

THE DOLL TERROR

Written by
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Based on the Raygun-Slingers Adventure Module

EXT. MIREHOLM - MARSH ROAD - DAY

A lone horseman emerges from the mist. JACK REEVES (30s, weathered, pragmatic) rides through fetid wetlands. Spanish moss hangs like funeral shrouds. Everything tilts at wrong angles.

The town of MIREHOLM rises ahead-buildings sinking into swamp, tilting at sick angles. Festival decorations hang incongruously bright.

And dolls. Dolls everywhere. In windows. On porches. All porcelain. All watching.

EXT. DALTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house leans five degrees into the marsh. Jack ties his horse to a moss-covered post and knocks.

The door opens immediately. MARTHA DALTON (40s, exhausted, red-eyed) stands in the frame.

MARTHA
You're the bounty hunter.
Not a question. Jack nods.

INT. DALTON HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The tilted floor makes Jack's stomach turn. CLEM DALTON (late 40s, prospector, hollow-eyed) sits at the table staring at a piece of paper.

MARTHA
Been there three days. Won't eat. Won't sleep.
Jack pulls up a groaning chair. Clem doesn't look up from the paper-four words in careful child's script: "I'm going to be better."

CLEM
Rosie left this. Three nights back. Window open, favorite doll gone. Just... gone.
JACK
Tell me about the doll.
CLEM
Porcelain thing. Victorian-style. Mr. Hollowgrave made it special for her. Said she had talent.

She called it Mother.

JACK
Hollowgrave?
MARTHA
Silas Hollowgrave. Runs the Toy Festival. Been awful generous to folks around here. Even helped with the bounty.

Rosie loved his workshop. Spent hours there learning to make dolls.
Jack's instincts prickle.

JACK
Show me her room.

INT. DALTON HOUSE - ROSIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dolls line every surface. All facing the door. All watching with glass eyes that catch the light.

Jack moves to the desk. Drawings of dolls with glowing eyes. A journal in careful script.

CLOSE ON JOURNAL: "Mr. Silas says I'm special. He says I can help fix people. Mom cried again today. She's so weak."

Jack flips pages. "The festival is coming. Mr. Silas says I'll be the Mother. I'll take care of everyone. Make them perfect. Make them quiet."

JACK

Sweet merciful hell.

CLICK. Behind him, a doll's head rotates.

Jack spins, hand on his RAYGUN. The doll stares with eyes that reflect lamplight like tiny green stars.

He backs toward the door, grabs the journal, and runs.

INT. DALTON HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JACK

Where's this Hollowgrave Mine?

Clem looks up, eyes focusing for the first time.

CLEM

Five miles west through the wetlands. But you can't go there—radiation levels'll cook you from the inside out.

JACK

Rosie went there.

CLEM

Nobody goes to Hollowgrave Mine. Not since old Silas Holloway's partners left him to die down there. Must be seventy years ago now.

JACK

Holloway or Hollowgrave?

CLEM

Same man, different name. Story goes he survived somehow, came back changed. Calls himself Hollowgrave now.

(voice dropping)

Sometimes I see him in town—never seems to age. Eyes wrong somehow. But he's been nothing but kind to Mireholm.

Jack heads for the door.

JACK

I'll need a radiation suit and a map.

MARTHA

What about the bounty?

JACK

If your daughter's alive, I'll bring her back.

(pauses at door)

But Mrs. Dalton—you might not like what I find.

EXT. MIREHOLM - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The square pulses with festival preparations. Workers erect stalls. Children run between legs, laughing. Colorful bunting hangs from tilting buildings.

And dolls. In windows, on tables, in children's arms. All similar. All watching.

On a makeshift stage, SILAS HOLLOWGRAVE (appears 60s, silver hair, gaunt, eyes that catch light wrong) directs workers with easy authority.

He turns as Jack approaches. His smile is warm as summer sun.

