

Third Birth

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A teenage boy named Pilot gets more than he bargains for when he brings back a corpse nicknamed Sighn from long ago...Could Pilot have brought back a legend with a soul?

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1 - Prologue

Prologue-The Animator's Voice

This is the room he had first woken up in. I had had to carry him all the way home, which was something I had not expected. When I came home, my parents immediately knew exactly what he was and where he had come from. Simply put, he had come from the grave.

There's a little cemetery down the road from my house, in fact, I do not know why I had just called it small. It houses multiple family tombs of the like that shelter generations upon generations of families in the area. In winter, it is the creepiest place this side of the world. Many lonely apparitions are said to appear there. Although most of these sightings and tales had come from paranoid, over-active imaginative students of who were told of the tales before or upon entering the gloomy grave.

However, my family has been in the business of the dead for over two centuries, so I knew that apparitions were likely to have been seen, even by the exaggerators or village idiots. Apparitions give off strong feelings. Usually when someone reports a certain aura or feeling to an apparition, they are correct about its mood.

I have many lame reasons for resurrecting him from his resting place. I was a very lonely person when I was younger and possibly a little curt and cocky.

My room had been small and white and clear of clothes and papers. It had been one of my better weeks. It was a lovely day when he finally woke up, but I had drawn the blinds down for him. I imagined that the dead could be very sensitive to things while they were first experiencing the world again. I was right.

I had been sitting on a chair next to my bed where he slept. His breaths came in slow and steady and I was immensely proud of myself for bringing him back whole and healthy. My parents were not so happy about it. In fact, they were furious, but they were even more worried for the soul that I had brought back.

My family has a great respect for the dead, so great in fact that we have quite a name in the area we live in. We are quite famous for our respect for the dead, for our powers with them as well. For a while now however, we have kept the business deep underground for obvious reasons. The new century would not understand and we would be swamped with unwanted visitors.

My mother had brought extra blankets in case he was cold, which he probably was for the weather outside had been atrocious. He had curled up almost instantly under the new covers as if reflecting his gratitude with his actions. He stayed curled up in the same, exact position until he had woken up. My father checked in all of the time, glaring at me with rebuke and looking with concern on the reborn corpse. I had no idea what I had brought back. He had come back human, but he had been vicious at one time. He had been a monster.

Then, the eye that was not buried in the covers opened up to the bright world. It was the afternoon after the night when I had woken him. He instantly screeched and dug himself under the heavy layers of

blanket. Maybe the blinds had not been enough to protect his sensitive eyes, I had thought at first. At first, I had made many assumptions about him and his origins.

He had also thought that he had woken up to his old century, which was expected. If there was a heaven, the dead came back without any memory of it. I could see him shiver beneath the blankets. I turned my chair about so I could rest my arms on its back and I watched him. My mother came in with dinner for me and as I sipped at soup and clinked my fork against a plate of chicken and rice, he slowly came out. He had very feminine features. The skin on his face was very smooth and young and his eyes were very thin and small but perfectly placed on his face. He had pronounced lips and his frame was incredibly skinny as if he had been starving. He glanced at me briefly, but his gaze almost instantly dropped to the food in my hands. He stared in awe at the plate of food. I saw him lift his head slightly, sniffing the air like an animal, wondering, questioning. Then he looked beyond my shoulder and saw the TV and jerked back. He stared at me, then. It was so suspicious I almost laughed. It was not nice to laugh at the dead, however. That would not do at all.

He did not say a thing for a whole three days. I imagined that he did not realize he could speak. Or perhaps he knew that he could and his mind was just so full of memories and of the strange and fantastic objects in the room that he could not speak.

He had the blanket wrapped around his shoulders and renewed garments. When a corpse is very far off, their clothes will regenerate as if they were part of the actual body. They were strange clothes for someone who had died barely over a hundred years ago. It reminded me a lot of a band's uniform, the kind of band that goes marching for their school on game day or perhaps of a Union soldier's uniform from the Civil War. His uniform had been all red and it had been very ragged. He had little strips of cloth buttoned over his shoulders, of which I was fairly sure were there for simple display. First thing was first, no matter how awed he was at the food, he had to take a shower first. He may have been renewed but that did not mean he had not come with an odor.

My mother came in at that moment. She had always told me to let them choose. I would let him choose the clothes he wanted to wear and what towel to use. Frankly, it was not just a matter of respect, it was a matter of free will. Nobody (dead or not) deserved to be a servant. So is the way of my family and I agree with them wholeheartedly. He got up with strong posture, sliding off of the bed with some fantastic grace that would have just impressed kings and queens of his time. He could have been important at one time. Or he could have been just incredibly haughty. Chances were he had been both. I had been impressed with his composure. If I had woken up in his place, I would have been incredibly frightened. My wits' end would have been around the corner to jump me.

I had walked to the end of my bed, past it, and stopped in front of a double-doored closet. I opened it for him and made a curt nod as a bow and told him to pick something out. I might have been stammering a bit for I had been nervous. I was only a high schooler after all. At the time of his rebirth, I had been 16 and on the verge of hitting my final growth spurt. I had already acquired my deepened voice and was already growing hair in places that I had once thought would remain naked forever. I noticed, as he got up and his hair swayed, that on the right side of his head his hair was shorter than on the other. I would find that if one were to walk around him, the hair was like a spiral. The tips twirled around the side of the right side of his face about at the cheek line to the middle of his forearm on the left. It had been a precise cutting job. More stunning than that however, was the color of his hair. It had been a darker color than I had ever encountered before in my entire life and I had been in many a crowded places. The complete

and utter blackness and opacity of it, like it had been feeding on the light and sucking it in, is something that I will never forget.

Then I noticed his expression, zombie-like as his movements were. He looked deep in thought, his eyes whirring with glints of color and...ice. Something seemed to be shaking up inside of him, behind those tired eyes. The tired eyes are normal. Many come back like zombies for a time and then reawaken to their true spirit after. However, he never lost the eyes, glacier eyes, with the ice tumbling and cracking against each other constantly behind them.

I stepped back from him as he raided the closet and shuffled out a regular, white, button-up shirt and an old button-up vest that had gone out of style at school a while back and black slacks of which I had feared were too short for him. He was taller than I was and the skinniness made him seem lanky. That soon changed as my mother quickly fattened him up with her hospitable cooking. The red uniform, which had been rather small to begin with, hung off of his form like rags on a scarecrow. The buttons on the ends of his sleeves looked about to fall off, dangling on thinned thread and shredded fabric. The collar of his attire was frayed and darkened with some sort of grease or dirt, same with the ends of his pants.

At that moment, I had wondered how he had died.

2 - Chapter One

Chapter One-Back to the School Days

Quick note: Well, I hope there aren't too many mistakes, grammatical or...um, what's that word? Or...well, otherwise, whatever. I sort of change the tenses and the point of view. Pilot was mature and a tad bit older in the Prologue. He's young and grudgeful now. I made up a word for this chapter. At least, WORD seems to think it doesn't exist. I bet my WORD was just being a dog. And Phys is pronounced like "peace." **Playful language and an uneasy past are all you've got to worry about here.**

"So that's the guy, huh?"

My friend, Phys, kept pace with me as I walked on, staring at the man ahead. He was making good conversation with the ladies and I was actually surprised. I thought, for some strange reason, that he'd be too closed off to the world just yet to be attempting such an "alive" feat. Apparently, I was wrong.

"Yeah, that's him all right."

"So, you walk into a graveyard, without doing any research at all, and go and bring the sexiest dead man to life?"

"Oh, god, when you say it that way-"

"Your quest for rapid popularity is going to kill you one day."

Phys was very sarcastic. He could afford to be, though. He was the smartest student in school. His mind was talented and could be disciplined if and when he wanted it to be. It was times like these, though, that I just hated him for it. His intelligence made him incredibly witty. And he knew it.

He could snap a comeback or sarcastic remark better than anyone I knew.

"The thing is," he cleared his throat, "is that you went about it all wrong. That guy's getting all the attention."

He stepped and turned, his chest facing me now. His eyes trained on a group of boys who were trotting behind us. They were talking excitedly amongst themselves on the wide sidewalk. I guessed that they hadn't heard the great news yet.

"Guys hate you because you brought back a girl magnet."

He looked back in front of us.

"Girls ignore you because he's dead sexy.

I let out a weak laugh and said, "Excuse the pun. The really bad part about it is that he doesn't

sound like an idiot.”

“Well, you picked the crème of the crop.”

He started walking again and so did I, with a very concerned look on my face.

We got to the point where he was talking to the girls and passed it without a second glance. We turned the corner after that point and slipped into the gates of the school. It was still rather early, but he needed to leave me because he was working on a project of some sort. I was pissed, but concealed the anger by trying to be as nonchalant as possible. It worked. It always did.

My father owned the school that I attended and while I went there, he was the acting principal. I suppose that had its cons for me, because nobody wanted to get into trouble around me for some of the obvious reasons. Except for those few people who didn't care what other people thought, like Phys, there was always some loneliness to return to. I was convinced that the school had it out for me, not just the student body, but the actual building itself. I was a really paranoid sort of whelp.

I had my reasons for it.

While we had been passing by my creation, I had ignored him solidly for one small purpose. The purpose was to avoid the head of the girl crowd who had been surrounding him, the purpose was to completely avoid and ignore Kim.

If I had a hitlist, she would have been at the top of it. Kim was the first in a long line of catalysts that had eventually ruined my life up to this point. It all started in seventh grade. The rumors had spread like wildfire. I went out with her for a week after school started. She was the prettiest girl in class, still is if you like the skinny, blonde type, and I was the one who caught her attention. You can imagine that I had actually felt special and the prank (or real event, I'm not sure) had crumbled my self-esteem into almost nothing. I don't know how it was started, but it spread and I was the laughing stock. I remember the people staring at me after that week or so I started going out with her and I wondered. I wondered why and then I knew why after someone finally told me. Rumors were going around that Kim had a crush on my father and the only reason why she was going out with me was because she liked him and wanted to see him at home. However, that wasn't the clencher. The real horrible rumor said that she had actually gotten flirtatious with him and finally had let him screw her.

The rumors had gone from bad to worse to worst. By the end of the year, I had cried in the bathroom during lunch for most of the hundreds of lunches you have in a school year. My father was furious, but somehow kept the school intact and kept his cool about everything. I hoped that they were all lies, but my paranoid mind was screaming at me. It was telling me otherwise.

Then, I lost my first best friend a year later. I had known him almost since were in diapers. Despite all the rumors, he was there to always reassure and did his best to stick up for me in school. I appreciated his guardianship. He kept helping me and sticking by me.

Then I got confused. Sam came over to study one day. It was a nice afternoon and we were crouched down next the bed. It was a rather low bed, low enough for us to use it as a desk when we sat down on the floor next to it. Books cluttered the edge of it and papers littered the floor around us and that's when I realized it. I noticed his not-too-skinny frame and his shiny brown hair. He smiled when he looked up at me and I leaned forward and kissed him. I kissed him right

on the lips. I kissed him, but not with the intention to. It just sort of happened. I can't really remember the whole scenario correctly, but for a moment, I might have mistaken him for...for a girl. At least, I try to tell myself that I had. Sam didn't take it very well. Of course, it went unsaid that it was never to leave the room, but it did. A few days later, I started to hear snickering and feel eyes on my back as I walked down the halls. I haven't completely left that legacy behind. I'm still teased about it to this day. I never transferred to another school. My father wouldn't allow it.

Well, dear old Sam had told one of his closest friends. And then that close friend had told their close friend and it went on and on until the entire school knew. Sam was forgiven, because I was the one who had pushed a move on him, a move I hadn't meant to make.

I didn't get confused anymore after that.

I sat down at a bench near a jungle gym where the younger kids were playing and admired the trees and the dirt ground beneath my feet. It wasn't concrete like most other schools had it. My father believed in nature, hence all the dusty shoes and trees worth climbing.

The building itself was grey and smooth-walled on the outside. The hall walls were half red brick and half smooth grey like the outside. The wall around the schoolyard was brick. It separated the schoolyard from the busy road on the other side and helped to thwart the noise that came from it.

I could hear an occasional whoosh from the road, but it was pretty well quieted. "You know, I really hadn't thought that you would abandon your show-and-tell project to the vultures, boy."

I heard a slight ringing of metal as he sat down next to me and slid over. I was uncomfortable with the proximity, but I didn't voice it. I was too proud to and it would have felt entirely homosexual if I did.

"Yeah, looked like they were really torturing you, there."

I rolled my eyes and I worked to avoid eye contact. My lips were tight and I was not in the mood to deal with a dead person after thinking of so much.

"You want to tell somebody that you hate them, don't you?"

I jerked my eyes to his.

"Well, I think everybody feels that way some time, don't they?"

"I could see it in your expression."

"Great, you're an observant one. So, what? You're not only dead sexy, but you're a mind reader, too? You're full of surprises."

"I learned to read people's emotions while I was still alive. Of course, some were more obvious than others..."

"Impressive," I murmured sarcastically. "Of course, you're alive now, but I get what you're saying."

I heard a soft laugh, more like a hum, come from his throat. He seemed pretty happy to be alive again. He ran his fingers through his hair often, picked it up, twirled it around his fingers, always smoothing it behind his ears. I found out why a little later.

He mentioned being a project and he was. But he was a project I had done on my own accord, not on teacher's permission or assignment. I would probably have to return him to the grave soon and hell knew what that would be like. He was probably already viewing it as a second chance, I mean, life. He was viewing his new life as a second chance at it, which it was not. He was just...there, brought back from the past. Of course, he was incredibly adaptable. After he got past the technology, used the remote controller a couple of times, he slipped right into life as we knew it.

It made me very curious to know who he had been. He was probably an inventor or something new age like that, well new age for the time he had lived in. I could believe it. His attitude was incredibly optimistic after he started talking. I almost regretted bringing him back after his soul lit afire.

There was something else a little strange about him as well. I was a little observant myself. He didn't seem too concerned about life and death. He never did say a thank you for bringing him back. And he was a perfect balance of carefree and this strange seriousness when something seemed threatening to him. I don't think he appreciated defiance very much. And one more thing: his reflexes were remarkable.

The second day he was in my house, he ate. He ate a lot. He sat down at the dinner table, straight and proper and smiled at my mother. She produced food for him. She brought it to the table in heaps. Finally, she brought out some chamomile tea at the end of it and put a cup and saucer too close to the edge and when she removed the tray from the table, her hip caught the edge of it and cup and saucer slid off of the edge and began falling. It never reached the floor. It had fallen on the side where he had been sitting and he leaned down, stuck his hand underneath the falling cup and scooped it back onto the table. A few measly drops had splattered onto the floor. Of course, my dad had been watching the television and my mother was already turned away, so I was the only one who saw it.

It happened, though. It really did happen.

When the bottom of the saucer had clattered onto the table quietly, he looked up at me and smiled. I didn't tell my parents what had happened. I was a little afraid to, because of the way the smile had looked for one, but I mostly figured the world owed me this one secret.

"Do they still have cigarettes around, boy?"

"Uh, Jesus. Could you just call manage to call me by my name?"

"I do recall that you never say mine."

"Well," I said in a suddenly shaky voice, "I'd just rather not."

"No, you are in shock."

I waved it off with a hand and stared at the jungle gym intently. His name was interesting, because it was a nickname. The nickname was interesting and frightening at the same time. I shook off the significance.

“So what do you propose we do for your presentation?”

“Don’t catwalk,” I muttered.

“What?”

His fingers were on my jacket, trying to pry one of my arms out of the fold they were in. I was irritated by him.

“Now, see, why are you being such a spoil-sport?”

I admit that I was a tad bit jealous of his good nature and good looks, but I tried my best not to let it get to me...I was petty. I was just straight out petty.

“I hate you,” I said quietly. I got up steadily, pulled the strap of my messenger backpack onto my shoulder and walked away.

I knew that he had heard me. I had wanted him to hear me.

Did I mention I was also melodramatic about it?

I got to class and settled in my seat in the rear of it. I hoped that he would get lost and would fail to show up, but that was a dream long lost. All he’d have to do is ask some stupid girl to tell him where I was and she would lead the goddamn way.

I collapsed forward onto my desk and buried my face in the sleeve of the old army jacket. I felt like a little baby, because at that moment I really had wanted to cry. The urge just washed over me and I really wanted to do it, but anymore wrong steps and I’d be farther behind than I’d be able to bear. Something kept the tears from leaking out, however and so by the time everyone was seated and the bell had rung, I was myself again. He was at the front of the room, leaning against the doorframe, waiting and watching me with heavy eyes. The ice was cracking behind them even more than usual. He stared at me, fixed, like I was a target and I didn’t like it. I ended up glaring at him without knowing it while the teacher set up to introduce him. So, how do you have this set up, Pilot?” the teacher called across the room to me.

I continued looking at him with my brutalest glare.

“I think,” I said, submissively enough, “That he should introduce himself. Unless you want me to tell the class the process.”

“All right, then. He will speak of himself, possibly a little history,” the teacher flashed a welcoming smile, “and then, you will describe the process.”

He shrugged as he pushed off the doorframe and stepped forward.

“Fine with me,” he said. His eyes refocused onto the whole of the class instead of just myself. “Near the end of my days, many people called me Sighn. I suppose it is as good a name as any.” He gave a quaint little bow and the questions began.

I was a little relieved when he took up the rest of class time. I hadn’t wanted to go up in front of all those people really. The class drew to an end and was dismissed and I went to my next class. He caught me at the door and followed me, tight at my left shoulder.

“Do you want me to draw the attention in all of your classes like this, boy?”

I paused in step for a moment, but immediately resumed. It probably looked like I tripped. I really did want him too, but I had thought he’d just do it without realizing he was.

“You say it like I care.”

“I’m rather sure you do.”

“What are you going to do if I don’t give you an answer?”

“Silly bastard, I’ll waste the time anyway.”

I rolled my eyes. “Well, then, guess that answers your question. And I am not a silly bastard.” He made a small scoff chuckle in reply.

“I thought you old guys used terms literally?”

“Well, sometimes when you become older than a little old man, words can be fun little jokes in themselves. They make even nicer mockeries.”

“Poetic, are we?”

I marched on and he fell silent. I was glad for it. This comfortable bickering was irritating me, too. I didn’t understand it. I seemed to know exactly what to say in response.

I got to the other side of the school and sat down in my seat in my second period. I thought that maybe my father was punishing me in his own subtle way. I was almost sure of it. He had probably known what was going to happen once we got to school. I bit my bottom lip in anger.

My lip bled.