Painless

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Brian Denu is a first-year student at Gettysburg College. He is a Music major as of now and will most likely be declaring a minor in Physics as well. He plays clarinet in the Wind Symphony, Symphony Band, and Woodwind Quartet in the Sunderman Conservatory of music, and also participated in Marching Band during the fall. In his free time, Brian finds time to write short stories of varying themes and can also be found trimming his bonsai tree, listening to music, making various props/costumes out of cardboard, or talking about himself in the third person.

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He was the first person to enter the house since the passing of its previous residents. And it was perfect.

At least that’s what he thought as he pulled up to it. Even though he had been there five times before, he still couldn’t get over how ideal the location was. Surrounded by forest. A half-mile from the main road. It all superceded the eerie feeling he got with each passing glance.

He stopped and exited his white sedan. There were no stars in the midnight sky, only a dark blanket expanding across the horizon. The air was humid; to the degree that one would practically drink the air rather than breathe it. But none of these unwelcome atmospheric conditions affected the man and his impending work. He moved to the rear of his car and opened the trunk, slowly, preserving the sight of its contents. And there she was.

Suspended in a drug-induced slumber, she laid still, hands bound with the finest duct tape. She was blonde, just like the others. This killer would have nothing less.

He grabbed her deceptively tanned body and carried her up to the front door. He had to put her down so that he may open it. Despite the great age that the entrance had accumulated, it would refuse to allow entry unless acted upon by a strong enough force.

The door gave up to the killer pushing against it and swung open with the expected screech. The moldy smell of age smacked the man’s nostrils, making him twitch even though he knew it was coming.

This was the third girl he had taken to this house, but it was obvious that there had been more. His style and methods were too honed to be those of a murderer of two. The killer must have brought the others to a location alternative to the house.

He entered, the girl hanging over his shoulder. He took the stairs immediately to his right up to the bedrooms. One by one, the stairs squeaked on cue, each emitting a rehearsed cacophony of pitches. Half way up was a boarded up window. It was invisible, engulfed in the pure darkness that inhabited the house, combined with the lack of light outside.

Reaching the top of the flight, he went to the first bedroom on his left. The door was already ajar. The room, bed included, was lined with plastic to make cleanup a much easier chore. He threw her onto the bed, creating an irritating sound as she skid across the plastic. Beyond the
clear coating, the room was very bare, containing only the bed and a large mirror, hung carefully on the ceiling at a slight angle. The only modernity that could be seen was the man’s black briefcase lying at the foot of the bed, and his lantern attached to the non-functional ceiling fan, illuminating the pale gray wallpaper that had begun to peel very long ago.

He moved towards the girl and removed her shirt, revealing the killer’s blank canvas. He ogled at it, visualizing his work being done upon the virgin flesh of his new victim.

He reached for his leather case filled with all his necessary supplies. It had been the same every time. He first took out the familiar duct tape and bound the woman’s limbs to each corresponding bedpost. He stopped midway through the step, and looked over his shoulder, to make sure the gaze he felt lay upon him was nonexistent.

Finishing with the binding, he reached for his two syringes. Neglecting to check for air bubbles, he inserted the first needle into her arm. She awoke, but was still hazy. She began to babble incoherently, but couldn’t construct a full phrase. The second syringe did nothing to help, adding more drugs to her already impaired condition. Her body returned to its previous limpopess.

But she had not been restored to her prior repose. Her eyes were very much open, and refused to blink. The drug was a paralyzing agent of some sort, leaving her very much awake. The killer then reached for his next tool.

The chrome scalpel gave off a grim glimmer as it moved into the dim light. The killer’s utensil extended farther than the conventional surgical blade, custom made to his personal preference. You could feel her fear as the blade came into her view, her eyes widening with terror.

As he turned towards her, he was stopped yet again. An incomprehensible whisper manifesting out in the hall. A minor ripple of fear passed over the killer, but he disregarded it. Just another mental projection, but it sounded so real.

Pushing the thought from his mind, he continued his work. He raised the surgical blade to her lips. He said only one thing to her.

“You won’t feel a thing.”

Whether or not he realized it she did feel the knife carving into her bare chest. Her eyes shouted with pain. What excruciating pain it must have been. After an hour of silent screaming, his mark had been made. An elaborate design whittled deep across her abdomen, matching the sketch he had in his briefcase.

A single tear streamed down her face, but disappeared into the ocean of blood that had streamed from his work. The man moved to the side, allowing her to view herself in the mirror. Her eyes shrieked, flooding her face with tears. The drugs had begun to wear off. He turned her head and added his final wound; the number twenty-one onto the
back of her neck, specifying which kill she was. Returning her to her helpless position, he slit her throat, spilling the rationed remnants of her blood onto his canvas. Her eyes fell silent.

As her eyes went empty, and her soul escaped its mutilated shell, there was a scream, powerful and high pitched. It came from the hallway, just as the other occurrences had. He looked in the sound’s direction with more intent than before. This time it was undeniable.

He stormed out into the hall, strongly hoping he had not been discovered. But as he took his first step onto the decaying rug that lined the hall, the sound stopped. Not even an echo.

His face accurately displayed his perplexed mindset. Was it all in his head?

He went back in the room, trying to rationalize what he just heard, his countenance still portraying active confusion. He looked down at the body; her eyes were closed. The confusion, now with undertones of fear, had doubled. Her eyes were definitely open when she died.

Fear of his detection fueled him now. Sweat began to form on his brow as he panicked to wrap the corpse in the plastic that it died on. His hands shook as he tried very hard not to spill her blood onto the rotting hardwood floor.

An hour passed. No further noise was made. You could tell from the speed of the cleanup that his confidence had been restored to its pre-homicide vigor. Using the resourcefulness of duct tape, he taped down the ends of the wrap as if it were some sort of synthetic burrito. He proceeded to lift the floorboards of the old room and placed the corpse underneath with the other two.

He took one last glance before the final floorboard was replaced, perhaps to relive the thrill of his skills. But the familiar confusion returned to his face. Her eyes glared at him through the plastic.

He slammed down the last board, his breathing heavy from fright. But like all the other irrational incidents, he removed it from his mind.

He killed the light from his lantern and grabbed it along with his packed briefcase. The darkness was stronger before. He looked to the hallway; its lights were on. He rushed out, and looked up to the ceiling. The light fixtures were empty. There didn’t seem to be any source at all for the omnipresent glow that filled the hall. He reached for the light switch next to the bedroom door; there was none.

The shaking in his hands re-manifested, but he managed to control his panic, at least until he saw her.

His first victim stood at the end of the hall in front of a boarded up window. She stared at him with screaming eyes, causing the killer fear rather than the satisfaction he constantly craved. Her chest was cut up and her throat slit, but it wasn’t his work. The design was indeed intricate, and in its center was a single word that slid an icy dagger of terror into his empty heart.
Revenge.
The killer turned and ran to the stairs but was tripped by a leg that wasn’t there. Flat on the awful smelling carpet, he lifted his head, only to see his second victim standing not two inches in front of him. He sprung up in an instant, terror stimulating his cells. The second girl’s inscription was identical to that of the first, a bloody declaration of vengeance upon their ruthless murderer.

He ran. A logical move. What else could he have done? But before he could set his foot on the first stair, the trio of skeletons emitted their mind splitting shrieks. Catching him completely off guard, he fell down the steps, his head bashing through the deteriorated wall at the end. He was knocked unconscious.

The lights dimmed back to nothing.

When he woke up the lights were still out. Was it all a dream? The killer stood up, brushing the debris from the wall out of his hair. He took a step, but hesitated due to the throbbing pain in his right ankle. He took a deep breath. The air had gotten considerably colder, but he paid no attention to it, despite the extent to which it decreased.

He scrambled for the door; he had lingered for far too long. Turning the knob, he was met with more than the typical resistance. Before he could muster the strength to overcome the door, he heard the back door open...and close.

Perhaps he would be appeased with one rational explanation to this evening’s events. He gave up on the front door and limped to the back, grunting in agony as he did. Standing at the threshold of the kitchen, he could tell that it was simply the chilling exhale of the wind.

But he could not be allowed the relief of rationality. Without warning, a similar breeze came from the entranceway. He turned around. All satisfaction evaporated.

The apparition was that of his most recent victim. She floated three feet off the floor, her stunning blonde hair had been reduced to wispy strands of white. The cuts on her torso spelled out the all-too-familiar phrase of “Revenge.” Her eyes, previously closed, opened, releasing a powerful glow of pale green light, and a screech that shook the foundation of the olden residence. A moment later, the two previous victims rose from the floor and began to release a similar shriek, causing wreckage to fall from the ceiling and walls of the house.

The air suddenly grew very cold. His breath was visible in front of his face, illuminated by the powerful rays. Seeing that the front entrance was blocked he turned around to sprint out the back.

Now was the time.

Out of the shadows, I, the Demon, puppet master of the night’s entertainment, emerged from observant hiding. It was time now for the
final act in my nine-ring circus. As the killer turned, he looked Fear in the
crimson eyes that glared into his empty soul. He could do nothing but
run. Neglecting his ankle, he ran through the ghosts of his victims, and
plowed straight through the resilient doorway, and into freedom.

But there would be no freedom. The ghosts, still screeching their
failing siren song, seemed to follow him with their sound, but he paid it
no mind. He stumbled to his car, and forced down the gas as soon as the
engine ignited. After a momentary skid, he fled.

The sound faded, but still rung in his ears, just as the chilling
sights would stay with him. He continued to shake, both out of fear and
the intense cold that miraculously eliminated the soaking humidity. His
head was drawn towards the passenger seat by a force he could not begin
to comprehend. His foot remained planted on the gas petal, but his eyes
were fixed on me, now occupying the seat.

Before he could speak, he blacked out.

The hospital was a happy scene compared to the house. The
overly clean white tile exacerbated the vibrant light. There was no harsh
moldy reek, but only the intoxicating scent of bleach and disinfectant. It
was obvious that these conditions soothed the intense fear that had been
placed inside the killer. His ankle was now in a cast, his neck in a brace,
and his jaw wired shut. The morphine drip attached to his arm gave him
the comfort he needed to forget the evening.

After all the exams were finished, he was left alone in his room to
rest. As the door shut, I made sure it stayed that way.

The cold caused the killer to awaken. His eyes froze with a fear he
should have been familiar with.

“You have many sins.”

His eyes screamed.

“Not even Hell could give you proper punishment.”

He timidly tapped the red button attached to his bed, hoping a
nurse would come.

“I will be making sure your punishment will never end.”

You could tell he was trying to scream.

“The first step is death. Don’t worry. You won’t feel a thing.”

But pain was in his eyes, despite mollifying morphine. His eyes
shouted pleasing screams of horror. Now he knew truly what he had been
doing. Blood began to pool underneath his hospital gown. He tore it off.
Twenty-one names were carved into his flesh.

His throat spilled open.

“Let’s go home.”