Carrick is a television editor  
working in Los Angeles

Dr. Fox set the black-metal device on the desk, he'd felt its need. The machine was hungry and would have to be fed. He looked around the facility and let the dull emptiness fill his ears. The bay was abandoned at this hour. Decoratively spare to the point of empty; clusters of terminals stood separated by sheets of particleboard. Couches leaned against cold metal walls.

Fox knew getting caught with a second unauthorized invention would be his last mistake; nothing would save him from another charge of treason. He looked out the window, procrastinating. Even in this he was frustrated, seeing only his reflection staring back from outside the glass. The conference center hovered at ten thousand feet, over international waters, where certain legislative restrictions could not reasonably be enforced.

Dr. Andrew Fox was tall and lean, his physique that of an obsessive scientist, who eats when he has to and rather resents the activity. The device was not as forgiving about its needs and flashed another reminder across his mind. He scanned the area and again listened intently, taking every precaution before so blatantly exposing himself. Thank god the facility was used for dubious projects; here, privacy was more important than security. During the past week Fox hadn't discovered even a hint of any surveillance system. If there were no cameras, he was safe.

Fox triggered the feed tray and watched it extend from the rectangle, its matte finish absorbing light. He opened the

center drawer of his assigned desk and fished out some change and a letter opener. He set the coins and blunt knife next to the feed tray and closed his eyes.

In his mind Fox called forth the utility menu. He could operate the device with his eyes open, but it was easier to focus on the visual cues without the added distraction of sight. He enabled the ingestion program and checked the thing's vitals. Everything looked normal; the cache was low, available reserves in the mid range.

Fox opened his eyes. He knew the device could smell the metal and was aware that it was about to be fed. He picked up a couple coins and set them on the center of the plate. It was best to let it start slow. A moment later they began to sink, as if the face of the plate had turned to gel.

Fox closed his eyes and checked the activity display. The burn gauge had spiked and other ingestion protocols buzzed with the activity of consumption as the coins were broken down and processed at the molecular level. Andrew felt dirty, as if he were somehow intruding, and turned the display off. He piled the remaining coins on the plate and set the letter opener across the top. The previous coins were still being metabolized and it would take some time to consume them all.

Despite the current illegality of his creation, Fox knew that eventually someone else would hit upon the idea of wireless forebrain data-transfer. When they did, he could release his version of the concept, maybe a year or so later. He's be accused of copying, but that was better than treason. Then he'd be in the clear.

The algorithm he'd used to write the code was similar to modern telecommunications; but Fox had created a six-sided switch structure supporting the human mind. The drive seemed to have limitless space. All of his research resided in the banks of the device. He generated and received correspondence over its frequencies. He was even capable of perusing other systems without leaving a hint of his presence.

In meetings Fox would occasionally look at the ceiling or rub his forehead as if engrossed in thought. Nine times out of ten, he was accessing the device for an answer to some problem asserting itself in his otherwise mundane environment. Dr. Fox always had the answer. The knowledge at his disposal made him an intellectual giant. Knowledge is power.

Fox understood the government's desire to be aware of all technological advances. The potential damage inflicted by

an enemy equipped with such a device could be devastating. Yet, the copyright laws clearly stated that any inventions created while on the national payroll were government property.

The government employed Fox across an array of fields and even so, he might have a case, if he took it to court. That is, if he made it to court. The feds didn't play around when it came to ownership rights. Everyone knew a colleague who'd been royally screwed by the Federal Acquisitions Department also known as the heavy-handed FAD.

Fox watched the consumption of the coins. He could still see their faces, the wet metal had only half swallowed them. After all this time, Fox still hadn't a proper name for it. For marketing purposes, it could be referred to as the Molecular Neural Interface, as that was what it did. Lately he'd been calling it: The Micronix. He didn't know why, but he liked the sound of it.

