DREADFUL SHEPPARD

Written by

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EXT. SMALL VICTORIAN HOME - DAY

THOMAS SHEPPARD has a pale complexion and an apple shaped face. He's a darkly yet smartly dressed 12 year old boy living in the 1890's with knickers, puffy shirt, tweed vest and an Irish cap. He's holding his school books with a leather strap handle.

It's autumn and oak leaves are joyfully dancing in the air by his sullen face as he stands by a gnarly oak tree, embedded partially into a distorted wrought iron fence across from his best friend's home. He swats the leaves from the air and crumples them in his hand, they flake into the wind. He stares intently at the aged clapboards of the house across the road. His ears perk as he listens.

An argument between two men emanates from the home. It's JOHN O'HARA, a substantial, well dressed coach driver, mustached and serious. The other voice is the town Doctor.

JOHN O'HARA (O.S.)
Don't you come into my home and tell me what I know.

An elderly couple walk arm and arm along the sidewalk. They look toward the door and frown as the argument projects from the house.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
I'm very sorry, These are standard procedures Mr. O'hara, I assure you.

JOHN O'HARA (O.S.)
I assure you, that for all the good you've done you might as well have stuck your procedures up my--

BELLA O'HARA
John!

JOHN O'HARA
Take your bag of snake oil and get out! Now!

The elderly couple see Thomas across the cobbled road and give him a friendly wave. Thomas waves back reservedly.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Just try to keep him comfortable. I'm very sorry.

The Doctor, in a brown tweed jacket carrying a leather medical bag, leaves the house, puts a bowler hat on his head and walks briskly down the street past the elderly couple. The elderly man shakes his head.

Thomas stares at the man as he leaves. He then runs down the street in the other direction.

INT. THOMAS SHEPPARD'S BEDROOM.

Thomas stands at his book shelf. On it we see a holy bible, a science book, an arithmetic book and a tin toy train engine. He removes the bible and opens it to hollowed out pages containing a different book entitled "Frankenstein". He removes the book.

He then picks up the tin toy train engine and tips it up. Out drops a large metal and glass syringe into his palm. He holds it up, with the tip of the needle to one open eye he inspects it's sharpness. He nods and slides the syringe into the inside pocket of his vest, shoves the book into his back pocket of his knickers and quickly replaces the contents of the shelf.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doors and windows are all open in a modest but ornately furnished home. A fire helmet sits next to a black cat, who jumps from the top of an apothecary cabinet to a wooden tea service cart. The cart is topped with a white cotton doily, a thermometer and a tea pot which sit at the foot of a bed. The bed is occupied by 12 year old EDMUND O'HARA. He's Thomas's best friend.

His skin looks very red and he looks excessively gaunt and ill. There's a rubber ice pack on his forehead. Edmund looks dejected as his mother and father bicker over his diagnosis.

Edmund's mother is BELLA O'HARA who a slender, fit woman with long blond curly hair and a buttoned up full length dress. She is a devout catholic and is terribly concerned about appearances.

JOHN O'HARA
It's not the measles Bella, for Heaven's sake look at him! He's bright red.

BELLA O'HARA
The doctor said it was the measles. You are not a doctor John!
(MORE)

BELLA O'HARA (CONT'D)
If the doctor says he has the measles then he has the measles! If he goes blind, dear Christ, as long as he is alive, we are blessed and he is blessed.

She does a "sign of the cross".

JOHN O'HARA
I don't care what that doctor said, he doesn't see what we see. He comes in and looks at him for 5 minutes and suddenly he knows exactly what's wrong with him?

BELLA O'HARA
Yes! That is what he is trained to do John!

JOHN O'HARA
The Gazette described Scarlet Fever with these symptoms! Why don't you want to listen?! That doctor is a quack, and you want to listen to him for what? Because he has a stethoscope and some cheap paper certificate? What makes him more qualified than anyone else with a Home Medical Encyclopedia?

