

Marked



#1



Marked #1 “out of retirement”

story & words:

Brian John Mitchell

artwork:

Jeremy Johnson

His days of fighting monsters had ended years ago. He was happy to be an average man with an average life. His body & mind were out of shape for it. But over a dozen murders at a local park begged him to do something....



When I get to the lake
where she was killed,
I know I made the
wrong decision.



I shouldn't have gotten involved in this.



I can smell what
happened here.



She wasn't just
killed here.



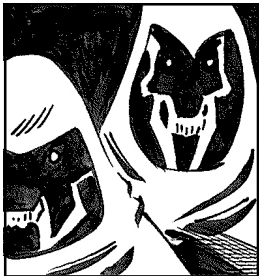
She wasn't even just
raped & killed here.



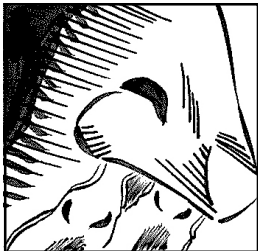
This was really violent.



She was torn apart.



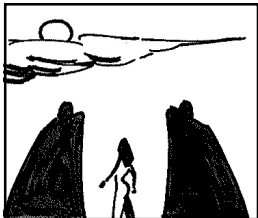
& not just by humans.



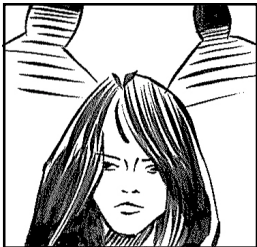
I can smell the ones
that were involved.



They're still weak.



That's why they only
come out at night
striking women.



Lurking in the shadows
for a vulnerable prey.



They'll be back in two nights. I can smell their plans.



I'm waiting on the
bridge at the far end
of the lake from the
parking lot.



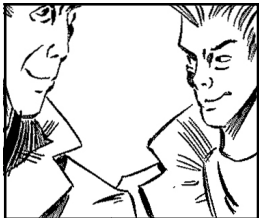
I've had a couple
shots of gin & poured
the rest of the pint on
me so they'll see me
as an easy prey.



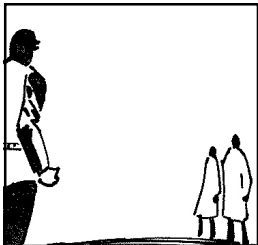
The two of them come
out of the woods &
onto the bridge from
opposite sides.



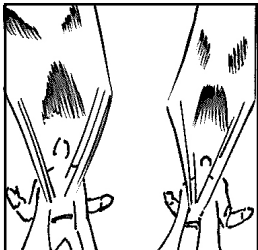
They're two skinny white kids in trench coats, probably not more than seventeen years old.



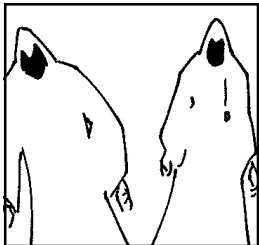
They flash smiles at each other, but don't say anything.



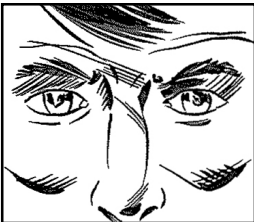
Twenty feet away from
me they stop walking.



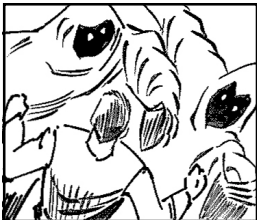
Their demons come
out of their chests.



Typical grim reaper
style demons.



I just have to break
their skulls to kill
them.



They fly in on me.
They've been working
together for a while...



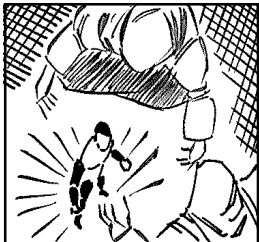
...they usually don't
work in tandem this
well.



My fists can't seem to
connect to anything.



Just hitting their robes
& sinking into nothing.



The thing saving me is
they think I'm a drunk.



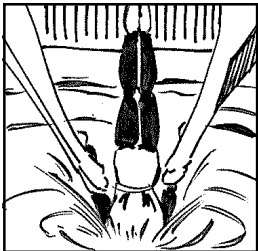
They're toying with me.



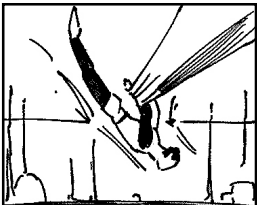
Just a few razor thin
cuts across my chest.



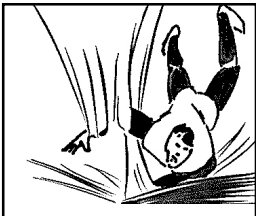
I wrap their robes
around my arms...



...& dive into the lake
to disorient them.



Just my luck, the lake
is only three feet
deep...



...& hitting the bottom
knocks the wind out of
me...



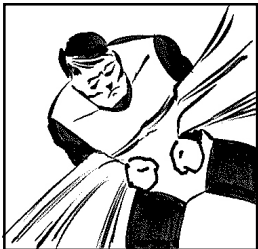
...& I almost drown.



When I pull my head out of the water I feel each of them put a skeleton hand on my head to hold me still.



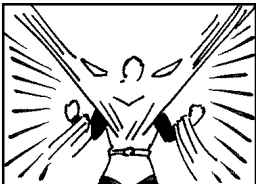
They're tired of playing
they're coming in for
the kill.



I promised I'd hold it
in forever...



...but here with my
arms tied up in these
robes & facing death...



...I let out my own demon. Bigger & badder than these two I'm facing.



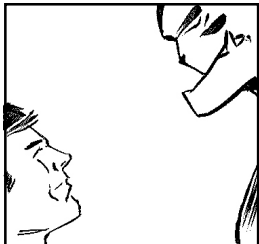
It jumps out of my chest straight towards the kid on the right.



Both of them are just puddles of blood before their demons can kill me or even run away.



My demon eats the
reapers as fast as the
kids...



...then it's face to face
with me snarling.



It's been stuck inside of me so long that I've started to look like it or it's started to look like me, I can't be sure which.

**I'M NOT COMING
BACK INSIDE, I'M
STRONGER
THAN YOU.**



I can hear its thoughts
in my head, they're
louder than mine.



I try to grab it to push
back inside me...



...but the demon tosses
me like a rag doll out of
the lake & onto the
bridge.



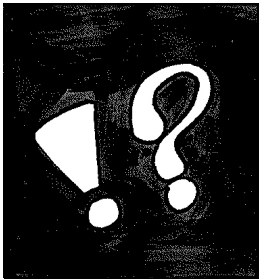
The landing probably cracks every rib on my right side.



My right hand's in one
of the boys' puddles.



My demon's gone.
On the loose.



Fuck.



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