

Puppeteer

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I feel his touch but it's hot, fevered.

I don't care for him when it's like that. I miss the way it used to be, many months ago, when his stroke upon my neck was warm and when it felt sincere. Now, his touch seems nothing more than forced. It's as if he feel he *has* to do this.

He used to control me....

....I remember when we met at Club Phenom, located in the heart downtown Phoenix. He told me, "You have the most enrapturing, hazel eyes." Of course, that hit me in the heart. His words, so charming, allowed me to feel that nobody else in the world could appreciate me he did.

We slept together that first night. I had always been an advocate against such activity I deemed as promiscuous. Yet, I couldn't help but kiss him all about his full lips and bronzed torso. I was slave to each one of his complimentary phrases—his words of fairytale romance—that had me falling in complete love with him.

After seven weeks, we moved in together and became the "two D's": Dave and Darren. Our friend, Dion, use to tease us about having a "3-D experience." Hat he meant was the act of engaging in a threesome.

Nonetheless, I viewed the relationship between Dave and I as being that of a happily-ever-after proportion. I didn't think twice about Dion's comments. However,

Dave raised his eye now and then as Dion spoke to me. Although Dave called this loved, I deemed it distrust.

Shortly after Dave reared the ugly-green monster of jealousy, he wouldn't allow me to meet with Dion. I didn't understand his decision, for I had always been completely loyal to him. Still, he threatened to leave if I didn't stop meeting Dion for lunch.....

....Zombies have been described as the living dead.

Can one truly “raise the dead?” Can a person “make” a zombie? Well, I suppose I have proof.

It doesn't come from a mystical dust sold at some dime-store voodoo shop in New Orleans. Nor is it a combination of some biological warfare mixed with rain. No. It's as easy as pricking the vein with some newfound blood.

Still, there must be some pain involved. There must be some type of agony, even if it awaits at the end of a needle.

I know that aguish....

....I recall the first time he hit me.

Almost a year and a half after I'd met Dave, I was planning his birthday party with Dion. Given that our friends wanted to keep it as a surprise part, Dion and I reserved our communication to cell phones only. After all, I didn't want Dave getting a clue to the festivities by seeing Dion's number on the caller ID of our home phone.

Unbeknownst to me, Dave had checked the incoming calls to my cell phone. After noticing Dion's calls late in the evening, (I couldn't plan Dave's party if he was in the room listening), Dave confronted me.

"Why are you talking to Dion at all hours of the night?" he aggressively asked.

"He's been having boyfriend problems," I lied, trying to shift any focus from Dave's upcoming birthday.

"Are you with him while I'm sleeping?"

"No, I'm just talking with him."

"Do you like him?" Dave asked.

"What?"

"You heard me." Dave's eyes reflected fury; his pupils grew large.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Without warning, I felt a hard punch to my left eye and a white light temporarily blinded me. The blood vessels rising to the surface heated the flesh around my eye. My heart pounded in unison with the throbbing of the wound I had just sustained.

"If you want Dion, be with him. Just don't lead *me* on."

I was speechless. Hot tears raced from my eye and down my cheek.

Surely Dave was having a bad day. *That was him*, I convinced myself.

I wish I had known better. Perhaps, then, it wouldn't have come to *this*....

....There is a slight piercing as the tip of the needle enters the crook of the arm. Surely, there is no difference between this and donating plasma at the local Red Cross. Though, after extracting three vials of blood at a time, in that especially tender part of the arm,

there is bound to be bruising. In fact, it appears like the appendage of a heroin junkie—pinprick scabs over layers of flesh colored black and blue.

I know such colors well, those shades of abuse that had revisited my body from Dave's constant beatings. There are times when I can easily recall having to wear long sleeve shirts on a summer's day because of the purple-colored imprint left behind from Dave forcefully tugging at my arm. Sometimes, I remember having to use make-up to conceal the brown and yellow hues that encircled my eyes because of Dave punching me. Still, there are times when I see his face and I *have* to kiss him.

After the blood is drawn from the arm of the living, it is then inserted into the non-beating heart of the deceased. I know it sounds like rubbish, and I can't remember where it was learned. I believe the technique came from the reading of some occult book.

Once the dead is host to the fresh blood, the eyes open and welcome blurred vision. The obscured eyesight is due to the cloudy residue that creates a milky appearance of the sclera from lack of blood when one dies. Soon, the body begins to uncontrollably spasm. There are multiple crunching sounds from the muscles fighting against rigormortis. The arms and legs bend and tremble in eerie activity, like that of a contortionist or carnival sideshow freak. Limbs wildly swing in the air and the head vehemently bounces in all directions, continuously thrown back.

As the reanimated corpse pounds against the hardwood floor, I am reminded by the pounding of Dave's fists upon my body....

....I was getting used to Dave's physical abuse. My happy thoughts became that of hoping Dave would strike me in a place upon my body that wouldn't be obvious to friends during their rare, social visits or to classmates at the medical school I attended.

I finally realized that I was ready to leave. If Dave tried to stop me, I would strike back. I had so much pent-up hatred for his actions!

The night I confronted Dave and told him that I was leaving the relationship, he grabbed at my neck from behind. I quickly spun around. I used all my might to bring back a rigid fist and strike him square in the nose.

I raced out the door and headed toward the stairs to make my exit to the parking lot of our apartment complex. Before I could reach the stairwell, I felt the heavy force of two hands push me from behind. I found myself teetering over the wrought-iron rail, ready to go falling head first off the second floor of our building and onto the cement. My stomach screamed with butterflies as I felt my upper body give way to the gravity that welcomed me over the railing. I reached behind me, grabbing a handful of Dave's shirt. If I was going to fall, he was coming with me.

That is exactly what happened.

I fell over the rail and Dave came tumbling over after. Our bodies made a hollow thud upon the sidewalk below. My arms and legs instantly went numb. I gasped for air. I slowly turned my head to find Dave beside me. The sight of the blood pooling around his head terrified me.

Was that the price Dave was willing to pay so that he could remain with me? Apparently not., for Dave had other plans....

....Dave looks as handsome as ever, those intense brown eyes. Yes, I can still make out those eyes through the chalky eyesight I've grown accustomed to.

My neck feels still; yet, I can manage to turn it upward to glance at Dave. I *have* to kiss him. Yes, *have* to.

"I love you, Darren," Dave says. "I won't ever let you go."

Dave bows his head toward mine. We kiss. His lips are soft like satin.

I'm freezing, but Dave's touch is hot. His contact is forced. I think his guilt is finally setting in. Perhaps my death has changed his way of loving.

As a zombie, I don't have much will power. I can only respond to Dave's reaction. From his kiss, I reply with pursed lips, as blue as they may appear. From his embrace, I try holding him with rickety arms that continue seeking life.

Sometimes, I search for the imaginary strings that attach me to Dave. If I am his puppet, then I pray the strings will be cut some day.

However, I look forward to responding to him hitting me. Unfortunately, he hasn't done that yet.