BELLA O'HARA
Please John! You're upsetting poor Edmund.

There is a knock at the screen door. Thomas Sheppard is there.

BELLA O'HARA (CONT'D)
Oh, it's Thomas.

JOHN O'HARA
Come in son. How are your parents?

Thomas stays at the door.

BELLA O'HARA
Yes, how are they? I haven't seen any of you at church lately. Is everyone alright?

THOMAS SHEPPARD
They're fine. Can Edmund play?

JOHN O'HARA
Oh, I'm afraid not, Thomas. But come and say hello to Edmund. Now he can't talk back to you, his glands are choking off his voice box you see. Poor boy. Come now, he can see and hear you just fine.

Thomas has that Frankenstein book peeking out of his back pocket. He enters the room timidly.

BELLA O'HARA
Let's leave them to it. You boys will say some prayers together won't you?

Thomas nods.

JOHN O'HARA
Good boy, I've known you to be a good boy. Keep our Edmund company, son. We'll be in the kitchen, Bella is making a pudding for Edmund. You'll have pudding as well of course, if you are so inclined.

Thomas nods.

JOHN O'HARA (CONT'D)
Ok then.

John and Bella move into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

BELLA O'HARA
I never liked that dreadful Sheppard boy, so quiet all the time.

JOHN O'HARA
He's a perfectly good boy, Bella. His father is a volunteer fireman. A good man.

BELLA O'HARA
You never know what's on the mind of a boy when he so rarely speaks.

INT. LIVINGROOM

Thomas pulls out his book.

THOMAS SHEPPARD
Have you read this story Edmund?

Edmund looks over at the book, gestures that he is familiar with it.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
Are you getting better?

Edmund shrugs and shakes his head no.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
If your days are numbered Edmund, I'm going to bring you back to life after you die.

Edmund is pleased.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
You're the only friend I have. If you are to go away, I would be all alone. I would have no one to walk school with, and no one to help me with the arithmetic.

Edmund closes his eyes.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
I know how to do it of course, I know how to bring you back. I just need some supplies.

Edmund's eyes open again, he nods.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
In the book, it says we need a tub of ocean water, a syringe of cocaine tincture, and high voltage electricity. The ocean water is easy enough. And I can use electricity from the new power station by the dock. I just need the cocaine salts from somewhere.

Thomas holds up his syringe. Edmund motions to his father's apothecary jars. One jar is filled with a white powdered substance.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
I read that cocaine can have an invigorating effect as well as an--
est--thetic.
(MORE)

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
And it says here that you won't feel a thing, but you will start to move and dance when the electricity hits you.

Thomas puts the jar of cocaine into his satchel. He holds up the book.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
Do you want me to read it to you?

Edmund nods.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
"I had recently read of a theory linking this great force of electricity with the essence within all living creatures."

INT. WAKE OF EDMUND O'HARA - DAY

Edmund is now dead and his body is in the living room on display. Many family members as well as the Doctor, and the elderly couple are in the room wearing black. There is a solemn atmosphere. Thomas kneels in front of the plain wooden casket and makes the sign of the cross.

THOMAS SHEPPARD
I have everything prepared Edmund. We're doing it tonight.

Thomas tucks the Frankenstein book into the casket and gets up. An elderly couple kneel in front of Edmund in his place.

EXT. STABLE - NIGHT

Thomas sneaks into the back of the stable with a dog, he releases the dog and shuts the door. The dog barks and the horses go wild with loud whinnying and neighing.

INT. O'HARA'S BEDROOM

John and Bella are laying in bed when they hear a dog barking and their two horses going wild. A shot gun is propped up by the door.

BELLA O'HARA
A dog?

JOHN O’HARA
Sounds that way.

They put bath robes on, Bella picks up a lit hurricane lantern, John picks up the shotgun and they both exit the bedroom.

EXT. BACKYARD OF THE O'HARA RESIDENCE.

Thomas is around the corner watching for John and Bella to leave the house. Once he sees them he bolts for the front of the house.

