

BROKEN BONES

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Living Doll

Marchant Street, at the rear of the hospital, turned out to be little more than a glorified alleyway. Richard stopped the car and killed the lights. He sat, peering out through the windshield, looking for some trace of Hector in the darkness but there was none.

Richard stepped from the car, closing the door as quietly as he could after him. The alley stank. Piss, stale vegetables, all mingled with the familiar tang of hospital disinfectants. Richard picked his way carefully towards the rear of the dark, looming shape of the hospital building. What little light actually penetrated this far into the alleyway did no more than pick out the tops of the refuse bins; anything else littering the ground was bathed in impenetrable blackness. Richard cracked his leg against something sharp. He froze, grabbing his shin with one hand, groping forward into the darkness with the other. The leg of his jeans felt damp. Whether it was blood or something from whatever it was that he had banged against it was too dark to see. Richard cursed and stood up, wiping his sticky hand on his sweatshirt.

“You took your time!” Richard glanced round, surprised. The voice was unmistakably Hector's but echoed off of so many different surfaces it could have come from anywhere.

“I got here as fast as I could. I was with Christine.” Richard strained to see some evidence of Hector in the dark. There was nothing, just a disembodied voice.

“No matter. Follow me!”

How the hell am I supposed to follow you if I can't even see where you are? Richard thought to himself, suppressing the urge to shout out loud enough to drive Hector into the open. As if reading Richard's mind, Hector stepped from the protection of the shadows. "What the fuck do you think you look like?" Richard stared in disbelief. Nothing in his experience of Hector so far had quite prepared him for this. Light glinted on the familiar steel rimmed spectacles, but there any sense of familiarity abruptly ended.

From above a dirty, white intern's coat, a surgical cap was pulled down level with the top of the spectacle frames. Completely covering the face below the spectacles, the surgical mask ballooned and then was sucked tight across a partly opened mouth, each time accompanied by a familiar asthmatic wheeze. The skin tight, translucent surgical gloves poked from the ends of flapping, over-large sleeves. The combined effect, intentionally or otherwise, was more comic than anything else, but Richard could not seem to raise a laugh. The sound stuck in his throat, held in check by a more pressing sense of unease. There was no real humour in any of this. Leaving Christine on the first night in weeks that they had managed to remain in the house—alone—to go creeping around hospitals in the dark didn't seem such a good choice. Richard had made enough excuses to himself justifying Hector's need to see Sarah since the idea had first been put to him. Even now, as doubt raised its ugly head once more, he kept the thought to mind that just maybe this would be all that was finally needed for Hector to come to accept the situation once and for all and life to return to normal. But what would normal be like after all this?

Whether there was justification on any level for allowing Hector to carry out this apparently pointless escapade, surely it could not warrant his having concocted a costume from the rewards of rummaging through hospital waste.

Richard hesitated then followed. Hector was already moving towards the building, the shadows starting to swallow him. An icy chill fingered its way up Richard's spine as he watched Hector slowly disappearing. Richard wondered for a moment whether the darkness might not have not swallowed Hector forever.

Inside the building Richard found the familiar smell of hospitals in his mouth and nose immediately. It made him feel sick. The corridor lights were only on at intervals, nocturnal energy conservation, giving them time to adjust their eyes from the gloom outside. Hector led the way, walking silently ahead. The walls and doors that passed all looked frighteningly the same. Richard looked around for some landmark, anything he could use to guide himself back if things got out of hand—there was nothing. It was then that the sickeningly uneasy thought came suddenly into Richard's head. Hector seemed all too confidently familiar with the route they were taking. With one featureless corridor blending so seamlessly into the next, that could only mean that the night's events were more premeditated than Hector had at first let on.

“You've been here bef...” Richard tried to voice his concern, but was immediately silenced by the sound of footsteps from the corridor ahead. Swiftly, Hector opened the nearest door and pulled Richard inside, expertly closing the door behind them without making a sound.

Suddenly engulfed by black, Richard raised his arm, reaching out into the Stygian dark for a touch of something solid, a chair, cupboard, wall. His fingers closed on thin air.