The machine's genesis felt more like discovery than invention; as if it had been there all along, guiding him, one step at a time. After the latest upgrade to the neural interface, he now had trouble defining where the box left off and his own mind began.

Perhaps the device had named itself and filled him in. It was difficult to determine which thoughts were his and which weren't. Micronix was still his silent suggestion to the marketing team he hadn't yet hired to promote an item he decisively kept to himself. His girlfriend didn't know about it, he hadn't told her. That would be making her an accomplice. Anyone could charge you with treason and rarely were such charges settled with a good-old-fashioned fistfight.

A gifted prosecutor could spin jaywalking into a crime of sedition and subversion. The arguments have become so ingrained in the minds of the citizenry; it's become a unique art form, with auteurs, amateurs and part-time dabblers. Suspicion of treachery stripped a citizen of all rights, rank and property, pending a verdict. To be found guilty meant the death penalty, anything less was considered mercy.

Dr. Fox knew his failure to disclose the creation made him guilty of treason. He also knew how disastrous the device could be. If anyone was hurt with it, that would be his responsibility. When Oppenheimer created the bomb, the honorable thing to do would have been to immolate Los Alamos before allowing a city of innocents to burn instead.

Fox would die before surrendering the device. He stared at

it, flat and wide now. It would slowly return to its earlier shape, a narrow rectangle, once the meal was completed. The Micronix consumed objects to increase its processing capacity, packing the electrons into its liquid core.

Fox didn't believe the device could think, but if it could, he might not know it. There wasn't any way for the doctor to pinpoint the origin of his thoughts anymore than the origin of those that weren't his. The concept disturbed him.

When utilizing his own memory he could easily recall much information, but after assimilating the data, he often found himself working in the Micronix environment. He couldn't remember the last time he'd pressed the power button, the device's only button. How long had it been since he'd powered it up manually? How long since he'd cycled the power at all? The machine never powered down. It was always there, at the edge of his consciousness, whenever he wanted it.

If he were showering, or engaged in some other activity that activated his tactile environment, it could be more difficult to interface. Occasionally, if he were physically too far away, response times would lag, but those were minor glitches. He'd polished the interface so as to be as supportive as possible to his own mind. He didn't see how he could improve it.

Dr. Fox realized he was again considering a grand unveiling. He weighed the pros and cons. It would replace an entire technological sector overnight. No one would need the conventional methods of communication. Then Fox remembered he still hadn't figured out how to secure anything. Since there was only one user, he hadn't focused on signal separation. Before it could work for the public, it needed testing.

Fox closed his eyes and leaned back in the chair, reaffirming his belief that it could never be made public. It was too much power for the common man. He wondered if it was too much power even for himself. Could he do without it? Could he endure the blank faces as he scrambled for some forgotten fact or figure?

What would happen if he didn't feed it for a while and left it somewhere out of conscious range? Perhaps he would return to find that it remained fully charged; he doubted it would do much, left alone. When the device ran low on power, it became heavier. The menus became more difficult to access; blurry, often causing pain, a headache. If it was going to be used, it had to be fed. That much was

clear.

Still Fox wondered, what would happen if he left it somewhere, out in the middle of nowhere? Somewhere he could be rid of it once and for all. Somewhere like a weapons lab, way out over the ocean.

The doctor couldn't do that, wouldn't do that. He'd put so much effort into the thing's creation, its birth. Fox shook his head. Birth. A birth isn't invented. Why did that word assert itself? He took a breath and calmed himself. Thoughts of revolting against the device were reassuring. IF it could influence him, it wouldn't allow him to entertain thoughts of open rebellion. It meant Fox was still in control, but he wondered why abandoning it felt like murder.

Fox loved it. He had created it. While he yearned to someday have a family of his own, at present all he had was the device. He would live with his sin for one more day. Maybe tomorrow he would do something different. He leaned back in the chair and rubbed his eyes. He could still get some sleep before dawn.

