

Bones

<http://nogoodsonofabitch.com>

MY SHAKING LEG

The morning arrives like it always does. The cozy blackness of night that had covered the bedroom like a warm blanket dissipates and leaves behind a sad, murky orange. Shadows grow out of the backs of the dressers and nightstand like weeds. The blinds on the windows begin to glow yellow from the awakening sun outside. The clock reads 5:59 am. I lay on my back, my arms at my sides under the sheets, my head turned to face the numbers.

Waiting. Waiting. Click. 6:00 am.

The silence is shattered by the violent explosion of the alarm. A monotone voice emerges from the shroud of buzzing static in mid-sentence to inform me that all four lanes of 85 are blocked by an overturned tractor trailer. The D.O.T. does not expect it to be cleared for another two hours at least. Expect heavy delays. I turn my head away from the noisy clock to the other side of the bed. It is empty. Her pillow is gone.

Morning has arrived, and I am alone.

My leg must have been shaking again.

...

I'm sitting at the breakfast table in the kitchen reading the paper. A bowl of granola sits in front of me, untouched. From my angle I can see into the den, can see the local news channel flickering from the muted television. Angie is slowly pushing herself up to sitting position on the couch, peeling back the quilt that had covered her while she slept. Or tried to. She presses a button on the remote to shut off the TV, then rises from the couch to join me in the kitchen. Her eyes are puffy. The way they get when she hasn't slept well.

"Did you hear about 85?" she says. "All lanes are blocked."

"Yes, I heard. Good morning, dear."

"Good morning, honey," she yawns.

She fills up a cup of coffee, steps up to the table and leans over me, pressing her palm against my forehead.

"Feeling ok?" she asks.

"Yes, I'm fine."

"No migraines?"

"No, dear."

"Your leg was shaking really bad last night."

"I'm sorry."

"The way it does when you have a migraine coming on."

"I'm sorry. Did I keep you up all night?"

"It's alright. You sure you're feeling ok? Maybe you should stay home today. Rest. There's no use sitting in the office all afternoon with a migraine. You won't be able to get there before lunch anyway if they don't get 85 cleared up."

This is my Angie. Always thinking about me. I'd kept her up all night like I had so many times before, with my shaking leg, and she's worried about me. Never once has she complained about her having to get up in the middle of the night to lie awake on the couch. Never once has she shook me from my slumber to insist that I go to the couch. Never once has she accused her husband of destroying one of the most cherished facets of a marriage - the joy of sleeping peacefully beside one another - due to the incessant rattling of his God forsaken leg. She is a good wife to me. Much better than I should deserve. I love her so much, and I try to be the best husband she could have - loyal, hardworking, patient - but I am unworthy of her kindness. A man that would continually torture the one he loves by depriving her of a simple night of uninterrupted sleep deserves nothing of the sort.

"Well, at least be sure to take your medicine before you leave." She turns back towards the den.

"Honey?"

"Yes, dear?"

"I think I will stay home today."

"Ok, dear."

...

I am sitting on the couch watching CNN and the volume is turned down to one bar. It sounds much louder than it should though, and this upsets me. It means that a migraine is coming on. Soon the quietest sounds will grow to deafening levels, foreshadowing the impending pain that will be born into the innermost core of my mind. Like a heartbeat, the pain will pulse. On, off, on, off. Slowly at first, and then it will gain speed, pulsing faster and faster and faster, fanning out waves of hurt that soak through every coil of my brain until they reach the inner shell of my skull. And they will smash into it like ocean waves against a ship's hull. Pounding, pounding, pounding, and flowing back against the waves of pain that rush forward, turning my head into a chaos of crashing. I will then be unable to think.

I can hear Angie coming down the stairs. Hear the crinkle crackle of the loose railing. Hear her step into the room. Hear her neck turn her face to look at me. Hear her blink.

"I'm heading out to run a few errands."

Her voice slams into me and feels like a car wreck. I force myself not to cringe away from it.

"I'll be back in a couple hours," she says.

"Ok, dear."

"Can I get you anything from the store?"

"Oh, no, thank you."

