

Bartholomew J. Franklin III

*By Alexander Golin
Freshman Fall*

Bartholomew was startled awake by a particularly abrupt shift in the tracks. He jerked slightly, regained his composure, and wiped the drool from the corner of his lips. He groggily retrieved his mug of coffee and leaned his head against the glass of the cabin window. He thoroughly enjoyed watching the countryside fly by - it served as a pleasant distraction from his impending reunion with his parents. The warmth of the coffee felt good on his freezing hands, which were quickly turning a deep cobalt. He took a sip, only to immediately spit it out against the window when his mouth was overcome with the taste of blood. In the deep maroon fountain of liquid emanating from Bartholomew's mouth, was a small pearl of bone that audibly clinked against the window and fell onto the leathery seat next to him. Bartholomew moved his right arm in the hope of further inspecting the item, but he found himself to be bound by a pair of steely handcuffs. He tongued around the new hole in his mouth and found that the gentle kiss of his tongue forced the remaining teeth from his mouth and onto the seat. This was unusual, since Bartholomew had always taken dental hygiene very seriously after his mother had taught him the importance of an authentic looking smile - one that could fool anyone. He panicked and continued to lick his gums in vain, finally making an attempt to call for help, only to find that his tongue had severed at the back of his throat rendering him mute. He spit the throbbing flesh from his mouth in helpless disgust.

In an attempt to distract himself, Bartholomew pawed around for his phone, finding it in his right front pocket, but to his dismay, he also found that a good deal of moisture had accumulated on his pants in his slumber. Taking advantage of his private cabin, he quickly unzipped his trousers, fearing that his nervous adolescent nocturnal emissions had come back to haunt him. As he peeled the denim from his loins, his hands were met with the

unmistakable viscosity of fresh semen. “Well that’s an unpleasant surprise,” Bartholomew thought to himself as he rose from his seat, dropped his trousers and briefs to the ground, and went to fetch a fresh outfit from his travel bag. He stepped one foot then the other through the legs of his clean briefs and only then noticed that he was conspicuously missing his genitalia. All the bells and whistles were absent, and in their place was a smooth patch of hairless skin. Bartholomew’s mind reeled and he felt his stomach drop in its familiar way. Knowing that there was no way for him to solve his problem and no way to call for help after losing his tongue, he settled upon dressing himself with shaky hands in his new green trousers and navy woolen sweater. He sat back down and soothed his worried mind into submission and casually forced his troubles from his thoughts, utilizing his years of expertise.

Bartholomew resigned himself to quiet contemplation, his bound hands making his seating options scarce and uncomfortable. Bartholomew peered out the window, lamenting that the fine fall day was being wasted on the interior of a train cabin. He could practically feel the waning warmth of the October sun. On second thought, he could literally feel the heat. Bartholomew flew from his seat as a satanic flame sprouted from his rear, sending him speeding through the cabin door and into the dining car, his eyes desperately searching for the relief of a cup of water. Without the help of his bound arms to stabilize his motion, not to mention the throbbing pain in his rear, Bartholomew found himself spiraling to the ground, his head whipping around and catching the eyes of the other passengers; lifeless, unresponsive, reflective like glass.

Bartholomew’s face was plastered to the floor, his gaze fixed upon a young father and his son, the only two passengers who seemed to be real. They sat at a table munching

on french fries as the father helped his son with the crossword in his activity booklet. Bartholomew watched the boy fill in a word, his father tussling his hair with a prideful smile. With his dying breaths Bartholomew desperately tried to crawl to the father and son, pushing harder than he ever had to reach something. As the pain bore further into his body and mind the pair seemed further and further away. Bartholomew collapsed, the life and hope thrust out of his body as the demonic flame consumed him from the inside out.

Bartholomew's eyelids split open, his hands and neck covered in a cold sweat. He reached his hand down his trousers and was pleased to find his manhood firmly attached to his pelvis. It must have all been a horrible dream. He tongued around his mouth, satisfied to find everything in order. At least he could still fake a smile. He'd need to that weekend, after all, it was his first time visiting his mother at home since his father's release.