Outside in the corridor the sound of footsteps grew louder until they almost drowned the sound of the rattle in Hector's chest. Then they began to recede.

Richard turned his head from side to side but there was not even a sliver of light from beneath the door to help him orient himself. He could have been anywhere, and anywhere was certainly preferable to this sordid game of cloak and dagger.

A light came on, bright and blinding. Richard covered his face until the glare eased enough for him to open his eyes. He was in the hospital, in a cupboard. No more than twelve feet square. The walls lined with shelves, each piled high with neatly folded uniforms and linen. The steel rimmed spectacles stared silently at him, the harsh glare of the cupboard light making them infuriatingly reflective.

Below, the surgical mask inflated then deflated. Hector moved, pressing his ear against the door.

“Just explain to me wha...” Hector clamped his gloved hand across Richard's mouth. The suddenness of the move startled him. Richard's nose wrinkled at the odour rising from the glove. He immediately stopped his train of thought, not wanting to think what it was that they might smell of.

“Shut up! They mustn't hear us!” Hector's voice carried an edge to it—serious, intent. The spectacles stared at Richard. Whatever Hector was planning, he was deadly serious about it. Richard hurriedly wiped his nose and mouth on the sleeve of his sweatshirt, desperate to remove the smell of the glove, as Hector turned and scanned the shelves.

“You stand out like a sore thumb. You'll have to put something on.” Hector reached up onto a shelf and handed Richard a folded green garment. “Put it on.” Richard held up the apron, inspecting it for any telltale stains. Thankfully there were none. He reluctantly slipped the apron over his clothes.

“Can you do me up?” Richard turned to face the wall as Hector secured the ties on the apron.

“You'll need these.” Hector slapped something cold and greasy into Richard's hand. Richard looked down quickly, fearing what he might see. In his hand was a pair of surgeon's gloves, a cap and a mask. Richard looked at Hector.

“I'm not wearing these!”

“We mustn't leave any fingerprints, and you mustn't be recognized if anyone sees us. Do it!” The force in the final words stung Richard. Hector's voice softened. “You promised.” Richard pulled the mask over his head, but let it hang loose around his neck. The cap and gloves he kept in his hand.

Hector had opened the door and was peering out into the corridor. Richard started to say something, but shut up as Hector was already out of the cupboard beckoning Richard to follow. He did.

Again Hector's passage through the hospital was too definite for him to be ad-libbing. As he followed silently behind, Richard couldn't

help wondering just how many times this deluded kid in fancy dress had walked this route before.

They descended a short flight of stairs and the air immediately chilled.

“How much further have we got to go?” Hector was too intent on his mission to waste time answering. He stopped abruptly outside a pair of double doors.

Hector turned to look at Richard.

“This is it.”

Richard thought he caught a glimpse of something in Hector's eyes. What, he could not be sure. Perhaps it had just been the reflection of the overhead lights. Hector closed a gloved hand over the bar securing the doors. He pushed.

“I hope you know what you're doing.” Richard said as he followed Hector inside.

The walls of the room were lined with glass-fronted cupboards each displaying a vast array of surgical gadgetry. Richard's eyes travelled along the rows of glistening silverware; knives, saws, clamps, objects whose function he could only guess at. Hector took it all in his stride, ignoring them with a cold casualness. True, the instruments did possess a strange kind of beauty, but they would still be here if he ever came back. There were more pressing matters to be dealt with.

So enwrapped was Richard with the sinister beauty of the instruments that he failed to see the sheet-draped gurney pushed against the corner of the room. Richard's hip cracked against the protruding handle. He yelped and spun round in time to see the arm slip limply from beneath the cover of the sheet.

“Jesus Christ!” Richard backed away from the gurney as far as the walls of the room would allow him. His skin crawled. There was a body laying on the gurney.

A dead body.

“Of course it is.” Hector's voice betrayed a slight sense of annoyance, panic? Hector's mind swiftly slipped a gear, floundering in neutral for a second. What had he told Richard? Which of the

many excuses he had concocted had he finally used? They were only coming to look at her. To pay his last respects. Hector grasped the thought, slamming his brain back into gear, concentrating on the job in hand. Could Richard really have been so naive as to have believed his story?

