

Revenge

5 December 2014

He jolts awake to the thumping of his own heart. Another nightmare. He feels the icy sweat covering his back. It's three o'clock in the morning. Only the second nightmare tonight. There's no point, he thinks to himself as he gives in to his inability to sleep comfortably and drags his body out of bed.

"Good morning," he said gloomily to no one. Not even an echo spoke back to him. But he was accustomed to this treatment. He was accustomed to the absence of a loving voice to respond.

In the pantry waits the familiar box of cereal. In the fridge, a gallon of milk sits alone. In the cabinet is a singular bowl. Next to it is the only spoon in the house. He makes his breakfast and sits by the fire. He tries hard to forget his nightmare. But the hairs on his neck have yet to go down. He moves closer to the fire. Closer to happiness. Closer to heat. Though the fire is warm, it is not enough to melt the ice running through his veins. He found out a long time ago that the ice will never go away. Not until he finds the fire. The real fire.

The sun has yet to come up. Still close to three more hours of darkness. Darkness. It is inviting, with its false promises of protection. Its deception: so sly it could fool even the wisest and most observant of humans. Humans. They are so predictable. Using the darkness as if it were light. Using darkness as protection when all it does is harm.

The next three hours seem to take four. Time enjoys mocking those who despise him. Jack knew this full well. After a restless night and restless morning, he wanted anything but rest. He could not be more awake. But he didn't need to wonder why because he already knew the answer.

Time for school. One more semester and Jack is out of there. He convinces himself that he must go, but with much difficulty. Jack walks slowly back to his room, dragging his feet along the way. He changes clothes and stands in front of the mirror. He focuses on his broad shoulders. His

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muscular arms and legs. Then up to his face. He notices the shadow casted on his eyes by his brow bone. Underneath the shadow are two, icy blue eyes that glint with liveliness. Jack realizes that his fists are clenched. Who is that, he thinks.

“Who are you?” he coldly whispers because he didn’t hear a response.

This time, he hears the answer: “I am your masterpiece,” said the reflection. It wasn’t an audible voice. Rather, it was the expression on his face as his whole appearance shifted personas, giving him goose bumps. This was the face of Jack, but not the Jack he knows best. It was the face of the Jack who everyone else knows. The Jack who boasts of his ability to fool others. “Everything is alright. No one will see your agony. They’ve never even seen the ice inside of you, have they? Don’t worry about it. Today’s not any different.” The reflection would not stop mocking him, so he ran from his room and out the front door.

The walk to school is typical. His attitude changing the closer he gets to school. His false, happy part of himself beginning to show. Jack begins to think, I was right. No one will find out.

And he was right.

“Good morning, Jack. How was your weekend?” his teacher asks as Jack walks through the door to his first class of the day.

“It was great! How was yours?” It was impossible to notice that he was lying. Impossible to see his apathy in regard to his teacher’s weekend.

“I had a wonderful weekend! Thanks for asking,” she replied.

Jack had gotten the hang of multitasking. He could participate in class while his thoughts drifted away. Meanwhile, not a soul in the class had any idea of what could be going on in his head: nor did they want to know. No one knew he was thinking things that were unimaginable to the faint of heart. No one knew to what extreme Jack was willing to go to ease his pain. No one

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knew just how much he thirsted for the taste of revenge to overwhelm him. No one could see past his outer shell of happiness and normality.

Finally. Another day finished. As he arrives at his house, Jack thinks about how he had stopped locking the door to his house about three months ago. Five months ago, when his parents were still alive, the house would have been locked. Back then, Jack had a reason to lock the door. Back then, Jack had values. Back then, Jack had peace. Back then, Jack had parents.

Each and every day out of the past 138 days, Jack thought of it. He thinks of the murderer. He thinks of his parents. He could only imagine how they struggled. How they didn't get a second chance. How they will never see him grow up. He thinks of how he will do it. How and when he will finally get the chance to quench his thirst. Every day he thinks of the fire. He wants the fire. More than anything.

There is a man who spent the last four months of his life in prison. It is this man whom Jack thinks about. This is the man who caused his pain. This is the man who introduced Jack to the ice. He is the one who makes him wake in the middle of the night in rage. This is the man who killed his parents.

Jack couldn't wait any longer. Today is the day. Jack sprints to his bike in the garage. As he pushes it out onto the driveway, he notices something. He had never felt colder in his life. It was as if every bone in his body had spent the past week in a freezer. His fingers are numb as he clenches the handlebars. But nothing will stop him. He hops on the bike. He forces his legs to pedal faster, though they feel as stiff as boards.

Jack arrives riding much slower than when he started. To his surprise, the sweat from biking for a little over 60 minutes chills his body. He didn't know he could be colder. He leans his bike up against the outside of the prison. Gathering his composure, becoming the Jack that

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everyone knows, he strides through the door and to the front desk. He talks for a while with the lady there. He talks about his reasons for visiting the man. He lies to her.

Jack fills out the paperwork for approval of the visitation. His hands are sweating. His heart pounds. He shakes and trembles as he writes. Despite the difficulties, Jack finishes the background check and turns it in. The waiting is the hardest part. He sits. He stands. He paces. His hands have not stopped sweating. His eyes are darting to various things around the room. 90 minutes pass. Wait, it's actually 18. Then he is called back to the desk.

This is the moment he was waiting for. Jack is so cold. He would not be able to walk if it weren't for the fire. So tempting. So close. He begins to feel its warmth as he approaches it. The hallway extends for miles. Despite the strength of his legs, Jack has difficulty lifting them to walk. His joints seem to be frozen solid. The thumping of his heart and the enticing calls of the warmth continue to push him forward.

The cell comes into view as Jack turns the corner. He can feel the heat radiating from the mere thought of the fire. With the thought, Jack notices the thawing inside of him. Just slightly, though. Twenty more steps. He is almost face to face with Agony. He is about to look into the eyes of Anger. Ten more steps until Jack meets Hate, himself. Suddenly, the anticipation of the moment reaches him. One step away.

"You don't understand what a pleasure it is to finally see you," Jack uttered. Shockingly, the voice of the ice spoke; not his.

What happened next was all a blur to Jack. The fire thawed him so quickly and painfully that he does not even remember doing the things he did. He doesn't remember stealing the key to the cell. He doesn't remember unlocking the door and tackling the man the instant he saw him. He

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doesn't remember how the man struggled in his strong grasp. He doesn't remember unloading over 20 punches to the man's face. He doesn't remember the guards coming in to peel him away from the man. He doesn't remember staring into the eyes of that murderer; and gasping for breath as he was dragged into a cell of his own. What he does remember is the intense, consuming, painful, satisfying relief of the ice melting. He remembers how his heart began to beat differently after that moment. He remembers how it began to beat with the fire. The real fire.