Fox rose and crossed to the couch in an upright crawl. The soft leather was cool against his face; he would have to shave before the long day of meetings.

Fox smiled as a concept arose in his mind. Could he devise an algorithm that would allow the system to spread its processing power to other objects, instead of consuming them? It might be able to write to other items, which would then work for it; nodes in its network, slaves to a master. The Micronix could create bay stations for incoming data streams, instead of internalizing everything.

Fox was sure it could be done. He worked out the equations and committed them to memory, testing himself, intending to measure his recollection in the clear light of morning. A solution to a long-standing problem within reach, relief washed through him. His muscles unknotted and he drifted off to sleep.

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Twenty minutes later Fox woke, suddenly startled. He looked across the room. The desk stood in place and black. The chair stood away from the desk, as if it was afraid to be near it.

Fox rubbed his eyes and looked again. The light-green desk was now matte black. He noticed the walls and the ceiling. What used to be gunmetal blue had taken on a distinctly

darker tone.

Dr. Fox remembered the equations he'd thought of earlier. He closed his eyes and focused. Sure enough, the equations had been read and recorded. The machine filed them under Upload Process Equations. Fox pulled up the history, dated just after the thought; he saw a new process, upload transfer. He terminated the process.

It was possible the upload to the facility walls could be diffused enough to go unnoticed, or at least not be blamed on him. The desk was another issue all together. Fox opened the patio doors.

When a toilet in the nearby restroom flushed, Fox knew it was already too late. He heard the sound of someone at the sink. Dr. Fox looked at the device, the coins and knife, being consumed by the plate. The consumption had stalled as the Micronix occupied itself with transferring data into the desk. The ends of the letter opener were stuck out through the sidewalls of the machine, its center being liquefied into nutrients for the kernel. Fox pulled open the center desk drawer. It was metal; they were all metal.

Fox couldn't put the device in there with an open feed plate. The machine would try to eat the desk and he didn't want to imagine the results. That would involve discovery on a grand scale. The inky color of the desk was dangerous enough.

Dr. Fox activated a thirty-foot signal jam. The Micronix confirmed the command as Chuck Davis, one of the acquisitions guys, entered the terminal bay. Fox smelled the scotch and cigars. Davis had been with the generals.

Chuck was one of those guys who behaved as if he were twenty, well into his forties. It worked for him. Fox didn't understand men who made a living by bartering partnerships. Davis measured success by return on investment, not tangible benefit, or contribution to all mankind. Fox felt sorry for him, Davis could never understand the scientists he worked with. Since Fox had known him, he'd never taken a stand on an issue. Though he had displayed a dangerous talent for parroting data and a nose for loose investment capital.

"Fox, what's the deal? You're here late."

"Rest when I'm frozen," Fox replied.

"They'll never get that one. Long term suspension, fool's gold. What would we do with it if we had it?"

"Deep space exploration, maybe?"

"No profit margin."

Fox rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"What's that?" Davis asked, gesturing to the device at the center of Fox's desk.

Fox hesitated.

"Is that an undisclosed?" Davis asked.

"No."

"You don't have any new projects on file with the DOD."

"How would you know?" Fox replied

"People are watching you and I know that is not on file." Davis was drunk and the alcohol was catching up with him.

"That's undisclosed, I fucking know it is." Davis tapped the side of his head. The tapping of his head with his left hand, it would be the left eye that was wired. Probably a straight model; connected to the forebrain. He undoubtedly had a sub-dermal personal data recorder, probably a series of implants under an arm or along his hip.

Now Fox had to do something about the situation. If Davis had kept his mouth shut, Fox could have denied it. The images from the retinal implant could have been scrubbed, and it would be one man's word against another. However the audio feed would be hardwired to the storage and now that would have to be erased as well.

"What do you want to do about it?" Fox asked. "You negotiate, right?"

Davis picked up a wastebasket and vomited.