"Ok, well, try to enjoy your day off. And be sure to take your headache medication."

"Ok."

"Ok. Well, I love you."

"I love you too, Angie."

I love you very much, Angie. And a man like me does not deserve your love in return.

I watch as she walks through the kitchen to the door to the garage. She opens it and steps through. And as she closes it behind her, I see her yawn. The door closes with a tremendous bang, and I'm left with the echoing moan of that yawn, trapped in the kitchen, its sorrowful sound bouncing off the walls and flowing out into the den where I sit. Filling my ears with its cry. As it rings inside my ear canal, it drills deeper down down down towards that deep bright growing orb in the core. The one that will soon be pulsing like the heartbeat of the devil.

I deserve this. I am a horrible man. A terrible creature with an evil leg that rattles and shakes in tandem with the pulsing of the orb and leaves my loving wife to lie wide-eyed throughout the night.

A leg that is now once again beginning its demon dance. Even as I press my hand down against my thigh to smother it, the ball of my foot continues to press down hard onto the floor, the heel bobbing up and down in its maddening motions. One two, up, down. One two, up, down. Again again again again...

Tonight will be bad. When the orb grows to its fullest size, a blazing Hell's sun that will envelope my brain, the frequency of the leg rattles will increase to treacherous levels. And Angie will crawl into bed and pretend not to notice. I cannot do this to her. Not again. Not one more night can I torture the woman I love with this awful leg.

I stand up. I'll go now to the bedroom to grab my wallet and car keys. It seems I have my own errands to attend to.

...

I am standing in the guest room. The one adjacent to the kitchen. I am standing next to the bed and looking into the mirror that rests atop the old dresser. Looking at the man that peers back at me, who holds a Linen's N' Things bag in one hand, a bag from Home Depot in the other. I watch as the man in the mirror places the Home Depot bag onto the bed and reaches his hand into the other one. I wonder if his head is pounding as hard as mine is. Does the man in the mirror see me through a translucent lens of hurt as I see him? I watch him pull a white bed sheet out of the bag, and lay it onto the bed, folding it over once, twice. I watch as he unbuckles his

belt, drops his slacks to the floor, and steps out of them. I stare at the man in the polo shirt and boxer shorts as he lifts up the necktie he had earlier placed atop the dresser. The necktie that has been wrapped around a neck so many times before without a second thought, but at this moment brings back images of another neck. I watch as the man sits down on the bed, making sure he's sitting on the new linens.

I turn my head away from the mirror to stop watching the stranger, and focus instead on myself. On my thigh. My hairy thigh, the one that grows thicker and more wrinkly with each day that I age, its skin and fat spreading out over the new sheet. I watch as it begins to twitch. I reach into the Home Depot bag and I pull out the saw.

I place it on the bed beside me, and I wrap the tie around my thigh. The thigh connected to the leg that is bouncing up and down, as if it is tapping out morse code. Communicating with the pulses radiating out from the orb. I grab the ends of the necktie with each hand, and I loosely tie them together.

And then I tug.

And the necktie digs deep into my thigh, tight, folds of skin flowing up and around it. The skin rivulets that ring the taught fabric quickly grow dark as the blood vessels underneath burst, and through my tunnel vision, the narrow cone that is my perception when the migraines start, the thigh looks like a neck. A neck being constricted by a makeshift garrot. If it weren't for the hairs, it might look like a woman's neck. A young woman's neck. A young woman's neck that covers a web of bursting vessels, a throat that tries to expand against the unyielding pressure.

I pick up the saw and I put its blade to my thigh, the teeth pressing down, making tiny divets in the flesh inches below the necktie moat. I grasp firmly onto the handle.

And I begin to saw.

Back and forth.

Slowly at first. Softly. The skin just moves left and right with the blade, unbreaking. It reminds me of the first couple thrusts across the surface of a cut of sausage. The pain is minor, just a mere annoyance as the occasional leg hair is ripped from its follicles. I grit my teeth and I

press down harder. I pull harder backwards with the saw. Push harder forward. Pull harder backwards. One two. One two.

And the skin tears.

And the saw teeth enter my insides.

And the pain rushes through my leg like a flood wave bursting through a dam. And it rushes down to my toes. And it rushes up through my thigh, through my groin, through my chest, and up through my neck, overtaking the pulsating pain in my head like the flood wave would flow right over the ripples of a pond. And just like that pond becomes a part of that flood, its past years of warm sunlight sparkling atop its surface all but forgotten within mere seconds, so is the pain in my head. The throbbing orb, the demon orb that had tortured my wife and my brain for so long completely drowned, absorbed by the typhoon of agony that surges throughout my system.

It feels... wonderful.

I continue to saw. Back and forth. Blood is streaming out of the canal that I carve, running down my leg and soaking the new bed sheet, foaming up over the rivulet of skin and into the fabric of the silken necktie. Droplets of blood are popping into the air and landing onto my jaw that is pressed down against my chest, landing on the sides of my mouth that is stretched across my face like a jack-o-lantern's smile.

I continue to saw. And the pain doesn't dissipate. Just grows deeper and deeper and fiercer. Overtaking me. Overtaking the orb. And the blood that gurgles out is now covering my entire thigh, covering my leg hair, turning the limb into a dark crimson stub that is no longer my leg. Could be anyone's leg. A woman's leg. A hooker's leg. A hooker's leg that I saw through, in and out, up and down, deeper and deeper. But this time, the pain is mine! I know this! Because this time the orb is not pulsing. The orb is drowned in pain!

I realize that I am screaming.

And it is real screaming. Not a subtle moan being amplified by the orb. BECAUSE THE ORB IS DEAD! This is real screaming! Real, loud, agonized screams of pain! And lunacy.

I turn my head and look into the mirror.

And I see a maniac staring back at me.

A maniac sitting on the bed in a growing pool of his own blood, methodically pushing and pulling his arm back and forth across his leg, splatters of red in every direction. Onto his shirt, the rug, the bed. His face is bright white, his eyes are wide. Blank. Insane. His jawline protrudes from his face in inhuman angles, his mouth a dark inverted crescent moon. He stares back me, screaming. But I cannot hear his screams over my own.

I cannot hear his screams over my own.

I cannot hear her screams over my own.

I thought she was dead.

I thought she was dead when I began to saw through her. It wasn't until she screamed that I realized what I had done. And that was when I began to scream. If I screamed loud enough, I could drown hers out, could only hear my own. And then there would only be my screaming. And sawing.

The sound of tearing. Ripping. Searing.

And now grinding.

I have reached bone.

I never thought you could feel your bones, but I know now that I was wrong. Because the feel of metal grinding against bone is just as it sounds!

It must have been what she felt. And it is when I snapped out of it.

Back in 1984, my senior year in college. The night before graduation. Alone in my one bedroom apartment. I was lonely. I called her. Just looked up some number in the classifieds that told me to call for a good time. I deserved it. Graduating with Honors. Just a day away from the rest of my life. I had earned a night of sin. So I called her. And when she showed up, and she pushed me down on the old thrift store couch and forced herself onto my lap and she began to rub her crotch against mine and told me to relax just relax and don't be so nervous and

why are you looking at me like that and you're freaking me out and I'm getting the fuck out of here...

And she couldn't leave like that but she wouldn't stay and I begged her not to leave but she wouldn't stay and my head was starting to hurt and it had never felt this way before and so I grabbed my graduation tie off the coffee table and I wrapped it around her neck and I pulled and I pulled and she tried to scream...

I continue to saw. Through bone. Marrow.

And I watched her pupils disappear into her skull and I released my grasp and she collapsed to the ground and...

I realized what I had done.

And what I would have to do.

I HAD to graduate tomorrow! I had to! So she had to disappear. And so I went into my room and I yanked out all the books and folders from my old wooden trunk. The trunk my parents had brought me when they came to visit me in the dorms back in Freshman year. A trunk to hold books, snacks, whatever, they said. Just a trunk. A gift. I thought about my parents when I pulled all the books out and threw them to the floor and I dragged it to the den and left it open-mouthed next to the hooker who lay lifeless on the floor. And I ran outside to grab the old rusty saw that had leaned against the back of the house, rained on for years next to the lawnmower and the dead, hardened hose.

