**Smiling Jack**

By Jacob Cumner

The moon light illuminated her face. I stood there for several moments stroking her cheek before walking to the broken window of the warehouse, peering out and down on to the street. Running my finger along the shards, I feel the sharp glass push against my skin, yet lightly enough so it would not pierce and rip my tender flesh “Where am I?” a voice rang out from behind and echoed around the room.

“Relax, Agent Rogers”, I replied smiling, tearing my eyes away from the alley below. She strained against the handcuffs that held her firmly to the table. I pressed play on the iPod dock that sat on my workbench, before too long the music of David Bowie – ‘The Man That Sold the World’ started playing softly.

“W… who are you?’ she asked finally laying back exhausted.

“The man you have been looking for, my dear”, I replied smiling, as her eyes adjusted to the dim lighting and saw my menacing smile inches from her face as the words “you’re face to face with the man who sold the world” cuts through the air.

The room grew dark and cold as a thick veil of clouds shielded the light from the moon. When the light returned she was staring up at me, her eyes as wide as saucers.

“You’re The Boston Butcher?” she asked.

“Boston butcher? Hmm… I don’t like that, but then again with little to no information people will always make up stories and assume they know all to mask their ignorance. Please, address me as Jack”. I looked over to her restraints, checking they were secure. I only stopped tightening the restraint when I heard a yelp of pain. I returned to the desk where I set my tools. A variety of shiny killing weapons perfectly arranged into parallel lines stand so boldly against the stained wood: a dangerously sharp hunting knife, a few scalpels, a range of empty needles, a magnum python handgun, a length of piano wire and much needed black leather gloves. Just how I like it.

“Jack, huh? What are you? Some cheap Jack the Ripper wannabe?” she quipped, trying to look over and see what I was doing. Amused, I turned slowly and smiled. With my large hunting knife cushioned in my black leather gloves, I began to approach her with my hands down by my side.

“Agent Rogers, you have *no* *idea* what type of monster I am. Speak out of turn again and I slice your perfect pink little tongue from your skull”, whilst tapping the knife on her cheek, “Though I am glad you brought the Ripper up. We are of the same blood”, I smile crookedly at her. While I took the hunting knife and began to cut the buttons off her suit. “The FBI are indeed cheap. I wouldn’t wear this if my life depended on it”, I thought to myself, smiling once more as I turned away. The hunt was over; I had my prey.

“Why me? How is this possible? Jack the Ripper disappeared in 1888. No one knew who he was”, Agent Rogers said looking over at me. “Oh Agent. He didn’t just disappear. He was murdered. That’s just the way it is with my family tree; the son kills the father and so it has always been. But I have never liked the act of murder”, I replied turning towards her, blade pressed against my cheek gently. “You don't have to do this. You don't have to be like them. You don't have to kill" she pleads. “Oh my darling Agent, I really don’t think you understand the mind of a killer”

I pulled a chair close to the table upon which she was laid out. After getting comfortable, smoothing out my **Alexander Amosu Bespoke Suit.**

**“My favourite fable is ‘**The Scorpion and the Frog’ which very much ties into why I must kill you. See, this scorpion asks a frog to carry it across a river. The frog hesitates, afraid of being stung, however, the scorpion argues that if it did so they would both drown. Considering this the frog agrees, but midway across the river the scorpion does indeed sting the frog, dooming them both. When the frog asks the scorpion why, the scorpion replies that it was in its nature to do so. So, now you know that to kill is in my nature” I sang while returning to my desk and looking at my kill tools. Oh how they shine under the light of the moon, their cold steel menace almost as beautiful as my tailored suits. How can my suit be so perfect, yet, the agents so crude and cheap? Disgusting.

I placed my hand upon iPod dock as it had stopped and searched for a new more exquisite song to play. I turned back to the agent whom lay in silence as the intro of a new and more menacing song began slowly through the speakers - ‘The Crystal Ship’ by The Doors.

“That still does not answer my question. Why me ?” she enquired, looking uncomfortable in her restraightens, which I enjoyed to a great extent.

“I have been watching this investigation very closely. You and your fellow agent have been very tenacious with your investigation.” I responded. “Yet, you didn’t even recognise me from the interviews from the scene of my last victim, Anthony Hopson”.

“I .. I remember you now.. You were a person of interest. McGregor told me to keep an eye on you but I never thou-”

“Yes, I can be very good actor. Anthony use to work for me but I have a nice way of covering my tracks. Even to the point of giving you a false name; Alexander Stark” I interrupted. “This is why you are here. You are bait for a much bigger fish I’m afraid” I smiled once more.

After a small period of time I turned to the young agent. “I have had a change of heart, my dear, I will set you free. I have no need to kill you.” I said rubbing my chin thoughtfully. “Thank you. Thank god”, she said slightly relived. “I do have one request though”, placing my hand in to my suit pocket and retrieving a small disposable cell phone. “You are to call agent McGregor. Tell him you are in Mass Port, in an abandon warehouse, just off Harbour Side Drive, and do come alone. Deviate from my instructions and I will not hesitate to erase your very existence. Do you understand me?” The blade on her pale throat sends beads of sweat the neck. “Yes”, she replied simply. I released one hand from the restraint and handed her the phone.

Returning to the iPod dock, I played one more song, softly than the others to increase the eerie atmosphere, ‘White Rabbit’ by Jefferson Airplane. I had always played music to torture my victims and put me at ease as the blood started to flow. “James.. It’s me, Stephanie Rogers. I need you to come pick me up at Mass Port in a warehouse just off Harbour Side Drive.” She spoke in the phone, staring up at me. She squeezed her eyes tight. “HURRY HE’S HERE!” I moved swiftly lifting the knife above my head and dropping it swiftly as I stood over her.