Fox reached for a writing tablet and set the device on it, putting them in the center drawer were it could continue its digestion privately. Fox hoped the device wouldn't slip off the tablet. It had a habit of doing that when there was metal nearby. It didn't need to have the feed tray out to eat and often moved itself to reach whatever goodies might be close at hand. There was lots of change in that drawer. Given enough time, it would slide from the tablet to the get at it.

Fox hadn't given himself time to theorize about how the new

upload equations would affect the device's appetite. Would it curb it, or kick it into overdrive? It was possible the signal generation required massive amounts of energy. Perhaps the device would need to consume more instead of less. If the Micronix slipped off the tablet, it would attempt to eat the desk. He hadn't forgotten how it had gotten his handgun.

Fox put a friendly arm over Davis' shoulders and led him toward the open balcony door. "Let's get you some fresh air, huh?"

Using the Micronix, Fox hacked the optical signal and accessed the executive's storage. Immediately Davis's security registered the intrusion and tried to shut Fox out. The doctor mentally struggled with the daemons, but they had been upgraded and he didn't have the data wedges to crack their breakpoints. Just that fast, it was over. He was beaten. There was nothing he could do about the audio without burning Davis's system.

Davis leaned over the railing, vomiting again.

Fox could burn the storage, knowing it might kill the drunken schmuck, or at least fry his mind. He could purge the data stores, leaving the security daemons intact; their logs would show an intrusion, but there would be no evidence of what precipitated the hack. It would have to be sorted in court.

Davis gave a particularly forceful hurl and consumed by a fit of disgust, Fox seized the man by the knees and lifted him up over the railing. He executed a coordinated attack on Davis's system, burning everything, scorching his mind as he watched Davis vanish into the darkness below.

Fox crossed back to the desk and opened the drawer. The feed plate was no longer digesting the coins. He lifted the interface and they slid from the plate. The one-sided coins and bits of letter opener clattered into the drawer. Fox closed the plate and pocketed the device. He pushed the desk across the concrete floor and out onto the metal patio.

Almost immediately the patio became stained with black splotches where the desk touched it. Fox tipped it onto its side, against the railing, and the inky color ran all across the bars. He heaved the desk up over the railing then it tumbled to a speck in his vision. He looked at the stained railing and floor. He felt like he was standing in a puddle of blood.

Fox stepped out of the stain and over to the clean side of

the patio. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the device. He called up the data storage interface and deleted the upload equations. For a moment he considered throwing it into the ocean, but then pocketed it again.

Fox leaned on the railing, inhaling the fresh ocean air. He stood for a few minutes, just breathing. When he came back to himself, it took a coordinated effort to pry his fingers from the bars. He didn't remember grabbing it, but it seemed as though he'd been locked to it for hours. His hands were exhausted.

Fox returned inside, closing the patio doors. On the railing, where he'd placed his hands, two inky stains slowly spread into the metal, wetly reflecting the pale moonlight.

END

# *Dad Ex Machina*

**By Greg Gonzales**

[Don't forget to voice your opinion!](#)

**"Where is he?"**

*"Nowhere to be found."*

**"Well, where the fuck is that?"**

*"Somewhere else."*

**"Are you high?"**

*"A little."*

**"How little?"**

*"Did you get the snacks?"*

**"Did you find Dad?"**

*"I told you he's nowhere. He doesn't want to be found."*

*"I got you a bottle of Jim Beam. Merry Christmas."*

*"I thought I told you I gave up drinking?"*

*"You also said you would stop getting high."*

*"I did stop. A little."*

*"Are you gonna pour me a drink or not?"*

*"I'm hungry."*

*"Drink."*

*"Okay."*

*(Three drinks later.)*

*"Dad left you a message."*

*"I thought you couldn't find him?"*

*"He found us. Said to wait here."*

*"Is that all?"*

*"No, he left you a message."*

*"Wha'd he say?"*

*"To wait here. Do you want your message?"*

*"Give it here."*

*"Let me read it to you."*

*"What are you waiting for?"*

*"You."*

*"Read it."*

*"It reads: Be right there. Pick up some Jim Beam and we'll talk about it."*

“Really?”