“What did you expect?” Everything seemed to spin around Richard. He wasn't quite sure of what was going on, he wasn't quite sure of anything just now. What did he expect? So far there hadn't really been time to actually sit down and figure that one out. Richard put a hand to his head, trying to stop the spinning, even if it had no effect on the rest of the room. Everything came to a stop. It was just him, Hector and a body on a trolley in some pokey little room in the basement of a hospital. That was all? It didn't take an expert to figure out whose body was most likely to be lying just a few feet before him. Richard stood, staring at the trolley as time politely stood still while his mind scrambled for an answer to the questions racing around his head; what do I do now?

The obvious answer flashed before his eyes, but for some reason Richard's feet refused to propel him towards the door. His mouth refused to call for help. For whatever reason, the answer just failed to connect. Richard stepped up to the gurney and raised the sheet. He had known exactly what to expect, could have predicted it correctly a thousand times, but even so, the sight of a naked Sarah Macintyre still took his breath away. She looked so normal, so peaceful, so beautiful. Richard stared, in truth he could have hardly averted his eyes if he had wanted. The long blonde hair with its soft, natural curl, the, silky pale skin, the gentle curve of her breasts. Christine or no Christine, there couldn't have been a single male that had come into contact with her that hadn't at least once dwelt on the thought of any kind of encounter with Sarah Macintyre, sexual or romantic. That train of thought was abruptly derailed as the sheet was suddenly ripped from Richard's hand as Hector hastily covered Sarah's body. Richard turned to Hector, his cheeks flushing slightly. Richard fumbled for something to say. Hector looked angry.

“It doesn't take that long to see who it is!” The accusation was as plain as day. Richard chose not to rise to it; there were more serious matters to deal with.

“Are you out of your tiny fucking mind! What do you think you're doing?” The venom in Richard's words stung Hector with the ferocity of a snakebite. Richard was a friend. He was here to help, not hinder. Hector swallowed hard, his mouth had gone dry. He hadn't expected an inquisition.

“I'm taking her out of here. She may not have given me a second thought while she was alive, but things will be different now.” This was not the time to have to explain. For some reason the words didn't seem to make as much sense now that he had finally spoken them, out loud. Perhaps he wasn't explaining himself too well. Perhaps it was all Richard's fault. After all, everything had made perfect sense until this accusatory voice had entered the proceedings. Hector frowned, he knew he was right. Richard just didn't understand. How could he expect Hector to plan such a skilful operation and then demand that he stop halfway through and cogently explain everything? It just didn't work like that.

“What are you talking about?” Richard's voice was unsteady, his face pale. He was confusing the issue, interrupting the smoothness of the plan. Hector had to take control of the situation before Richard's hysteria threatened to ruin everything. Hector could feel the hot stickiness building beneath his arms, any moment the flush would spread up his neck, creeping over his face, the sticky beads of sweat crowding his forehead, then the bittersweet aroma filtering out through his clothes. He touched his upper lip; it was already heavily beaded with sweat. Please calm down, Richard, don't make things go wrong.

“Hector, you've gone mad. This is a fucking corpse!” Beautiful though it may be, rationality started to creep back into Richard's head. “Keep your voice down!” Hector barked. The insult, the blasphemy sobered Hector immediately. Sarah, his Sarah—a corpse! The insult cut too deep to be ignored, but ignore it he must if things were to return to the path he had chosen. Hector took a deep breath, ignoring the souring odour from his body. His reasoning was perfect, of that

he had no doubt. All he needed was the right words to convince Richard. Richard was a friend, despite that last little remark. Surely he must want to help Hector? He was just a little unnerved. He must be able to see the logic behind it all. Hector tried to explain once more, it wasn't really the time but it seemed necessary.

"She's all I ever wanted! I had to leave her in here because I couldn't get the trolley up the stairs on my own. That's why I need you help." Richard didn't appear to be listening.

"You've freaked, Hector! Do you realise what you're saying?"

"Of course I do!" Hector was adamant. "I mean to have her." Richard still wasn't convinced. His head shook.

"This is fucking madness! You're sick!"

