

Fair Trade
by
J.E. Clarke

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Janetgoodman@yahoo.com

FADE IN ON:

INT. SHAWN'S OFFICE - DAY

A repetitive TICK in the air. Like a clock, or metronome. The office is decorated with antiques. Paper stacked on a side bureau.

Alongside family photos. Mother LORETTA (60s) smiles in a church picture. Dressed peasant simple. Old school.

GLORIA (30s) and JANIE (7) beam from a framed photo. Blonde. Happy. Together.

SHAWN (30s) types at a PC. An average guy, slightly on the handsome side. Deep lines etch in his face - due more to worry than age.

A Newton's cradle CLICKS on his desk. TICK TICK TICK. Shawn stares at his screen.

The screen blurs. Shawn YELPS and holds his head. Reaches a shaking hand towards his phone.

SHAWN

Gloria, honey? That doctor you researched, Rosen something? I think it's time to give him a call.

He glances at the family photo. Light FLARES. Blurs out everything.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A light flares - brighter than the sun. DR. ROSENBERG (50s, portly) shines a light in Shawn's dilated eyes.

Shawn winces. Rosenberg picks up a file folder. Frowns.

LATER

Shawn balances on an examination table, Rosenberg and Gloria at his side. He studies MRIs in his hands. Three LARGE LUMPS dot the pictures.

Gloria hugs Shawn and cries. Shawn wipes her tears away.

SHAWN

What are we gonna tell Janie?

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The table's decorated with a jack o' lantern and candy. Shawn sits at the table, holds Gloria's hand. Mother Loretta hovers over them with prayer beads.

Janie cuddles in Shawn's lap. Her face looks confused.

SHAWN

Rosenberg says a few months, at best. I don't want to go through chemo. I'd rather stay healthy as long as I can. Enjoy what time I have with you. At home.

Janie SNIFFLES. She darts off Shawn's lap, and runs from the room. Gloria stands. Shawn holds up a hand.

SHAWN

I'll talk to her. Alone.

Loretta bustles over with incense. Shawn gently pushes her away.

INT. JANIE'S ROOM - EVENING

Innocence personified, filled with toys. Halloween skeletons taped to the closet door. Shawn sits on the floor with Janie. The little girl can't be consoled.

SHAWN

Sweetie, I'll always love you. Even if I'm not there.

Janie presses her face to his chest. SOBS rack her body.

INT. SHAWN AND GLORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gloria spoons with Shawn. She's asleep. He's wide awake.

Shawn slides from the bed, and walks away.

Gloria MUTTERS - lost in fitful dreams.

INT. JANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shawn peeks in. Janie's STUFFED DRAGON's on the floor. He picks it up, and tucks it under her blanket. Exits the room without a word.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Shawn sits at a laptop desk; his face is bathed in the screen's eerie glow. A bottle of Maker's Mark keeps him company. A grandfather clock TICKS. 2AM.

The laptop camera glows green. Filming.

SHAWN

(slurred)

Hope I'm doing this right. I'm not a Twitter/Skype kinda guy. Janie - I wanna record this for you. Give you something to remember me by. Better than a pathetic man, dying in bed.

(beat)

Gloria, when you find this - please edit out anything stupid. You're the one who knows how stuff works these days. If it had to be one of us, I'm glad it's me.

He holds two leather books up to the screen.

SHAWN

Speaking of stupid. Mom's not taking this well. Thinks she can pray it away.

He opens one book. The cover that *doesn't* say "Bible."

SHAWN

She dug this up from the "old country." The whole thing's full of spells.

He flips a page. Sips whiskey.

SHAWN

"How to heal anything." Oh, this looks priceless. Perfect timing, too.

(reads)

"On the fall of Hallow's Eve. The darkest shadow of the soul. The doors shalt open for one night. What is broken, shalt be made whole."

He grins at the screen.

SHAWN

Fuck chemo. I got the Boogeyman on my side.

(beat)

Gloria, edit that part out. Please?

Something CREAKS. Shawn swings around. The whiskey bottle SMASHES to the floor.

SHAWN

Gloria? Sorry. Couldn't sleep...

But it isn't Gloria.

The living room closet's open - just a crack. Light seeps between accordion doors.