“*That’s what it says.*”

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“*Does it matter?*”

“I guess not.”

(Two drinks later.)

“Where do you think he is?”

“*Somewhere else.*”

“You’re an asshole.”

“*You’re a drunk.*”

“Pussy.”

“*Faggot.*”

“Only girls say ‘faggot’ nowadays.”

“*Sorry.*”

(Three drinks later.)

“You think she ever thinks about me?”

“*No.*”

“You’re probably right.....Got any more weed?”

“*What took you so long to ask?*”

“I don’t know.”

“*She probably still misses you sometimes.*”

“Liar....Thanks.”

(Four hits later.)

"What's it called?"

"*Southern Comfort.*"

"Isn't that a drink?"

"*Not right now it's not.*"

(Two hits later.)

"*Dad's not coming.*"

"What?"

"*He's not coming.*"

"What about the message?"

"*I wrote it.*"

"Why?"

"*You would have left much earlier. But I'm sleepy now. You can go if you want. I think I'll be okay.*"

"Why did you need me to stay?"

"*I couldn't sleep. It's been days.*"

"Why couldn't you sleep?"

"*I quit smoking and drinking.*"

"I can't sleep either."

"*Cause of her or Dad?*"

"I don't miss Dad."

"*Why not?*"

"Because he's a drunk and an asshole."

"*So are we.*"

"That's why I hate him."

*"Me too."*

"Stay up and help me finish this bottle."

*"If you say so."*

(One third of the bottle later.)

*"How long's it been since you've seen her?"*

"Too long."

*"I never liked her."*

"You don't have to keep lying to make me feel better."

*"You're practically begging me."*

"Sorry."

*"Smoke."*

(Three hits and two drinks later.)

"How're the supplies looking?"

*"Very little of each left."*

"Dammit."

*"Don't tell me you want more."*

"I'm not tired, I'm just fucked up."

*"You and me both."*

"Got any beer?"

*"Just two."*

"That's all we need."

*"For what?"*

"A strike out."

*"Trying to kill me?"*

"You and I know it would take a lot more than that."

(Two successful strikeouts later.)

*"I think that one did it."*

"What time is it?"

*"11:39p.m."*

"We can get more booze."

*"Not without a heavy dose of adderall."*

"I'm gonna do a line. Want one?"

*"Whoa. You didn't tell me you had coke."*

"You never asked. Want one or not?"

*"I want several, actually."*

"Good."

(Three lines and one trip to the store later.)

*"So why doesn't she want to see you ever again?"*

"Cause she's a bitch."

*"Who did she sleep with?"*

"Guess."

*"I don't know... Dad?"*

*"(...)"*

*"Holy shit."*

"I could use some more weed right about now."

*"I'll make some calls."*

(Three calls later.)

*"It'll be here in half an hour."*

(Two beers and two lines later.)

*"How the fuck did this happen?"*

"That's what I keep asking myself."

*"Pass the pipe."*

"Here."

*"At least I didn't fuck her."*

"I'd almost prefer that at this point."

*"You didn't prefer it the last few times."*

"That was different."

*"How?"*

"Her. That's how."

*"What makes her so special?"*

"I want her to be."

*"So knock it off, you stubborn prick."*

"S'not so easy."

*"Not for you maybe."*

"Well we can't all be you."

*"You wish."*

"I wish I was asleep or dead."

*"Stop doing coke or do lots more."*

"Want another line?"

“Yes.”

(Two lines, Two beers, and one short visit later)

“What’s this stuff called?”

“*Donovan’s Electric Banana.*”

(One hit later.)

“Quite rightly.”

(Four jittery minutes of silence later.)

“*Don’t you have work tomorrow?*”

“I quit.”

