



THE GREAT PUPPET THEATRE

A Tale of Horror

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There are those who claim it was all caused by someone reading a book. Bollox. The whole idea of a character coming to life because you read it in a book is utterly ridiculous. The phrase preposterous comes to mind. Regardless of how it started the following story is utterly true. Well, okay, mostly true. I'm not using my real name because ... well, because I'm not.

Let me start off by saying the Great Puppet Theatre is not what it sounds like. There are no puppets. There is no audience sitting in row upon row of uncomfortable seats. It's a film production company. Not a studio, but one of the thousands of tiny production groups which dot the Hollywood landscape. The Great Puppet Theatre specializes in special effects. A little like Industrial Light and Magic, but with a lot more blood and gore.

They almost never let in reporters, to protect their trade secrets. It's a competitive industry. But my editor convinced them a good backstage story would result in putting more butts in seats. You already know how such things are the mother's milk of box office, so you'll understand why they said yes ... although reluctantly. They sat me down in a classic canvas-backed director's chair. Although this one didn't have my name on it ... or anyone else's either.



“Quiet on the set. Roll one.”

The scene to be filmed was an operating theatre, complete with high tech monitoring equipment and those bright overhead lights. The big round ones with the studs in the center. There were only two actors on the set. One dressed as the doctor and the other one as the patient. But you wouldn't consider it a normal scene. The patient was strapped down to the gurney and gagged with a ball gag. Her hands were tied over her head and she was conscious. She struggled violently as the doctor approached.

She was quite attractive, but I can't say I remember seeing her in anything before. She had the gorgeous look of Hollywood about her. I found her extremely hypnotic. Tearing my eyes away from her was almost impossible. In her current position, there was more the look of the ancient sacrifice about her than of actress in a scene.

The actor playing the doctor removed his mask. “So, my darling, you've been naughty with the other doctors haven't you. Betraying me. I'm afraid I can't allow this to continue.”

This comment only increased her struggles, but it was pointless. He gave her an icy smile. “Do you know what a pre-frontal lobotomy is? Once I'm finished with you, you won't remember what it is ... or much else for that matter.”

He picked up a small stainless-steel hammer and what appeared to be an ice pick. Her screams were muffled by the gag. He buttered his words until they were soggy with malice. “I'm afraid the anesthesiologist is busy so you're going to feel every bit of this. I'll make sure I go slowly so you don't miss anything.” He pressed the ice pick to her temple and started hammering. Her screams intensified, at least what could be heard through the gag. The hammering was a slow cacophony of terror sounds.

When he had completed the one side, he moved to the other. Her struggles lessened as he began the second incision. The hammer clicked away as the screaming faded. Pulling the instrument out for a second there was silence. The movement on the gurney ceased. He untied her hands and removed the straps, but she continued to lay in place, still as the grave. He turned his back to return the bloodied instruments to the surgical table.

She seemed to turn directly to me. I could see it in her eyes, she was now utterly insane. There was no doubt in my mind. It was at this point she smiled. Normally this would have not have been something to point out. I mean the insane smile for no reason at all. But there was something deeply wrong with this grin. Something not right. It was only then I noticed it. The incisors were growing, getting longer right before my eyes. What were once teeth were now fangs of the most horrifying kind.

One must wonder what happens to a vampire when they are insane. When they lose all control. All restraint.

She was on his back in an instant. Her fangs sinking deeply into his neck. You could see the blood rushing down over his shoulders, thick and flowing. It was his turn to scream as the lights when out.

“So how did you like it?” a voice said to me. I was almost too shocked to respond. The entire thing seemed to visceral to be a special effect and it was all done in one take. I didn’t see a wire or a blood bag. No stunt doubles or dummies. And I’d seen it all. “The name’s Andre, Andre Lorde. I’m the director. I hope you are going to give us some good advanced press. Start the buzz going so to speak.”

My state of shock started to fade. “Sorry, the name’s Oscar Meter. I’m from *The Press*. That was amazing, very impressive.”

He gave me a wry grin. “I glad you found our little play worthwhile.”

“Do you mind if I interview the actors?”

His smile was gone in an instant. “I’m afraid that won’t be possible. It’ll take a few hours for them to get out of costume and get all the equipment removed, you understand. High tech stuff takes a bit to get out from under.”

I talked to some of the other members of the filming crew, but they were reticent. It was clear no one wanted to lose their jobs by giving away any secrets. Andre led me away, out of the set. He bid me a good day and set me off down a long corridor which led to the front gate. Not even halfway down the wall, I ran into the actress from the surgical scene. She came out of nowhere. Just as hypnotic as she had been in the scene, I practically melted when she looked at me.

“Going somewhere?”

“I... I...” My tongue and my lips were definitely not in sync with my brain.

“My name’s Niki,” she spoke like a chorus of birds. “I hear you wanted to interview me.” She played with the buttons of my shirt and gave me a suggestive smile. The fangs were still there ...