

Killers Behind Closed Doors

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Jerry

The truck lights illuminate the inside of the decrepit house. I hold the hatchet wound in my shoulder and look at my options. The broken stairs, the dusty living room, or a dirty kitchen. The old truck's door creaks open. I grab a lone coat on the coat rack as I form a plan.

I collect the blood to my hand from my shoulder and squeeze my hand to drip it across the walkway, towards the kitchen. I grab a rusty knife to start my things-that-save-me collection. Using the coat, I keep my wound from dripping.

The truck door slams shut with little effort.

My breath steady, I walk to the other side of the walkway. I hide behind the couch, and I make sure the couch shadow covers mine.

The floorboards creak under his muddy boots. He looks down at the blood. I cover my nose and mouth to make less noise. The muddy boots thud across the walkway towards the kitchen. Listening carefully, I wait.

Nothing.

The truck lights beam through the open doorway. I make my way to the light. I hope to god that I do not make a sound. The wood floor is rough under my bare feet. A creak of the floorboards stops me. The muddy boots begin to shuffle, and I run outside. I get to the truck and pull the door closed.

There's always a particular smell to old pickup trucks. This one seems to have a hint of blood. I set the rusty knife on the cloth seat. There's half a tank of gas.

"This should be good enough to get me the fuck out of here," I say as I shift the stick.

The slam of a hatchet into the hood of the truck startles me. It takes a few pulls, but he removes the hatchet and walks towards the side of the vehicle. I punch the gas and reverse my way out of his clutch. Turning the wheel, the truck now faces the road leading into the forest. He watches me through the rearview mirror. I wince as I pull the coat closer.

The lights of the truck flicker.

"No, no, fuck no."

The speed begins to fall. 40. 38. 35. I keep hitting the gas, but nothing happens.

"Please, God, no."

30. 28. 25. There's not a clearing of the forest in sight. Tears form in my eye.

"I'm so close."

20. 18. 15. I try everything, I shift the stick, I hit the gas, I slam my hands on the wheel.

Nothing.

10. 8. 5. I put my head back and try to breathe.

"It's not the end of the world, yet."

Yet. God forbid I get lost, or worse, he catches me.

I bring the truck to the side of the road and button up my new coat. I hop out of the vehicle. I slam the truck door and reach into my pockets. I pat my body and panic.

"Where's my knife?"

I realize it's in the truck and pull on the door. It's stuck. I try again, but it won't budge.

"Damn it."

I scurry around the front of the truck and pull on the passenger side door. It's jammed.

"No." I pull.

"Goddamnit." I pull again.

I grunt as I pull with all my might. I hit my head on the door with shame.

"Fuck." I take a deep breath and turn to the road. Leaving the one item in my things-that-save-me collection, I walk away from the truck.

Along the way, I find a small tan house in the middle of the woods. A few bushes grow in the front next to the sidewalk leading to the side driveway.

The lights are out.

"Maybe I'll find help or a phone." Anything to help me get away from my "friend."

I get to the door where a welcome mat that says "Welcome to my humble abode" sits. I bang on the door and put my ear next to it to listen.

Nothing.

I open the door. I walk through a hallway that leads to another door. I find a set of stairs leading to the basement.

"I'm not going down there."

A door opens in another room. I decide to hide on the stairs. I get into position so that I can see through the crack in the bottom of the floor. The hallway light comes on, and I see two muddy boots walk into view.

Widow

“Do you think Geoffrey knew about this change in his brother’s will?” Doug says. He sets his drink on the coffee table. Leaning back into the chair of the motel room, he pulls a flip notebook from an inside trench coat pocket.

“It’s possible. They would always golf on Tuesdays, and Geoffrey loved to gossip.”

“Would you say Geoffrey is a jealous man, Katherine?” Doug looks over to Katherine as he opens the notebook.

Katherine has bright auburn hair. Her blue eyes pop from the eye shadow. Her skin pure white. Around her neck sits an elegant diamond necklace which droops down to her—

Katherine clears her throat.

“He did seem to act rather... strange around me as of late.” She pulls up on the scantily clad red dress.

“I see.” Doug adjusts his glasses and flips over a page in his notebook.

“Why, you don’t think—” She raises her white gloved hand to her mouth.

“Now I was just asking a few questions. We don’t need to go assuming anything just yet.”

Katherine takes her handbag and places it next to her lap. She searches through to find her “Rouge #4” lipstick.

“Thank you for cooperating Miss Rabbit, I believe those are all the questions I have,” Doug says.

“Well, I hope they helped you in some way.” She slides the lipstick around her mouth, and takes a napkin out. “Mind if I use the telephone?” She blots her lips.

“Go right ahead.” Doug continues to look through his notes.

She places the napkin on the table and walks over to sit on one of the beds.

“I will have to ask that you stay in Los Vegas, Miss Rabbit, I may have some more questions for you.”

She picks up the phone. One at a time she dials the numbers on the rotary phone.

“Do you have everything ready?”

Doug stops on a particular page. A photograph of the signature.

“Of course. Why is it taking you so long?” Geoffrey says over the phone.

Just out of his peripheral vision, Doug notices the stained napkin on the table.

“The detective is starting to catch onto us.”

“Oh shit. What are we going to do?”

He lowers the notebook and leans in closer to the table. Something is written on the napkin. Doug raises the notebook back up.

“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.” Katherine sets the phone on the hook.

Cross referencing the image and the napkin, Doug sees a peculiarity.

The room is quiet. Doug sits back up as he realizes this odd silence. The cocking of a revolver causes Doug’s eyes to grow wide.

Katherine slides the gun back into her handbag.

“They say ‘crime doesn’t pay.’ I say they just stopped too soon.”

She walks around to see Doug with part of his face blown out.

“It’s a shame. You could have been halfway decent if you didn’t have four eyes.” She looks down at the napkin. Next to the lip stain and the blood reads “Widow.”

My Everything

“Oh god,” I say, “What have I done?” I hold the hand of my lover as he lays in a hospital bed.

“Mr. Ortiz, is it?” the Doctor with a clipboard asks.

“Y-yes, that’s me.” I look up at him.

“Your partner hit his head very hard during the crash. He is in a coma.”

“He’s going to be alright though, right?” I can’t believe that he will never be there for me again.

“Due to the impact, we can’t be sure when, or if, he’ll wake up.”

I turn my head back to him, he looks so peaceful laying in the bed. I should have paid more attention to the road.

“I’ll give you some time,” the Doctor says as he places the clipboard on a table and leaves the room.

I lay my head on Von’s chest. The rhythm of his heart lulls me out of time.

###

Today is the big day. Von has been offered a great job in New York as a freelance artist. He has to fly in this morning, and I wanted to drive him to the airport. I want to be there for him today, just like how he is always there for me, even when we were kids.

The sun is rising, giving a pink fade on the horizon. There isn’t much traffic on the highway today. Not a car to be seen.

I look away from the road to check on him.

He is so adorable when he sleeps I love his dark hair and smooth skin, the little dimples that form when he smiles. He’s curled up with a blanket wrapped around him. It’s a pretty cold day and my car heater is broken, so I made him take a blanket with us so he can cozy up with it during the ride.

We’ve been together for a couple years now. I think it’s finally time that I put a ring on it. I want to propose to him at the airport before he leaves, give an incentive to come back sooner. I hope he likes the ring I got.

I look back to the road with a smile on my face, only for it to turn into fear. A stop light with a car right in front of us.

###

The thud of tears falling onto him brings me back to reality. I raise my head and look at his resting face.

“Please don’t leave me. You’re my everything.” I pull the snot back into my nose. His hand feels smooth as I rub my thumb across the top. I reach into my pocket and open the case of the ring. I decide to slide the ring onto his finger, maybe he will feel it and know that I want to spend the rest of my life with him.

“I-I love you.”

The sound of the heart monitor is my only response.

I look down at his hand. The ring fits perfectly. My vision becomes blurry from the tears swelling up.

Rain drops begin to hit the window as a nurse walks into our room. I notice her dark blue scrubs as she tries to work without disrupting the mood. The chair I sit in isn’t the most comfortable, but I wouldn’t dare leave his side. A buzzing from my phone tells me his mother won’t be in until tomorrow. I wish I could tell her everything is alright, but the longer he’s in a coma the less likely he’ll come out of it.

I stand up. If I was in some Disney film this will surely wake him. I bend over to him and I kiss him. I kiss him with all the love I could put into a kiss. I am begging for my happy ending.

The heart monitor continues.

The Feather

I have never killed a man. I stand by that, even now.

‘Twas a fine day. I had scheduled it to be a day for my writing. I sat in my study finishing my latest work. A ringing of the doorbell came to my attention. I continued with my work in hopes that my butler will handle the situation. Again, the bell rang, and again I ignored. Surely my butler was almost at the door. After all, it could take some time to get across the mansion.

Another time the bell rang; at this I was furious.

I abruptly stood and said, “where the hell is that damn butler?”

Only the ringing of the bell was my answer. I opened the door to the hallway which leads to the grand foyer.

I came to the door met with a stop to the ringing. I opened the door and found it empty but for a decorative wooden box sitting on the ground. I looked around to find the culprit. Not a sight to be seen. I picked up the box.

A heavy weight was in my hands.

I walked back to my study as I examined this “gift.” Carvings on each side of the box were painted dark. A metal hatch in the front kept it closed.

I sat the box on my desk. I undid the lock and found a feather quill on the inside. The feather was dark blue, it sat on a velvet red cushion. Something was engraved into the box. “Life requires equivalent exchange.”

“Peculiar.” I picked up the quill. It felt grand. I took a piece of paper out, and I decided what to write while dipping the quill. It came to me out of nowhere.

*How doth the little bluebird
sing with such grace
and soar through the sky so stirred
by the vigor of their chase.*

Every stroke was smooth and eloquent. I sat the quill down. Looking up I saw a bluebird standing on a stack of books on the desk. It chirped at me.

“Where did you come from?”

The bird saw the feather quill and back to me. I felt a sharp cramp in my stomach. I looked down to see a blank sheet of paper.

“Impossible.” There was absolutely no way this bird could just appear because I wrote it. I felt the paper. It was completely dry. I checked the window and it was closed. Have I gone mad? Surely not.

I grab the quill and wrote for gold. Gold could not move on its own. I sat the quill down and looked at the bird.

“I am not crazy.” I gave a smile and leaned back in my chair.

I stretched my legs and hit something with my foot. Confused, I checked beneath my desk to find a gold bar sitting on the floor. I take it and sit up to find the bird lying dead on my desk.

The paper once again dry.

“What is going on here?” I moved the bird away from me with a book.

“Charlton!” I called for my butler, but I received no response.

I look to the quill.

“I’m not mad.”

I wrote his name into the paper.

“Yes, sir?”

“what?” I looked next to me and saw him standing there. “Where did you come from?”

“I believe you called for me.”

“Ah, yes. A bird seems to have flown in and died. I’d like you to dispose of it.”

“As you wish.”

He takes the bird and walks out of the study.

A sharp pain forms in my abdomen. I take my white handkerchief out to cough. Splats of red blood show. I had no idea what was happening. I looked around and my eyes settled on something.

“Life requires equivalent exchange.”

Could it be?

The pain became stronger.

“Bloody hell.” I wrote for my health to return.

Finally, I saw the ink vanish, and my pain disappeared.

“Ah,” Charlton cried out from the hallway.

I rushed out to see what the matter was. There he lay. His white button-up stained red with blood. I opened the shirt and found a chunk of his abdomen missing. I stood up and realized the true nature of that quill.

I returned to my desk. I looked at the quill. So much power, but at a cost. Only a madman would mess with its darkness.

“I think tomorrow will be a lovely day for some guests.” I smiled as I placed the quill back into the box.

About the Author

Gaige Broughton is a game writer who creates science fiction/fantasy worlds that deal with subjects of personal struggles. He is earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and has published flash fiction work in the *Scarlet Leaf Review*. Most of the time, you can find him lost deep within expansive or strategic video game worlds.

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