Richard stepped towards the door and opened it, poking his head out into the corridor. He turned and glared at Hector.

"Right. The coast's clear." Richard stepped across to the gurney and picked up Sarah's limp arm. He froze momentarily as he felt the coldness of the flesh sting him. Then he tucked Sarah's arm back beneath the sheet.

Hector stood transfixed as Richard began hastily rearranging the sheet. Could he have suddenly convinced Richard so easily? How quickly some people saw the light. It couldn't be possible. He had to know.

"What are you doing?" Hector asked.

Richard looked up at him, quickly moving to the rear of the gurney and starting to guide it out through the door into the corridor.

"With any luck, we can get this back to wherever you got it from before anybody notices that it's missing." Hector quickly stepped into the gurney's path, halting Richard's progress.

"She's mine! I want her!"

"You can't have her, Hector. This is not what people do, can't you see that? Where did you think you'd keep her?"

It was obviously a time for explanations. Hector was uneasy with the time that was being wasted in exposition but it seemed to be necessary to convince Richard every step of the way now.

"I'll move out. I'll get an apartment someplace." That should settle things. Have an answer ready each time Richard tried to voice an

objection. Appear calm, in control, in possession of the answers. Once Richard finally realised just how well planned things were there should be no more problems.

“I always knew you were weird, Hector, but this is going just a little too far. Now step out of the way of the trolley.” Hector laid his hand on the gurney handle and tightened his grip. Richard pulled sharply back, trying to wrest it from Hector’s grip but Hector held fast.

“Let go of the fucking trolley, Hector!” This just couldn’t be happening. Richard could feel his stomach churning like a barrel load of eels. Only an hour before he had been lying on Christine’s bed, his hand already expertly unlocking the clasp on her bra. Now he was stuck in a hospital basement wrestling with Hector over the ownership of a corpse. Richard relaxed his grip but did not let go. Try a different tack.

“What about the mortician?” Hector’s head tilted just slightly to one side, like a dog in a commercial when it’s supposed to be thinking.

“What?”

“What happens when they find her missing when they come to do all their bits and pieces?”

“They won’t find her. I’ll...”

“That’s not the point! They...” Richard saved his voice. He could see it wasn’t working. Was Hector really as stupid as everyone claimed, or had Sarah’s death really loosened a few screws? Hector stared at Richard.

“But I...”

“No ‘buts,’ Hector. This body is going right back where you found it. Then you and I are going home and all of this is going to be forgotten. Understand?” The scales were starting to sway. Richard’s voice had such an air of genuineness to it that Hector almost found himself carried along by the sentiment of Richard’s words. Hector frowned. He had been through every aspect of this a thousand times in the past few days. It had all been so right until Richard had turned up, how could it be so wrong all of a sudden? Hector pulled on the gurney. Richard saw the move coming and let go of the gurney handle. The gurney shot backwards into the corridor, Hector with it, stumbling over his feet. As Hector corrected his footing, Richard

grabbed the gurney and began wheeling it out into the corridor. Hector looked helpless as Richard began wheeling the gurney along the corridor. Hector ran alongside.

“I want her!” There was confusion in Hector’s voice. That, if nothing else, gave Richard a little hope. Hope that he might be able to resolve matters before they took an even more serious turn.

“Richard!” Hector was starting to whine. Richard stopped the gurney. He turned to Hector and quickly telegraphed his fist, connecting with Hector’s chin. Hector stumbled back into the wall, holding his mouth.

“That’s enough fucking around! She’s going back even if I have to do it myself!” A little stain of red was blossoming in the material of Hector’s facemask. Richard wasn’t even trying to regulate the anger in his voice, or the volume. Hector’s mind spun like a dervish. Why was everything suddenly going wrong? His eyes watered. The finger he poked beneath the mask came away with a bloodied tip. Everything looked different through misted eyes. He could hardly see Richard any more, just a series of cloudy shapes hovering in front of him. Richard pulled the sheet back into place over Sarah’s body.

“But I love her!” Hector’s mouth ached as he spoke.

“Loved!” Richard corrected. “She’s dead!” Hector was confused. His mouth hurt, his head hurt, his heart felt like it was being torn in half. Hector blinked to clear his eyes. Everything was too fuzzy. When he had concealed the scalpel in the coat pocket, or even where he had got it from, Hector could not remember. He scarcely even realised that it was gripped in the hand that he suddenly raised as Richard’s back was turned. Richard finished attending to the sheet on the gurney and turned round.

“Right. Are you going to help, or do I have to do this alone?” Richard’s voice had a soothing edge to it, was calm and friendly. He wouldn’t have hit Hector unless he thought it was for his own good. Hector could remember a voice telling him that you had to be “cruel to be kind.” That was why Richard had done it. Hector blinked his eyes again and everything suddenly swam into focus. Hector looked

at his hand. The scalpel had been returned to the coat pocket before Richard had even noticed it.

“Check the end of the corridor. Let’s get this over with.” Hector obeyed, jogging quickly to the corner ahead of them. He peered both ways then indicated Richard to follow on.

One of the back wheels of the gurney had begun to squeak. Richard kicked the wheel hard and the sound stopped. Hector walked ahead, guiding the trolley behind him, Richard pushed from behind. Hector’s head was bowed, the stain on his mask had stopped spreading. He snuck a look behind him to the sheet-covered shape on the gurney. It could have been anything—only it wasn’t. It was Sarah, his Sarah. She was finally going to be his. Indeed, she was his already. After all, everyone else had suddenly given her up. Hector couldn’t think clearly enough. Something had to be done, but not just now. Pain clouded his head, Richard’s continual interruptions and ill-timed questions confused him too much. The time would come when Hector’s plan would once again swing smoothly into action. For now it seemed better just to follow along with Richard until the correct opportunity revealed itself.

They walked two corridors in silence, Hector leading the way.

“Whatever possessed you to try something like this?” Hector wasn’t listening to the words. What could he say? Why did life have to be so complicated so much of the time? It was the right thing to do. What other reason could there be? Hector did not say it. Richard would never believe that, not just now.

“You really can be an idiot some...” Hector stopped suddenly, taking Richard by surprise, the gurney running into Hector’s back.

“What are yo...” Richard was immediately silenced as he looked past Hector and saw the two security guards standing some twenty yards away in the corridor. Quickly, Richard dragged the gurney back round the corner. The rear wheel suddenly decided to come alive again and begin squeaking. Richard kicked the offending castor until it agreed to be quiet. Hector darted into cover just as the security guards turned, alerted by the squeaking wheel.

“You hear sumthin’?” The first of the security guards, a thickset man in his late fifties was already moving toward the source of the noise. His companion, a good thirty years his junior, remained where he was.

“Nah.” The younger man shook his head. It wouldn’t be the first time on the nightshift that Harry had started hearing noises. Harry stopped, running his fingers through his short-cropped hair.

“Thought I did.” Harry’s other hand fingered the flashlight attached to his belt.

“Well, check it out if you want.” The younger security guard was already walking away. “I’m fixing a coffee. You want one?”

Pressed against the corridor wall, fearing to move in case the gurney wheel gave them away, Richard listened as the sound of Harry’s footsteps grew louder. Please, he thought, don’t let anyone catch us, not right now. A situation like this would take more explaining than he cared to do.

Harry thought better of his initial instinct to follow things through and turned and followed his colleague. He flicked off the corridor lights as he left.

Richard breathed a huge sigh of relief. He looked across the corridor at Hector. In the half-light, Hector’s silhouette took on the appearance of something far more monstrous than the ordinary bespectacled teenager Richard hoped he still was.

“I hope you can find your way round here in the dark.” Hector raised his head.

“It’s just a little way up on the left.”

Richard quickly glanced around the corridor to confirm that they were alone, then he and Hector resumed their positions at the gurney. They moved slowly, although Hector did not appear to need to stop and read the signs on the doors as they passed. The rear wheel of the gurney, perhaps realising that there was no one to give its position away to, had stopped squeaking. Hector stopped the gurney outside a pair of double doors.

“This is it,” he announced, not even trying to disguise the sense of defeat in his voice. He pushed on the bar to open the doors. They did not move. He pushed again but the doors remained shut.

“It’s locked!”

“Don’t fuck around, Hector. I’m not in the mood!” Richard moved around the gurney and pushed on the doors. They were indeed locked.

“Shit! We can’t leave her out here.”

“Maybe I am meant to have her!” There was a note of hope in Hector’s voice.

“What did you say?” Richard wasn’t sure that Hector could have said such a thing.

“Perhaps it means…”

“You’re out of your fucking tree!” Richard did not need to let Hector finish to know that he had not misheard him the first time. Richard closed his eyes and thought.

“The security guards must have a key.”

“And you’re just going to ask if you can borrow it?” Richard grabbed Hector by the front of his intern’s coat and slammed him back into the wall. Richard held him there, watching as Hector’s facemask rapidly inflated and deflated.

“Don’t try my patience any more than you have already. Come with me.” Richard pushed Hector ahead of him in the direction that the security guards had gone. Hector stopped, looking back at the gurney.

“What about Sarah? We can’t just leave her here!” Richard thumped Hector in the chest, pushing him away.

“If you think I’m leaving you alone with her after everything you’ve done, you must be dumber than you look!”

At the end of the corridor, Richard slowed on hearing the muffled voices of the security guards. He turned and motioned to Hector who was following slowly some yards behind. Richard peered cautiously round the corner of the corridor. The younger of the security guards was standing only a few feet away, scratching his crotch with the base of his torch. Beyond him, Harry was sitting at a desk reading a book. On the desk beside him was a small black and white monitor. Richard prayed that the security camera it was

attached to did not point anywhere near the Marchant Street entrance. His stomach twisted at the thought of their nocturnal bodysnatching exploits being captured on videotape. Before he could dwell too long on that unpleasant thought he saw what he had come for. On the wall behind Harry was a row of hooks, from each of which hung keys.

“You’ll do yourself a mischief with all them books you read.” The younger security guard laughed. Harry ignored him. What did the little runt know? He’d probably never finished third grade. Night school was nothing to joke about. He was fifty-seven, there had to be more to life than this endless patrolling of hospital corridors night after night.

“You want a coffee?” Breaking the silence was the closest Harry thought he would get to an apology. The younger man kicked a cigarette butt along the floor, waiting for an answer.

“You make it. I’ll drink it.” Harry looked up from his book, his expression showing his disapproval. The younger man picked Harry’s mug from the desk and wandered off into the darkness, starting to whistle as he disappeared from view.

Richard turned and motioned to Hector to move up with him. Hector dragged his feet. Richard put his hand beneath his coat and fumbled in the pocket of his jeans.

“What’re you doing?” Richard silenced Hector by raising his hand. He looked at the quarter in his hand and hoped it would be a small price to pay for getting them out of this situation. Peering once more round the corner, Richard tossed the coin away into the darkness beyond the desk. He ducked back out of sight as the coin sailed past Harry, then hit the floor and started to roll. The coin clinked along the tiled floor then stopped.

Harry looked up quickly from his book. He hadn’t imagined the noise that time. Slowly, Harry lowered his book and rose from the desk.

“Who’s there?” No one replied, not that he thought they would. Pulling the flashlight from his belt, Harry moved away from his desk. He could switch on the corridor lights, he could wait for that

young brat to return, but both options would only leave him open to ridicule. The only solution was to check it out himself.

Richard held his breath as the security guard moved away from the desk into the darkness, the flashlight beam lighting the floor as he walked. Richard darted towards the desk, keeping close to the floor. He put his hands on the desk, peering up at the row of keys. Above each hook was stuck a small, handwritten label. The one Richard was after dangled beneath the “mortuary” label. Richard froze as he heard the footsteps that told of the security guard returning. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the beam of the flashlight playing along the corridor wall. There was no time to run for the safety of the corridor where Hector hopefully was waiting for him. With hardly a thought to consider the consequences, Richard ducked down and scrambled beneath the desk. His heart trip-hammered in his chest as Richard crouched, waiting for the security guard to return.

“What’s up?” The voice belonged to the younger security guard, coming up behind Harry.

“Nothing.”