I/E. FRONT OF THE O'HARA RESIDENCE

Thomas runs in through the front door. He closes the casket.

THOMAS SHEPPARD
I’ll see you soon Eddy.

JOHN O’HARA (O.S.)
Woah! Woah!

BELLA O’HARA (O.S.)
Get that dog out of there!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Thomas pushes the casket, which is still sitting on the wheeled tea service cart, out the front door and onto the cobbled street.

EXT. STREET

Thomas pushes the casket down the dark cobbled street illuminated by gas street lamps with intense focus. He has no time to lose. He passes the elder couple walking their dog. They look aghast when they see the casket roll by.

ELDER MAN
Stop right there boy!

The man’s wife makes the sign of the cross and passes out as Thomas with Edmund’s casket move out of sight over a hill. The old man catches her.

Thomas muscles the casket from the front to slow it’s roll down a hill on a dark dirt road surrounded by a tunnel of gnarly leafless trees.

Thomas shoulders the casket up a hill as the brick power station comes into view overlooking the ocean on the pale moonlit night.

EXT. OCEANSIDE POWER STATION

Thomas with Edmund's casket safely arrive at the power station. There, his prepared reanimation supplies await: a wooden horse watering trough, two large electric cables connected to the trough by steel screw-clamps, the frayed, looped ends of those cables are just below a large electrical terminal connection attached to the brick and copper-roofed building.

Thomas pushes the casket parallel to a large horse-watering trough that is filled with murky water. He opens the casket.

Edmund's lifeless body is motionless, his eyes look straight ahead.

THOMAS SHEPPARD
Edmund, I'm going to put you in this water, it's cold but it's only for a minute, once you're alive again you can get right up, understand?

Edmund says nothing.

Thomas pushes the casket off the tea cart and it slides down, still leaning against the cart. He heaves the casket up straight then a little more to dump Edmund's stiff body out and it splashes into the trough. The body is stiff as a board and sticks awkwardly out of the water.

THOMAS SHEPPARD (CONT'D)
I'm giving you this injection of medicine now. It's going to help prepare you for the electrical current.

Thomas injects Edmunds body with a large syringe and his stiff body suddenly goes limp.

The O'Hara's and a police officer are downhill and within sight shining a lantern in Thomas's direction. Bella is sobbing uncontrollably. John has his shotgun trained on Thomas.

JOHN O'HARA
Stop what you're doing right now boy!

POLICE OFFICER
You won't be in any trouble Thomas, we just want Edmund back. No trouble at all.

Thomas takes hold of the cables and prepares to attach them to the terminals. Bella O'Hara is hysterical. John yells up the hill.

JOHN O'HARA
What are you doing boy?

Edmund holds up the cables and turns to his audience.

THOMAS SHEPPARD
I am bringing Edmund back to us! I have researched the science and the miracle of life that is in the electricity! Edmund is going to be with us again in just a few moments time! Stay right there!

The police officer and John look at each other sharply and then run toward Thomas, as he turns and places the cables upon the terminals.

There is a loud crack. Electrical arcing and cracking makes a blinding and deafening light show. The water where Edmund's body lays is boiling and steaming and splashing uncontrollably. All the while electricity flows through Thomas.

Edmund's legs move spasmodically and the body flops out of the water and out of the electrical current. Simultaneously, as Thomas placed the cables, his body becomes frozen as he is electrocuted and his body smokes briefly before he bursts into flame.

JOHN O'HARA
Jesus.

John, Bella and the police officer are silent. Staring at the burning body of Thomas.

BELLA O'HARA
Oh my God the smell.

JOHN O'HARA
Go send for his parents Peter.

POLICE OFFICER
Aye.

They are all obscured by smoke.

The smoke clears, Thomas is dead, now a smoking heap of charcoal with knickers and an Irish cap.

Edmund is standing hunched over Thomas's charred body, staring at him, then stands erect and turns to look piercingly at his parents.

The End.