

November rains. He hated November and he hated rain. In fact there wasn't much that Miller Pressman didn't hate. And those things that he didn't outright hate he simply detested. He stared at the pictures again, as he had many times before. His eyes were drawn to the picture of he and his father with the first deer he'd ever shot. His father wore a look of pride that made his stomach turn. *I tried so hard t make him proud.* He looked at the blood spatters on his vest and face. His stomach heaved. *The pictures...the blood.... They...* His mind flitted back to a night much like this one.

The drunken rage... the terrified screams of his mother and sisters... He heard a soft thud and scrapes from below him. The house was always silent except for nights like this. The rain slashing at the windows always brought the sounds of his father moving around downstairs and the screams from the basement. A floorboard outside his room creaked making Miller snap the book shut in surprise. "Go away Dad! You're dead!" The floorboard protested a second time and he slapped his hands over his ears. "Go away...go away...go away!"

Deep in his heart he knew though. He knew his father would not rest until he, Miller was as dead as the rest of them. A fter a while he slowly took his hands from his ears and listened. When there were no sounds for several minutes he rose and lit the lamp on the night table. Its pale light filled the room with an eerie glow. Shadows huddled in the corners like little demons. His hand strayed to the worn book at his side. Flipping through the pages he found several markings and hand written notations.

Floorboards elsewhere in the house creaked as if someone were walking across them. A door downstairs slammed. Jumping up Miller grabbed the lamp. The book spilled onto the floor damaging several of the handmade pages. His feet were leaden as he marched slowly down the stairs. A scream rent the night forcing him to pause halfway down. He knew that the screams were only in his head, yet it still took him several deep shuddering breaths to calm his racing heart.

He made his way into the kitchen. The pastel blue Formica of the dinette table was scarred and chipped. It didn't really matter, because the only thing on it was a bloody handprint. Turning his light towards the back of the kitchen, he saw the door to the basement hanging slightly ajar. He was certain that he'd closed it when he'd gone upstairs earlier. Crossing the floor he shined his light down the stairs. There was nothing. No signs of disturbance, no sign that anyone had been down the steps in years. The thick layer of dust covering the steps was undisturbed.

Shrugging his shoulders and calling himself seven different kinds of fool, he closed the door firmly and latched it. "Stay down there," he muttered. "You're dead. Leave me alone." Switching the lamp to his opposite hand he flexed his aching fingers. Raising the light to illuminate his way, he found himself staring like a deer caught in a gun sight. "You're not real. Go away and leave me alone!" To his horror the apparition he stared at began to shamle towards him. He couldn't tear his eyes away. "What do you want?"

"You've been a bad boy Miller. You need to be taught a lesson."

The reeking breath sailed up his nostrils like a ship at low tide and sent a shudder of repulsed terror through him. "You can't hurt me anymore Dad. You can't hurt anyone anymore. You're dead!" The apparition vanished before his eyes. His heart thudding like a racehorse thundering around a track, he ran up the stairs. Darting back into his room, he slammed the door. The lock was broken so he pushed his dresser in front of it. He was going to keep them out for as long as he could.

The sounds started up downstairs and grew louder. He shouted above the roar. "Go Away!" Dropping the lamp on its base he wrapped his arms about himself and rocked back and forth mewling.

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Police Detective Spry stared at the body dangling from the crossbeam for several moments before speaking. "Subject is male. Appears to be approximately seventeen to twenty years of age. Cause of death? Hanging by the neck...likely snapped his spine. Weight estimated at maybe ninety-five pounds. Coroner will confirm details." He waved a dismissive hand and began cataloguing everything else the room contained.

Spying an old family album on the floor he bent to retrieve it. He carefully lifted the stained item from the floor with gloved hands. "Give me a light, would you Carl?" The assistant angled his flashlight so that the light shined on the pages. The stains, which he realized were dried blood, had splattered over several of the pictures the book held. There were notes written very neatly beside several of the pictures, notes that explained what had happened. The detective read the first.

*Dad beat Ellie again. He has them tied up in the basement. He doesn't think I know, but here they are. I snuck in when he was out and took a picture.*

The picture was of a pretty redhead in her thirties and two younger girls with their hands bound to a beam above them. Each one wore the bruises of past beatings, but the youngest one by the looks of her, wore fresh red welts that peaked through her tattered clothes. Pointing to the picture he asked, "Carl do you have any idea where this room might be?"

The older man bent closer to get a look at the faded picture. Scratching his chin he thought for a moment. "Seems to be a dirt floor boss. I'd say it's the basement. Should be a way in through the kitchen."

Detective Spry nodded and rose accidentally running into one of the dangling feet. The body swayed eerily behind him. "Let's go take a look. This guy ain't going anywhere."

The older man shined the light on the hanging corpse one last time. He looked from the feet to the head and found something that almost made him lose his nerve. The bulging eyes black seemed to be following his every move. Hearing the creak of the corpse's jaw opening was all it took to send him scuttling after the younger detective. "Shouldn't we send for the ME boss?"

"All in good time Carl. He isn't going anywhere." Keeping a hold of the book he led the way out of the room. Downstairs in the kitchen he found the door. It was locked and had obviously been jammed shut at some point. Carefully removing the slim dowel that had been shoved

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