

GLASS

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"I remember back in my history class, when I was a kid, how my teacher Mr. Porter told us about the bombing of Hiroshima." Convicted murderer, death-row inmate 502376 Elliott Bowers began to speak. Father Jonathan McKnew listened intently to the man's ramblings, trying not to pass judgment on his sanity.

"He said that when the bomb fell, the blast from it was so powerful that it burned the images of the dying onto the walls of buildings and cement sidewalks. Now can you imagine that? Walking through Hiroshima after we dropped the big one on them and seeing those images. One final snap shot for history's posterity." He began to giggle, and the back of his hand brushed against his lips as he tried to suppress full laughter.

"Mr. Bowers, perhaps we should pray...." Father McKnew cupped his hands and looked across the glass pane that separated him from the prisoner. A smooth sheen of light glared off the freshly shaven skull of the man across from him. But the man's eyes remained elusive. They were covered in dark thick Ray-Ban shades.

"Uhhhh, Father ... I'm not Catholic," said Elliott, with an eerie leer crossing his lips.

"Then why have you requested my presence here, Mr. Bowers?" asked the priest nervously.

"Because I want to confess."

"Confess?"

"Yeah ... confess my sins." Again Elliott began to giggle facetiously, like a child who had said something secret by accident, but it turned out to only be a lie. "But seriously, I want to confess to you about the truth. About everything that happened, and what continues to happen."

"If this isn't a religious confession, why have you not confessed to the authorities before?" The priest tried to suppress his anger at the game that was being played on him.

"I have," said Elliott, a perplexed expression flooding his countenance as his fingers began to tap nervously on the table before him. "They didn't believe me, Father. They thought I was crazy, or more like trying to act crazy so I could weasel my way out of the death sentence. But they were wrong. I know it's true, everything I saw and did was true."

"Perhaps a doctor...."

"I don't need a goddamn doctor!" shouted Elliott. Father McKnew was startled by the sudden display

of emotion, and it caused him to shake upon the chair he sat. "Listen ... just hear me out, okay? I just need one person to believe what I have to say. I just need to know that before I die one person believes me. Please ... if you believe in your God, hear me out."

"Okay, Mr. Bowers. I'll listen to what you have to say. But you have to try to control your emotions."

"I'll try...." Elliott said, exhaling a frustrated breath. "But I've gone through so much this whole time that I almost feel like I am insane."

"I understand, Mr. Bowers."

"Please don't call me that. I mean, my grandfather was called Mr. Bowers. And I'm not that old yet. Call me Elliott."

"Okay, Elliot. So tell me, what seems to be haunting you?"

"Wow, now that's a good word to use for what's happening to me. Haunting...."

"What do you mean?"

"You know I killed her. I'm not gonna lie about that. I did it and have no regrets on killing that pretentious fucking cunt. She was such a whore. I'm sorry I shouldn't talk like that in front of you, but I really did hate her. You know, before we got married she wasn't so mean and spiteful. I guess a lot of spouses could say that about their loved ones. But she changed...."

"What changed her?"

"It was after the miscarriage. She was never the same after that ... neither of us were. Things became very strained between us. Hell, she wouldn't even let me touch her anymore. Every time I crawled my ass into bed and waited for her she would never come. She would just be there sitting for hours in front of her vanity mirror combing her hair or removing her makeup. God, she combed her hair so much in front of that damn thing I'm surprised it didn't all fall out. Then she would start in with her inane degrading conversation, which was always directed toward me. 'Why couldn't you have a better job? Why couldn't you look better? Why do you obsess so much about sex?' You know ... the typical bitch rant. And I would always agree with her and nod myself to sleep. She thought she was fooling me, but I knew better. I knew she was screwing around on me. Hell, one time when I was taking out the trash I found a used condom hidden behind the batch of crap-covered toilet paper. You know, it really didn't bother me that I wasn't getting laid. No, what really pissed me off was that everyone else was screwing my wife except me."

"Perhaps you should have sought counseling for the both of you. You would be surprised how insightful and helpful a relationship therapist can be."

"Oh, she wouldn't have that," said Elliott as he balled his hands in a fist. "She was too perfect. Nothing was wrong with her. Everyone else had problems but never her. She was the kind of woman that could paint hell with a rainbow and have you believe you were in heaven."

"Maybe if you would have...."