HOLLOWGRAVE

You must be Mr. Reeves! The Daltons mentioned they'd hired help.
He extends a hand. Jack shakes it and nearly recoils—the skin feels waxy, preserved. Like touching a corpse.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

Silas Hollowgrave. Pleased to meet you.

JACK

I'm looking for Rosie Dalton.

HOLLOWGRAVE

Poor child. Such a talented student.

(concerned)

I fear she may have wandered into the old mine. Dangerous place. I'd be happy to guide you there.

JACK

That won't be necessary.

Hollowgrave's smile never wavers. He turns back to his workers.

Jack notices: Hollowgrave's SHADOW moves a half-second out of sync.

INT. THE SOGGY NICKEL SALOON - DAY

Water stains on every surface. Floorboards soft as sponge. Behind the bar, ONE-THUMB PETE (weathered, missing thumb) pours drinks mechanically.

Jack slaps coins on the bar.

JACK

Rosie Dalton.

Pete pours whiskey that smells of turpentine.

PETE

You asking about that missing girl or asking about what she really was?

JACK

Talk.

PETE

Strange kid. Too quiet. Too... observant. Like she was studying folks instead of just seeing them.

Pete downs his own shot.

PETE (CONT'D)

And lately, people been acting wrong. Like they're here but not here, y'know? Sheriff Clayborne—yesterday he laughed at my jokes. This morning he barely blinks. Moves too smooth, like a wind-up toy.

JACK

How many?

PETE

Fifty? Hundred? Hard to say. But something's wrong in Mireholm, and it started when Hollowgrave showed up talking about his damn festival.

Pete leans close.

PETE (CONT'D)

People say he's been here forever. That he should be dead but ain't. That the radiation in that mine didn't kill him—it changed him.

JACK

Into what?

PETE

Something that ain't quite human no more.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

SHERIFF CLAYBORNE (40s, weathered) sits at his desk staring at paperwork without reading. His movements are too precise when he looks up.

SHERIFF
Can I help you?
Perfectly polite. Perfectly empty.

JACK
We talked yesterday about Rosie Dalton. You remember?
A pause. Too long.

SHERIFF
Of course.
JACK
What did I tell you?
Another pause. The Sheriff's eyes don't quite focus.

SHERIFF
You... said you were investigating.
Jack draws his RAYGUN and aims it at the Sheriff's chest.

JACK
Who are you?
SHERIFF
Sheriff Clayton Clayborne. I don't understand the question.
No fear. No reaction at all. Jack backs toward the door and runs.

INT. BOARDING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack barricades the door and spreads his findings on the bed. Rosie's journal. Map. A doll he'd taken from a merchant stall.

He pulls out a multi-tool and cracks open the doll's back panel.

INSIDE: A fragment of glowing green crystal-X-ranum. And something organic.

When he touches it with his probe, a WOMAN'S VOICE WHISPERS in his mind.

VOICE (V.O.)
Help me help me help me—
Jack drops the tool and scrambles backward. The voice fades.

KNOCK at the door.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Mr. Reeves? Please, I need to talk to you. About Rosie.
Jack grabs his raygun and cracks the door. Martha stands in the hallway—hollow eyes, too-precise movements.

JACK
How did you find my room?
NOT-MARTHA
Mr. Hollowgrave told me. He wants to speak with you. About the girl. About everything.
JACK
Tell him I'll meet him at the mine.
NOT-MARTHA
He thought you'd say that.
She produces a doll from her apron and sets it on the threshold.

NOT-MARTHA (CONT'D)

He wanted you to have this. A gift. So you understand.
She walks away with mechanical precision.

Jack stares at the doll. Braided into its scalp is a lock of Martha Dalton's hair.

EXT. WETLANDS - NIGHT

Jack in a RADIATION SUIT moves through glowing green marsh. X-ranum leaches into the water. Things move in that glow-things that should be dead.

The MINE ENTRANCE yawns ahead, bleeding green light into mist.