That wasn’t very smart of her. The blade worked quickly in my hand. Separating flesh from flesh and bone from bone. Moving like a warm knife through butter until it hit the wood of the table in which she lay. A scream rang out into the darkness of the warehouse as blood erupted from the nubs where three of her fingers once were. The phone falls to the floor and was crushed under one of my heavy, yet stylish, shoes. Fresh blood splashing on my suit. I released her other restraints, grasping her hair. She screamed louder.

I placed the blade in to her mouth. The blade rips the skin up to her cheek and I repeated the process on the other. “*You are free*.” The blade plunges deep into throat. The screams soon turned to bloody gurgles before her body gave one last violent shudder. Limp dumb bitch. Then, like a maestro hitting his last note, I directed by blade to the stomach slowly and in a quick motion released the organs from her midsection. I sat her upright and admired my last master piece, my final symphony. But the curtains are yet to fall.

Some moments later, a heavy wooden door to the north creaked open letting in the draft of winter into the large wooden warehouse. I hid behind a large crate, grasping the Python Magnum I had picked up off the work desk. A man entered, arms outstretched, supporting a 9millimetre and a torch looking around the warehouse. I watched on as his eyes met the back of Agent Rogers.

“Rogers it’s me. Where is he?” he whispered. Approaching wearily, he placed his hand on her shoulder to shake her but the lifeless shell fell to her side. She rolled on her back and thus revealed my handy work. “WHAT THE FUCK!” he screamed dropping to his knees. “Ah, yes. She was *just dying* to see you again.” I’m amused by my own puns. “Sadly, it was not meant to be.” I slid from my hiding place, emerging with the Magnum aimed directly at him.

Tears rolled down his cheeks. Even from the distance I could see them, yet I knew he could not make out my features as his head rolled in my direction. “You are a sick freak” he bursts, voice cracking. “Indeed I am. But she was not my target. You were.” He did not seem fazed by that piece of information. That is not okay. “Then why kill her?” he asked, turning towards me. “The silly little girl disobeyed my instructions and bled on my suit.” I replied as I gesture to my poor bloodied suit, letting out a small chuckle.

“How long has it been? 28 years now?” I asked stepping in to the light to illuminate me whilst I look down at my defeated pray. “29 . . . 30 in four days,” he replied, his eyes remaining on the corpse. “It’s good you remember me.” I said, pulling the hammer back on the handgun as I walked towards him, stopping behind him and placing the barrel to the back of his skull. “All these years I have been running from you but I knew you found me with that trail of recent kills” he said, dropping his head finally in defeat. “James. You impress me. Finishing the top of your class in Yale University and finally being the recruited by the FBI. In the 13 years you have worked for them you have caught 37 serial killers. Very impressive. And now here you sit at my feet.” I said nudging his skull with the high powered gun.

“And you? What stupid fucking name are you going by now? Son of the Ripper?” He quipped after a short period of silence, his voice barbed and aggressive. Such cheek I receive from these FBI agents. “Smiling Jack.” I replied, “Well, Jack.” “You have left a pile of bodies, ugh 48, here giving you the name ‘the Boston Butcher’. Boy, I hoped you had died.” James continued.

“Oh James. The devil’s greatest trick was proving to the world he never existed.” I put the hammer back down and stood in front of him, his eye now fixing on mine. I raised the gun again placing it on his forehead. Smiling. “Now James. It’s time for you to make a decision.” I said pulling back on the hammer again.

“What decision would that be, you sick freak show?” He started slowly to stand. “You have been running from me all this time, fiercely trying to escape our destiny, but here it is. You die by my hand or you kill me. Just how it always has been; just how it always *should* be.” I said, smiling widely. “The first time I’ve seen you in all these years and this is what you have planned for a reunion. I have been running from you my whole life. Your traditions are sick! You killed my partner!” he said swatting the barrel away from his forehead. “It is not tradition. It is destiny.” I replied sharply digging the barrel hard into his skull, right between his eyes. “You are my son. The last in a long line of historical killers. I have let you play the hero, I even accepted the fact you changed your name. Agent Rogers was merely in your way, stopping you from becoming who you were meant to be.” I gripped the gun hard. “But now play time is over…”

He quickly swatted the gun away once more as a shining bullet erupted from the barrel. It flew from my hands and hit the ground. The sound echoed through the warehouse as we both leapt into action to retrieve it. He tackled me to the floor, punching me repeatedly in the face. I grasped his suit jacket and head butted him, breaking his nose and kicking him in the chest. He flew back and sprawled out on the floor. Both of us winded and tired. I managed to pick myself up and shake off the beating. I ran to the desk grabbing a needle and the hunting knife. I returned to James, grasping him by the suit jacket. I lifted him and plunged my knife into his right shoulder. “This is it, boy!” I mused, twisting the blade. He let out a scream of pain. “GO TO HELL!” he screamed as he lifted the magnum, pointing it at my head with his left arm. “Goodbye, Smiling Jack!” he smiled, pulling the trigger. A loud roar of the gun enveloped me, followed by deafening silence.

June 3rd, 2016; a young man I once knew sat at a quaint little café. The distinct shape of an FBI badge left an imprint in his pants’ pocket even with the badge removed. The newspaper he brandishes shields his entire face, bar the eyes. Despite the look of concentration that shaped his brow, he is not reading. Down the way, a young lady finishes her beverage and walks briskly past the man. He lingers a second, folds the paper and *smiles*. Target acquired.

Jacob Cumner

Word count: 2413