"No. Believe me, I tried everything." Elliott sighed with resignation and ran his fingertips along his temples. "Damn migraine. You know, prison life really wasn't that bad. I mean, really, I got three meals a day, cable television, and pretty much any book I want to read. Shit, I guess jumping from one prison to another, I really didn't notice the difference. Except now here in death row, it's not the same as before. There's one thing I do miss a lot from the outside world, though. Every Thursday for lunch I used to go down to Perry's ice cream shop near work. I would order me the four scoops special. God, that was pure bliss. Just thinking about it makes my mouth water."

"You know, tomorrow you will be able to request whatever you want for your meal."

"Yeah, I'm really looking forward to that," Elliott said sarcastically. "Anyway, where was I? Oh yeah, I was going to tell you how I killed her. Well, one night during her typical tirade and vanity adoration I went up behind her with one of my nice nylon work socks and strangled the shit out of her. Let me tell you ... it's not easy choking someone to death. First off, you have to be pretty damn strong, because they will fight you all the way. Also, you have to have a sturdy tummy, because when a person is dying they lose all bodily functions. It's not a pretty mess, I assure you. Plus, feeling their throat constrict for air and the gurgling of their blood leaves you with a very nauseating sensation. I swore I must have thrown up about three times after the

struggle. I just remember looking into the mirror and seeing her fight me. The way her hands lashed out and legs thrashed about ... it was just very unsettling. But she finally did stop. I made her."

"Oh, my God..." whispered Father McKnew.

"God had nothing to do with it. It was all me. It's a horrible thing to die by strangulation. Blood vessels in the eyes burst, leaving them dark red, and the tongue plops out of the mouth, leaving it a dangling, swollen piece of flesh. Sorry about the details, but I've always been a graphic kind of guy. I do a lot of reading, I guess. Anywho, with her dead I began to notice the difference right away. Once I cleaned myself up, thought about things, and dragged her body down to the basement that is. Things were ... well ... peaceful."

"Did you not regret taking a human life?" asked the priest, astounded.

"Nope, not one bit. Did she have any regrets screwing those men and ruining my life? I think not. Anyway, my reprieve didn't last long, because something strange starting happening the following night. Now I know this is going to sound weird to you, but I want you to keep an open mind."

"What is it? What happened?"

"I started seeing her."

"You mean, alive?"

"No, dead."

"So ... you saw her ghost?"

"No, at least, I don't think it's her ghost ... I don't know how to explain it, but I saw her. I know I did."

"Where did you see her?"

"In the mirror."

"In the mirror?"

"Yes, in the mirror. I saw her the way she looked when I killed her. It was so vivid I know it wasn't a ghost. She was sitting up, her skin bluish, eyes red, and that swollen tongue hanging out the corner of her mouth. I'd left her like that for several hours while I ran around the house trying to decide what I was going to do with her body. God, even her hair was a mess. But that image was what I saw in the mirror the next night. When I awoke after carrying her body into the basement and wrapping it up in plastic garbage bags."

"So you saw her image in the mirror?"

"Yes...." said Elliott as he ran his trembling hands again along the temples of his skull, trying to soothe the aching in his head. He adjusted the dark glasses firmly upon the bridge of his nose and looked once more at the priest before him. "Bear with me on this. I'm still trying to piece it all together. Like I said ... I do a lot of reading and I think I might have figured out what caused this to happen."

"There could be no human explanation for such a unexplained event. Perhaps you only believed what you saw was real?"

"No! I'm not crazy! I know what I saw, and what I saw is real. Remember what I told you about earlier? About those images of the dead that were burned into the streets and building walls in Hiroshima? I also remember stories being told about how the human eye can capture a final image of its death. What if, by some freakish act of nature, at the moment of her death she looked across at the mirror and, like a camera, it burned her image into the glass? And what if, by me leaving her body propped on that chair for several hours, it only burned that image more vividly?"

"It's not possible."

"But it is; I've seen it!"

"Wouldn't the police have seen it when they did their investigation?"

"No, because I destroyed the mirror! I shattered the damn thing to pieces! But I could still see her!"

"How?" asked Father McKnew, confused.

"She's in the glass! I see her in the glass!"

"But you shattered it to pieces?"

"I still see her in glass...." Elliott screamed like a caged animal and ripped the dark sunglasses from his eyes, flinging them to the floor.

"Oh!" gasped the priest, as he saw the prisoner's eyes at last. His eyelids had been torn free from his

flesh, and only the dark orbs lay opened and revealed, reflective and glistening like a cat's.

Elliott pounded his clenched fist against the glass partition that kept him from Father McKnew, and the priest saw the truth.

There, burned within those two orbs, was an image.

"I see her in glass!"

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