INT. HOLLOWGRAVE MINE - RITUAL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A massive chamber. Walls lined with glowing X-RANUM CRYSTALS. In the center, a RITUAL CIRCLE made of bones and doll parts.

Surrounding the circle: THOUSANDS OF DOLLS arranged in concentric rings. All glowing. All containing trapped consciousness.

SILAS HOLLOWGRAVE stands in the circle's heart, arms raised. Green light pours from his eyes and mouth. His shadow writhes independently on the walls.

HOLLOWGRAVE

Mr. Reeves. I'm pleased you came. You're early. The ceremony doesn't begin until the festival reaches its crescendo.

JACK

What are you doing to these people?

HOLLOWGRAVE

Perfecting them.

He gestures at the glowing dolls.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

Humanity is broken, Mr. Reeves. Small-minded. Cruel. Petty. So I'm giving them peace. Replacing their fractured consciousness with something... purer. The Others will inhabit their vessels and make them whole.

JACK

The Others?

Reality TEARS. Through the rip comes SOMETHING--too many eyes, geometry that hurts to perceive, colors that shouldn't exist.

HOLLOWGRAVE

Beautiful, aren't they? I met them during my century underground. After Marcus and Jacob and Samuel left me to die. The radiation opened my mind, and the Others showed me truth. His eyes blaze brighter.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

They'll make Mireholm perfect. And then every town on this frontier. No more betrayal. No more cruelty. Just pure, eternal peace.

JACK

That's not peace--that's extinction!

HOLLOWGRAVE

It's evolution.

He raises his hands. Dolls around the chamber begin to ANIMATE, rising with clicking limbs.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

I offered you mercy, Mr. Reeves. The chance to be perfected willingly. But you've chosen the hard way.
The dolls SWARM.

INT. RITUAL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS - ACTION SEQUENCE

Jack's RAYGUN splits green fire, shattering porcelain. For every doll destroyed, two more crawl from shadows. Tiny claws rake his radiation suit.

When each doll shatters, a PSYCHIC SCREAM echoes—trapped consciousness dying.

HOLLOWGRAVE

You feel them, don't you? Every doll contains a soul. Destroy me, and they all die. The ritual is self-sealing. Kill me, kill them all.

Jack switches his raygun to stun and fires. The bolt PASSES THROUGH Hollowgrave's intangible form.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

The radiation doesn't just heal me, Mr. Reeves. It transforms me. I'm not entirely flesh anymore. I'm something more. Something that will outlive your pathetic species. He gestures. A wave of PSYCHIC FORCE slams Jack against the wall.

Jack struggles to rise. The ritual circle pulses brighter. More ALIEN ENTITIES push through the tear in reality.

FOOTSTEPS.

ROSIE (O.S.)

Mr. Silas? Is it time?

ROSIE DALTON (12, blonde braids, white dress impossibly clean, carrying the MOTHER DOLL) walks into the chamber.

Her eyes glow the same green as Hollowgrave's.

JACK

Rosie! Your parents are looking for you!
She turns to him. Her smile is cold as winter stars.

ROSIE

You mean those weak, broken things? I left them behind. Mr. Silas showed me what I really am. What I can become.
She sets the Mother doll down. It begins to MOVE INDEPENDENTLY.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to be the Mother of the new order. Isn't it wonderful?

JACK

Rosie, listen to me—

ROSIE

No. You listen. I'm special. I'm perfect. And when the Others come through, I'll be their vessel. Their queen.
She raises her hands, mimicking Hollowgrave.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

You can't save me because I don't want to be saved.

HOLLOWGRAVE

You see? Some are born broken. But I can fix even them. Rosie will be my greatest work. My legacy. Even if you somehow stop me, she'll continue. The work will go on.
Jack looks at the glowing dolls—hundreds of trapped minds. Looks at Rosie. Looks at Hollowgrave.

He holsters his raygun and reaches for BELT CHARGES. Shaped explosives meant for mining. He has six.