And I began to saw through her. Because I needed to get her in the trunk! I had to! And as I began grinding through the bone in her thigh, she screamed..

I continue to saw. To grind. Back and forth. Watching the man in the mirror do the same, screaming. His screams blanketed by my own. His mouth frozen. Jaw locked. Lower teeth biting into upper lip. Blood dripping down onto his chin, where blood is splattering up from the carnage of his leg below. The sound of metal against bone is so horrible that I can hear it even over the howls. Like that horrible sound after two cars have engaged in a head-on collision and the tow truck is pulling one car off the other, and the sound of metal against metal, of more and

more monetary damage happening in front of your eyes, your ears, makes you have to step back and just shudder.

And I saw. And saw. And bone splits at the bottom.

And she screamed. I thought she was dead. I THOUGHT SHE WAS DEAD. I was sawing through a living human being! I had never intended to kill her in the first place! I had just freaked, man! I fucking freaked when she said she was leaving. She called me a creep. That fucking slut called me a creep? How dare her? I didn't mean to kill her. It just happened! And I had to graduate! So I had to get rid of her! But when she screamed! Man! I stood up above her, saw her look at me. That look in her eyes. And I crushed her face with my foot. Stomped on her. Over and over. Over and over. And even when she was dead, when she HAD to be dead, my leg continued to lift my foot and slam it down upon her. Over and over. It didn't want to stop. It didn't want to ever stop.

And my leg continued to move, to rattle, as I sawed her body into pieces and placed them into the trunk.

And it moved anytime the headaches arrived. And it moved when my fiancée crawled into bed with me for the first time. And it moved when we lay in bed after making love on our wedding night. And it moved last night. And it will continue to move. And one day it is going to move like it did on that night before graduation. And it is going to stomp on my loving wife's face. And I can't allow it to happen!

I am a horrible person.

I continue to saw. And scream.

And now...

And now I realize that I am sawing, but nothing is happening. I stop looking at the lunatic in the mirror and look down. Down at my leg. A raw, wide-open red circle is staring up at me. I look down at the saw. It is now trying to cut through the mattress. The leg is completely severed, and it is propped against the side of the bed, the bloody gap of the amputated limb an open mouth screaming along with me and the man in the mirror.

It is no longer moving.

And the orb in my skull is still not pulsating.

I have killed the demon.

I love my wife.

Ha ha!

I have done it. I shall present this gift to my wife. To show her that I DO deserve her love. I have done this for us.

I hear the garage door opening. And I am getting tired. And the pain is gone. I must get up. I must welcome my wife to our new life of happiness.

I push my hands down onto the mattress, blood soaking my fingertips. I raise up until I'm standing. On my one leg. I totter. It's tough to stay upright, to get used to this new sense of balance. And the blood loss isn't helping. I am rocking back and forth. I hold myself up against the bed post. And with my free hand I grasp hold of the dead demon leg that rests against the side of the bed. I lift it to my chest. And I hold it there with both hands. Like a baby. Cradled. The thigh and knee pressed to my heart, the rest of the leg extending outward, the foot pointing toes-down to the floor.

And I hop.

Towards the doorway.

Towards the den.

Towards my wife.

I love her so much.

I am out of the room and I am so tired. And I am hopping, trying to regain balance. My gift for my love cradled in my arms. I can see the door to the garage. I am so excited.

I see the door knob turn. See the door slowly swing open.

I hop towards it.

I love you, honey.

We'll sleep well tonight.

No more shaking leg.

I see her step into the doorway, a bag of groceries in her arm. I hop towards her, holding my gift out to her with both hands.

She sees me.

I smile for her.

I hop towards her. I just want to get to her. But I am losing balance. I'm hopping toward my right, and not straight. I am trying not to fall.

I try my hardest.

I try to hop to her.

She screams.

Her groceries fall from her arms and crash onto the floor.

I hop to her, my gift in my arms.

I love you, honey.

We'll sleep well tonight.

-Bones

August 10, 2007