“*When?*”

“Just now.”

“*Let’s celebrate.*”

“How?”

“*We could push your company car into the bayou and report it stolen.*”

(An odd realization later.)

“Okay.”

(A short time later in the car.)

“Where’s the bayou?”

“*I don’t know.*”

“So where are we going then?”

“*The Bayou.*”

“How?”

“*We’ll have to find it.*”

“How?”

“*By looking.*”

“I hate when you do that.”

“*No you don't.*”

“Don't talk to me.”

( Several minutes of silence later.)

“I forgive you.”

“*Cool.*”

(Six wrong turns later.)

“This is dumb.”

“*No it's not.*”

“How?”

“*(...)*”

“Exactly.”

“*We're still gonna do it, right?*”

“Of course.”

“*You had me worried there for a second.*”

“I know.”

(Twenty minutes into a dark road lined with trees on either side.)

“I like this road.”

“*Me too.*”

“The way the trees sort of line up perfectly on either side.”

“*Yeah.*”

“How it winds and weaves mysteriously.”

“*Yeah.*”

“I like how it makes the night sky a sort of trail of stars and darkness.”

“*Yeah.*”

“Are you listening?”

“*No.*”

(sigh) “Doesn’t matter.”

“*Was it important?*”

(Considers.)

“*Yes.*”

“*Why?*”

“I don’t know.”

“*Freak.*”

“Cunt face.”

“*Your mom.*”

“Yours first, ya know.”

“*Ugh. Don’t remind me.*”

“*Ha.*”

“*What?*”

“You don’t like being older, do you?”

“*Sometimes I don’t.*”

“When?”

“*When I’m sober.*”

"You're not sober now."

*"I'm driving. Might as well be."*

"Drink?"

*"Couldn't hurt."*

(Silence and drinking.)

"How's it comin along?"

*"How's it look?"*

"Lost still."

*"Shows what you know."*

"I know we're lost."

*"We're almost there."*

"Where are we?"

*"Trust me."*

"You still don't know, do you?"

*"Trust me."*

(One triumphant turn later)

"Stop smirking."

(Maniacal laughter echoes.)

"Quiet, Asshole. Does anyone live around here?"

*"Who cares?"*

"Grab the booze."

(Grabbing)

"Okay, so how do we make sure it goes under all the way?"

*"We could Thelma and Louise it and bail at the last moment."*

(sigh) "As cool as that would be, it would hurt and we'd wind up pushing it the rest of the way in anyway."

*"Pussy."*

"Just put it in neutral and fuckin help me push. Don't forget to roll down the windows."

(Sinking)

*"Victory."*

"If you say so."

*"Don't make me smoke this victory blunt alone."*

"I didn't know your white ass could roll blunts."

*"There's a lot you don't know."*

"I'll puff to that."

*"Nay. Puff to Victory."*

"Just pass the fuckin blunt."

*"Moment spoiler."*

"Just watch it sink and don't talk."

*"You're asking a lot."*

"I know."

(One sinking moment later)

*"Fuck. It's cold. How're we getting back home?"*

*"..."*

*"This is all your fault."*

*"Deus ex Machina."*

*"The God machine?"*

"This is about the time Dad would show up or a cab would drive by for no reason."

*"God must be sleeping tonight."*

"Must be."

*"Could be he doesn't like you."*

"He doesn't like you more.

(Quiet sounds of the Bayou.)

Walk?"

*"This is all your fuckin fault."*

"I know."

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Coming up next:

The Charge will continue, introducing you to a world that thrives in chaos, throwing the remaining few survivors into a pit of despair.

Also

Resurrection: Some stories are too good to run once. Christopher's "Daddy's Little Girl" is incredibly vile and will cause your stomach to churn.

Credits:

Cover art: Jesse Dedman

Layout: Jesse Dedman

Editor: Jesse Dedman and Greg Gonzales

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Greg: Submission coordinator