HOLLOWGRAVE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JACK

Something you didn't plan for.

Jack plants the first charge at the base of an X-ranum crystal pillar.

JACK (CONT'D)

You need the radiation to live. Need the crystals to power your ritual. So I'm taking them away.

HOLLOWGRAVE

You'll kill us all! The explosion will bring down the entire chamber!

JACK

I know. But at least you won't turn everyone into your hollow puppets. Hollowgrave SHRIEKS and sends a wave of dolls. Jack fights through them, planting charges three and four. Psychic screams echo with each shattered doll.

ROSIE

You're going to die down here.

Jack plants charge five at the ritual circle's edge.

JACK

Probably. But so will you. And so will he. And sometimes that's the best you can hope for.

He plants the final charge directly beneath Hollowgrave's feet.

HOLLOWGRAVE

You're mad!

JACK

No. I'm just done.

He activates the timer—60 SECONDS—and runs.

Behind him, Hollowgrave SCREAMS. Reality tears wider. Alien entities grasp for purchase. Rosie stands her ground, arms raised, welcoming them.

Jack reaches the tunnel entrance as countdown hits FIVE. FOUR. THREE. TWO.

EXT. HOLLOWGRAVE MINE - NIGHT

MASSIVE EXPLOSION. The ground shakes. The mine entrance COLLAPSES.

EXT. MIREHOLM - TOWN SQUARE - SAME TIME

Every doll in town SHATTERS simultaneously. People drop to their knees, clutching their heads as trapped consciousness releases in a wave of PSYCHIC SCREAMING.

EXT. COLLAPSED MINE ENTRANCE - DAWN

Jack digs himself out three hours later. Radiation suit cracked, bleeding from a dozen wounds. The green glow is gone.

He limps back toward Mireholm as dawn breaks through the mist.

EXT. MIREHOLM - TOWN SQUARE - DAWN

Chaos. People wandering, confused. Festival decorations look garish in morning light. Obscene.

EXT. DALTON HOUSE - DAWN

Martha and Clem wait outside. Martha grabs Jack's arm.

MARTHA

Did you find her? Did you find Rosie?

Jack looks at these people who'd lost their daughter long before she disappeared.

JACK

The mine collapsed. Nobody could have survived.
Clem's eyes meet Jack's. Understanding passes between them.

Clem closes his eyes. Martha sobs into her apron.

MARTHA

The bounty—

JACK

Keep it. Use it to leave this place. Mireholm's dying anyway. Find somewhere the buildings stand straight and the air doesn't taste like sulfur.

EXT. MARSH ROAD - DAY

Jack rides out as the sun climbs higher, leaving the tilting town to sink into the marsh that spawned it.

FADE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - DAY - THREE MONTHS LATER

Jack sits at a desk reviewing reports. One catches his eye.

CLOSE ON REPORT: "Whisper Creek. Children's dolls appearing in homes. People acting strangely. Blonde girl with two braids teaching doll-making workshops."

Jack stares at the description. His blood runs cold.

He grabs his coat and raygun.

JACK (V.O.)

I'd seen Rosie walk into that explosion. Seen the mine collapse. But if she'd used her psychic abilities to jump into one of the dolls before the blast...
Jack heads for the door.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Somewhere out there, a child monster was learning from her mistakes. Getting smarter. Getting stronger. And I had a new bounty to collect.

EXT. FRONTIER ROAD - DAY

Jack rides into the distance toward Whisper Creek.

JACK (V.O.)

Because some evils don't die easy. Some evils don't die at all.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: "The events depicted are based on classified reports from the New Sonora Railroad Company's Paranormal Investigation Division. Hollowgrave Mine remains sealed by government order. Rosie Dalton's current whereabouts remain unknown."

TITLE CARD: "If you encounter porcelain dolls with glowing green eyes, do not bring them into your home. Report all sightings to your local Railroad Authority office immediately."

FADE OUT.

THE END