

A Torn Mind Piece

Fred The Crawler

By deZtormmind | Sky Tesi
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597 Words

Fred lay on the stone floor, gripping the cold bars. His tongue slithered out and passed over the floor's scratches. He didn't intend to stand up today. Another day would pass as he lay sunken into the floor, wishing it would give and let him drop through.

The jingle of keys approached his row. He knew it was too early for the guard. Ten years of routine made him notice the obscure. He was sure.

"Today's your day, Fred," the guard said.

Fred didn't lift his eyes. His tongue slithered out again.

"Watch out, boy."

The guard twisted his key and slid the bars to the side. Fred didn't want the bars to open. He already missed gripping the steel. He was brought to his feet, but wouldn't stand on his own volition. His feet dangled on the floor. He watched them brush back and forth, so unlike human limbs. The guard lifted Fred's chin to speak to him. Fred had large, innocent eyes. His puzzled look made the guard guffaw.

"We're headed to the field. Suppose you ain't heard of the coffin drag."

Fred's mouth didn't move. He had no need to speak for a long time. Now wasn't the time to screech an unintelligible sound that would come from his throat.

Fred was dragged out the exit and into the blinding sun. It seared his vision white. He could make out the silhouette of the prison walls in the far distance. It would take miles for anyone to walk to reach.

“I’m gonna tie this rope around you, Fred. It’s for your own safety that you don’t take it off. We’ll lower you down, and use it to bring you up afterwards.”

Fred didn’t let the words penetrate his skull. He watched the rope be tied around his waist.

“Grave 0074. This’ll be you, Fred.”

An angled narrow hole was below his dangling feet. The guard dropped him to the dirt. He looked down the hole, but could only see black.

“Go on, Fred.”

He crawled forward on his forearms. He fit his head and his left arm inside. His right shoulder stuck out too far. He grabbed the dirt and yanked himself through. The shoulder popped. He pulled his feet into the hole and steadily climbed downward. The earth grew colder and wetter in his descent. Bugs crawled around his back and across his eyes. His fingers were bleeding from the abrasion.

A hundred feet down, Fred’s hands felt a wooden surface. He smoothed his hand across the texture and was sure it was the coffin. He squirmed inside of it and slid the top as closed as possible. He absentmindedly tugged the rope. The coffin slowly accelerated. It bumped along the rocky soil. As the speed increased, it sent him sliding towards his feet. The coffin began cracking, and dirt was flying inward. Beetles entered the coffin and swarm to his flesh. Pinpricks covered his body. He could feel his eyelids being tugged. His nostrils were filling with spiders and his gums with other crawlers. Air was quickly running out. His stomach pumped up and

down in panic. He refused to swallow the critters. Vomit spilled out his nose and mouth, flooding some of the bugs back into the coffin. The dirt weighed the coffin down tremendously, making it creak and splinter. It broke apart and tore through the rope. His body ground against the dirt, and came to a halt. He lay folded grotesquely. The blood running out of his pores warmed him like a bath until he could feel no more.