“Been hearing noises again, ain’t ya?” The younger man handed Harry his mug. They were standing close enough for Richard to smell the rich aroma of the coffee. Richard closed his eyes and turned his head away. A mug was put down on the desk right above his head.

“What of it?” Harry was annoyed. Annoyed at being ridiculed. Annoyed at having to work nights again after the promise of something better when the new rosters were drawn up. “You wanna go take a look?”

“Don’t suppose it’ll be any more interesting than standing around watching you reading. Why don’t you show me?”

Richard watched, almost unable to believe his luck as the two pairs of feet started moving away from the desk. Richard crawled out from under the desk and ran to rejoin Hector. Hector, his cheek pressed flat against the wall, jumped as Richard touched his shoulder. Richard dangled the mortuary key in front of Hector’s face, then set off to where they had left the gurney unattended.

His fingers shaking, Richard unlocked the mortuary door. Hector stood by the gurney, staring down at the sheet-draped figure of his amour. His hand stroked Sarah's cheek through the thin, white sheet. "Come on. Get that thing in here!" Richard grabbed the handle of the gurney and began dragging in into the mortuary. Hector followed inside and reached up for the light switch.

"Don't touch that!" Richard's anxiety made him forget to regulate the volume of his voice. Light was the last thing they wanted. Besides giving their presence away it would also illuminate the other gurneys in the room, many of which were not unoccupied.

"Get down!" Richard hissed, having seen the white circle of the flashlight beam, bobbling along the corridor outside the open door. Hector quickly ducked away into the corner of the room. His familiarity with the hospital layout also appeared to include a knowledge of the best places to hide. Richard squatted on the floor, pulling the gurney with Sarah's body on it in front of him.

The door was pushed open and the younger security guard stood in the doorway. His flashlight beam skipped around from gurney to gurney.

"Someone left the mortuary door unlocked!" he called out. Richard held his breath as he saw the flashlight beam tracking across the floor towards him. Suddenly the beam was switched off.

"Of course I'm gonna lock it!" The younger security guard turned away from the door, his footsteps receding along the corridor. Richard stood up, scanning the room for a sight of Hector.

"Hector!" He was almost too frightened to speak. Hector rose from among the gurneys. Richard grabbed his hand and started dragging him towards the door.

"This is our last chance to get out of here!" Richard pulled on Hector's arm, but still he resisted.

"What about Sarah?"

"Fuck her!" Richard dragged Hector from the room. They ran. Richard pushed Hector in front of him, forcing him to lead the way. Doors, corridors, all raced by.

Then suddenly the cool night air embraced them and the confines of the hospital were left behind.

Richard leant against one of the garbage bins, his chest sucking in great lungfuls of air. He tore off the intern's coat and threw it into the bin. Hector followed suit, although with less haste.

As they walked towards Richard's car, Richard suddenly turned and punched Hector straight in the mouth. Hector disappeared backwards, crashing to the ground.

Richard stood, watching as Hector slowly rose from the shadows, his hand holding his bottom jaw. Blood was trickling from between his fingers.

"What did you do that for?" Hector pulled open the car door. Richard sat in the car and started the engine. He turned and glared at Hector.

"Don't you ever try and involve me in anything like that again. Understand?"

The tires spun on the road as the car sped away.

Author's Note: Living Doll

Living Doll. There's movie called that, isn't there? You're right, there is. I wrote it...my first foray into the wondrous world of having a script you've written turned into a movie.

Of course...there's all the ancillary markets to think of as well. Spin-offs and the like.

How about a novelisation of the movie? Good idea.

So that's what I was thinking. Of course...if you're gonna sell a novel and you're not already a world famous author, most publishing houses are gonna want to see a sample of the book they're going to be publishing.

Well...the world of making movies is a strange place to be and the finished movie had precious little to do with the story I'd originally conceived or written.

In such a situation there's ways to try to redress the balance...to return to the natural order of things.

Well...as the world turns, so things change. Writing a novel is actually a shitload of work. It's like five times the number of words as your average movie script...that's crazy...and quite possibly too much work for the likes of me.

So, the novel idea was put to bed...but I had this makeshift sample chapter that was really nothing to do with the movie at all.

And this is it. It actually works quite well as a little stand-alone piece.