Shawn takes a step towards it. He looks back at the laptop screen. The glow's not reflecting from there.

A HUM from the closet.

SHAWN

I don't need this shit. Not today.

He throws the doors open.

And freezes. Stupefied.

Two DOOR FRAMES glow inside, suspended in mid-air. Yellow on the left. Red on the right. Thorns and rusty razors line the interior edges.

The area between the frames ripples like a pond. And reflects like a mirror.

Shawn blinks. His reflection blinks back. A reverse image of the living room behind it.

He reaches out to the space between the doors. His reflection mimics the action.

SPARKS. Shawn yanks his hand back.

His reflection *doesn't*.

Shawn stops. Waves a hand before his face.

The doppelganger crosses its arms over its chest. Stares petulantly at him.

Shawn looks at the whiskey bottle on the floor.

SHAWN

I'm drunk. Or... Crap. The tumors.

He reaches for the red door. His doppelganger hastily waves him away.

The twin picks up a wooden figurine from a shelf; motions for Shawn to do the same. Then pantomimes putting the knickknack through the red door frame.

Shawn extends his figurine. Invisible gears GRIND nastily. He jumps back.

The figurine hovers mi-air, held in place by an unseen force. It feeds through the portal like butter through a thresher. Comes out splintered on the "other side."

The yellow door glows. Shawn's doppelganger slips *his* figurine through the portal. THUD. It drops to Shawn's living room floor.

Shawn picks it up. Examines it from all sides. It's untouched. Intact.

SHAWN

I get it. Equal and opposite balance.

He glances at figurine fragments on the red door side.

SHAWN

Guess I got the better part of this deal.
(beat)
If Gloria comes in, and finds me talking to the closet...

At the mention of Gloria's name, Reverse Shawn looks anxious. He scurries to his PC, and returns with a file folder. Shawn glances at it, annoyed.

SHAWN

Yeah. The MRIs. You don't need to show them to me. I've studied them. Many times.

The doppelganger flips the folder open. Holds up an MRI.

INSERT: The three tumors. The patient's name: GLORIA.

SHAWN

What?

He glances at his twin.

SHAWN

Over there, it's Gloria?

The twin nods. Shawn slumps; drained of energy.

SHAWN

Oh God. I'm so sorry. I can't imagine what you're going through. I mean, if you were real and everything...

His doppelganger points at the grandfather clock, worried. The time is 4:30AM.

SHAWN

Janie can't lose her Mom. She deserves to grow up with both parents!

The twin steps towards the yellow side of the door. His eyes plead with Shawn to do the same.

SHAWN

You want me to walk through that? I saw what it did to the figurine.

The doppelganger snatches another photo from the bureau. One of Shawn, Gloria and Janie. Happy. Wholesome. Together. He points to the picture desperately.

Shawn's face darkens. Unbidden thoughts creeping in.

SHAWN

She'd have us both, if we switched places.

(beat)

What about *your* Janie?

His twin picks up another photo. Loretta.

Shawn stares. The grandfather clock TICKS loudly.

A CRY from Janie's bedroom. The girl WHIMPERS in her sleep. Shawn COUGHS, muffles the sound with his hand. He glances down. Blood speckles his palm.

Shawn inches towards the portal.

SHAWN

I'm dead anyway. Besides, none of this is real. And if it is, it won't hurt...

(beat)

For too long.

His doppelganger matches his steps. Their eyes lock. Shawn takes a breath.

SHAWN

Okay. For Janie. Anything.

He steps through the red door. Gears GRIND nastily.

Blood SPLATTERS the doppelganger's carpet. The yellow door FLARES - brighter than the sun.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The closet's dark - the portal's gone.

Shawn slides the accordian doors shut with a CLICK.

He walks to the laptop. The green light's on; still filming. He TAPS a few buttons. DELETE.

INT. JANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. The grandfather clock TICKS far away. Shawn steps inside.

He crosses over to a sleeping Janie. He kisses her forehead. Makes sure the stuffed dragon's in place.

He slips from the room.

Reflected light from the living room illuminates his face. And a drop of blood on his collar.

Shawn glances back at Janie. Smiles.

FADE OUT: