A Collection of horrid tales by a One Mr. Whobbly:

The Tapestry Murders

The Peasant and His Fish

A Farewell to Liberty

“Oh, god. But it’s such a disgusting and horrorsome and frightening and…oh, it’s just so *vile*!” The old Mr. Whobbly writhed about in his chair with his arms swinging around and threatening to pull his whole body down onto the floor.

“But please! You said you would tell me! I’ve waited and waited and now I’m ready so you have to tell me.”

Mr. Whobbly paused, straightened up a little, and eyed the young man in front of him sadly. Then, he slowly hung his head and leaned back into the chair. “I don’t see why you would want to know. I really don’t. I do not wish it to be so, but if I must, I must.” With a deep sigh he began. “It all happened hundreds of years ago in Englebrook Castle. You know the place, right?”

The young man was seated in the sofa across from him and was listening very intently now. “Yes, yes, of course. I know the place.”

“Sure you do. Yes, that’s the one. Englebrook.” He stared off towards the windows of the building into the dark cobblestone outside. “Yes, well, Englebrook was the best castle there ever was. It towered over the surrounding land, built with massive stone blocks. Long corridors and twisting parapets snaked their way around the building. The king’s court shimmered in gold and boasted the most beautiful collection of tapestries in all the land. There were knights and jesters and banquets and games and everything that a castle ought to have. And so life went on pleasantly in this old forgotten castle. But eventually, the sickly king lost what little strength he had left and passed away. Everyone mourned, for he was the best king that ever ruled Englebrook, but they also celebrated, for the young prince was going to take his throne.

But the young prince was far too young. Not much younger than you, but far too young to be a good king. I can’t imagine the people of Englebrook had anything but hope and joy for the new devil that would rule them. And I can’t imagine they had any idea what was coming for them, either. But in any case, the king now sat with more power than he could’ve imagined and began to become quite curious as to the ends of what he could do.

Now, before I go any further you must know that the king was far too young to understand what anything he did meant. He did and he did simply because he *could*, not because he wanted to. You mustn’t blame him, yes? Oh, and…but you must understand that the people of the court did what they did simply because they *had* to, not because they wanted to. They were loyal to the throne above all else, and see, well, you mustn’t blame them, either. Do you understand why I say what I say? Yes? Well, good, good. Okay, then. Okay.

You see, these tapestries were portraits of the people of the court. A welcoming or gift to thank them for their service to Englebrook. So the young king, seeing as the rest of the castle had nothing as glorious or beautiful as the court did, spent much of his time sitting in the throne and staring at these tapestries. He would glance at the tapestries and then at the people they resembled, for they were there in the castle, and was amused by the thought of it all. He thought they were wonderful, but they weren’t quite perfect. So he wanted to, well…he was a kid you have to understand. He had no idea what any of this meant. None at all, you have to remember. He saw the tapestries and he wanted to…make them better. More realistic. So this one day, I can’t remember which, I’ve tried to forget it, he ordered one of the maids into the court. She stood in front of the king and let him glance between her and her tapestry several times until the king noticed a little something off about her complexion in the tapestry and that it didn’t quite match her complexion before him and he wanted to do something to make it right because surely that was his job as king to make the castle better. And damn you for making me say this but the young king ordered for her face to be…put on the tapestry—no, don’t ask me how, I don’t well know nor should I ever like to. Oh, it makes me sick just thinking, but, well, the people of the court did what they had to and actually *sewed her face onto the tapestry*!

Oh, I can’t imagine how they did it, I really shouldn’t like to know, but you see, well, the horrid part is that the young king enjoyed it! He admired the tapestry for its perfect representation and found it to be the most splendid thing in the castle. So, naturally—or rather unnaturally—he ordered other faces to be sewn onto their respective tapestries all around the court. Don’t even try to imagine it, I don’t want you to! An image as twisted as this does nothing to deserve room in your mind or in the world. And—oh, I can’t speak much longer it weighs too heavily on me—the sewing went on and on until the young king had depleted Englebrook of all its inhabitants but him. And the young king didn’t know much so he wandered around the long corridors and twisting parapets and always returned to the court. And always returned his gaze to the bloody collection of tapestries and ate nothing and drank nothing and did nothing but stare at those bloody tapestries until he too fell dead.”

“Okay, I suppose we have time for another. This next one is quite odd, isn’t it? I suspect it to just be an old wives’ tale, but I have no reason to believe it not to be true! Aw, what the hell, let’s call it as it is and suppose it really did happen. I take it he would’ve lived quite a few miles south of here down by the water. I took you there once, you don’t remember? Oh, good, you do! Well, wonderful, yes, that’s where he lived—it’s where he found the damn thing too! Let’s see, we visited the eastern shore but I recall him living on the west…or was it the south?..oh, it doesn’t matter much anyhow. Yes, yes, I agree, let’s just hurry up and get to the damn story.

The fisherman lived off on his own in a small but acceptable little house—I can’t recall the specifics…it’s been a while since I’ve last heard this—he ate what he caught and went to town every now and again to trade for what he couldn’t get. It was a nice life, but he didn’t know anyone too well and they didn’t care to know him well either so he just sort of abided in his house and in his boat just watching the sun rise and fall again and again without anything to fear, but with nothing to hope. Well, you see, one day he went out fishing—again I can’t remember the exact spot and it’s probably all dried up now anyways—and he cast his line and reeled and casted as he always did, but this time he caught something well beyond unusual—a fish.

Yes, yes, yes, I understand, just wait. Clearly the fisherman thought nothing of it, but after several hours of flopping about in his house, well the fisherman now realized the fish was something particularly odd. You see, it was thrashing and flopping out of the water, as if it could breathe the air—no, it wasn’t a damn frog or anything like that, it most certainly was a fish—and so the fisherman went to town the next day and showed this fish to the villagers. They were skeptical at first, but again, after hours of it thrashing about, they began to believe the fisherman. They believed him but they also praised him as some sort of necromancing-miracle-Jesus or some bologna like that, but he loved it! He couldn’t get enough! All anyone could talk about was *his* fish. All anyone talked to was *him*. He loved it and he brought it to town and showed it off at houses and even other towns and then after a week or so he stopped.

You see, when you have something so rare and so profound you begin to get nervous and protective of that thing. And so too did the fisherman. In fact, he got so paranoid that he thought the villagers were going to kill the fish or even kill *him*. And so—well I do remember that he began in September, it’s just too horrid a thing not to remember—he started making sure that the villagers would not be able to take his fish. You have to remember that in these days there wasn’t much in terms of police or even laws. Living by himself made it very easy for him to sneak in during the night, slit a throat and bury the knife anywhere he pleased, even the lake sometimes. So, as you’ve probably caught on, he began murdering the villagers. Not only in simple manners, either, but more complicated and…elegant ways that only a lonely fisherman may dream up. I shouldn’t like to get into it and I hope you don’t either; what you need to know is that in less than two weeks half the village lay in a pool of blood.

Well, it wasn’t too difficult for the town to suspect an isolated, lonely, suspicious fisherman at the edge of town for committing what had happened. Thus, they eventually began to make their way to his house, all at once now, and clearly with the intent to eliminate whatever evil force was attacking their village. By some means or another the fisherman caught wind of what was happening and feared for his life, but even more fervently for the safety of his fish. Now, yes, the fish could live out of water, but it was still a fish and only valuable for the praise upon which it received. In any case, the fisherman had divulged into a mentally chaotic mess and began to thrash and flop just as well as his companion and eventually settled into a defeated and near-vegetative state by the time the villagers were close. Wrought with delusion and fear for what was to come, he ran out to his boat, rowed to the middle of the water, swallowed the fish whole so as to feel the thrashing in his gut and plunged himself into the bottom of the water where no one could ever strip him of his unusual fish.”

“Alright, alright, one last one and then we’re done for the night. My, I can’t imagine how you will sleep with these messes in your head. But you asked for them so don’t come running to me in the middle of the night, alright? Good. Well, this last one is particularly foul, but you ought to know it. It’s a good one. Yes, it’s coming back to me now, that’s good. From what I’ve heard this story takes place further out west, in a small town. And the man I shall be talking about was employed at the local butcher. He absolutely hated the job, hated slashing these animals to bits and selling them as fodder. It was disgusting to him, but he couldn’t find a job elsewhere so he just abided at the filthy shop.

His days were miserable but his nights were wonderful. You see, through the years he had acquired a lovely horse that he had fittingly nicknamed ‘Liberty’. And he and Liberty would go out for late night rides every day. They’d run past large mountains and desert brush and live happily for those few hours every day under the cool cover of night.

It wasn’t the best town, but it was certainly growing. It had amazing views and amazing properties to be had and so people rushed in from every direction trying to get a stake in it. Suddenly, the man had to work much more at the butcher and could hardly find time for Liberty during the days. It took quite a toll on the man and he slid into an unreceptive state just hacking and bagging mindlessly until the day finished and the new one began. However, the business was doing very well and their product was flying so fast out the door that they were beginning to decline orders. Well, the butcher didn’t very much like this idea of potentially lost money and he got furious at his distributor when they said they couldn’t up production. And so the butcher was talking about temporarily closing the business until they had enough product in stock, but he very much didn’t like that idea either.

But one day, the man overheard the butcher talking to the distributor in such a rageful way and then heard the butcher storm out of the shop and disappear into town. The next morning when the man showed up he found that the entire shop was once again well stocked up. He found the butcher sleeping at the counter and inquired as to how he had convinced the distributor. And he mumbled something about something and waved his hands in the air but gave no real answer and so the man had reason to believe that something was mightily askew with the whole situation. Eventually a holiday came up and the man was overjoyed to hear that he would be able to ride Liberty that night. Now, the man didn’t live in too nice a place, so he let Liberty wander off in the mountains on the days he was gone, but Liberty would always return to the base of the mountain each night in case the man was able to ride. This particular night Liberty wasn’t at the base, and the man found it quite strange, but he had also not ridden for quite a few days and maybe Liberty had given up on him. So he, too, began to wander the mountain but he couldn’t find his horse. So he returned the next day and scoured the area, and the next day, and the next day but he never found Liberty.

Now, after a couple days of searching the man had come to quite a nasty conclusion. And maybe you have, too, but I certainly hope you didn’t because that would mean you have an exceptionally twisted mind and maybe you ought to focus your attention elsewhere. Anyhow, the man had come to the conclusion that the butcher had actually taken Liberty for meat the night he stormed off. Before you ask, no, I can’t say and nobody does know for sure if the butcher actually did or if Liberty simply ran off, the evidence could rightly procure one to either side. However, the man was staunch with this idea and turned it over and over in his mind as he made his way to work in the morning. The sun was just up yet and the man and the butcher were a few minutes away from opening the shop when the man finally made his move. The butcher had taken away his Liberty so it was only fitting that he take away the butcher’s liberty. So when the butcher went back into the meat storage room, the man followed quietly behind. And when the butcher had turned around and started to come out of the room, the man took his butcher knife and began hacking furiously at him. It’s quite frightening should you stray to think about it, but the man had just started. He cut him up into such a way that only a butcher knows how and began to actually *bag* him. Yes, you heard me right, the man put the butcher’s meat out in the store and the people of the town, not knowing any better, *bought* and *consumed* the butcher’s meat. As for the man, I’m not exactly sure whether he consumed any of the meat, but I shouldn’t like you to think about it, it’s such a terrifying topic. Now you’ve got me trembling! And all these filthy tales have only called upon several more lodged deep in my mind that I’ve been trying to bury for years. Off to bed, now, quickly, before you sway me into recalling another horrid tale!”