

THE RITE OF ROSEMARY

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Based on the short story "DEADWOOD"
by Sarah Scanlan

Draft dated 23/05/2014

1 EXT. HARROW WOODS - EARLY EVENING

1

A thick wood of tall and foreboding oak trees. A constant mist swirls around. The sound of a church bell chiming in a nearby town breaks the silence for a few moments, then all is quiet again.

Underneath the massive trees - lies something small and gleaming. The sparkling object is a ring. It shines brightly on the hand of a young woman. Her body is lifeless upon the wet ground.

The woman's face is smooth, with perfect features like a china doll. Her dress is stained with dirt. Her still feet show chipped coloured nails of bright turquoise. Her radiant golden hair is matted in crimson, a congealed and drying mess of blood, bone and grey matter surrounds her head.

In the middle of the woman's chest is a cut in the yellow fabric she wears. Underneath is a neatly sliced incision, which has been sewn back together.

2 EXT. HARROW WOODS - EARLY EVENING

2

There is movement. The sharp noise of leaves shuffling and cracking. Feet running. A tall and muscular man in his 40s, JACK, runs out of a woodland onto a road. His skin is scarred and rough. His clothes are dirty and his shoes have been badly scuffed.

Up ahead, he sees a cars headlights driving towards him. Quickly, he jumps into the bushes and watches as the car passes.

After all is clear, he clambers out of the bush slowly and continues to walk down the road. He briefly checks his watch as he continues to walk. It reads 6:07pm. Ahead of him he can see lights from the town.

Jack stops next to a sign at the side of the road. It reads: WELCOME TO GAUNTS. HAVE A PLEASANT STAY.

Jack looks down at himself, suddenly realising the state of himself. He zips up his brown leather jacket, hiding the flecks of blood on his shirt. He runs on.

3 EXT. STATELY HOME - EARLY EVENING

3

There are three knocks. CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD, a short and pleasant woman with large eyes stands at the doorway of an amazing looking house in the countryside. There is no answer. She knocks again. Nothing. Looking through the window, it's clear that nobody is in.

Stepping away and walking around the house, she comes to an incredible looking garden. Not saying anything, she takes a moment to breath the fresh air and admire the view.

Then, beginning to walk down the path, she sees a small cabin through the woodlands in the background. A light appears to be on inside. Treading carefully through the ever bumpier path, she walks towards it.

4 EXT. THOMAS'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

4

Constable Merrifield comes out in a clearing. A small little river stands between her and a creepy looking wooden cabin, mostly hidden by the overgrown trees.

She hears a snap behind her and turns quickly. A hunched over elderly man comes out from the side of the cabin. He is surprised to see a policewoman facing him.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD
(holding out I.D. card)
Evening sir, I'm Constable
Merrifield.

Thomas looks a little taken back.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD (CONT'D)
Can I take your name, sir?

He walks towards her - old, frail and confused.

THOMAS
(stuttering)
Of course, it's Thomas Wyatt.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD
Do you live on the premises, sir?

THOMAS
I'm just the gardener. I take
refuge in this little cabin. It may
not be much, but it's home.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD
Not a problem. Sorry to disturb you
at this time sir, but I'm sure
you've heard the news about the
manhunt currently under progress in
the county?

THOMAS
Only what I heard on the local
radio.
(beat)
I don't have any close neighbours
to talk to, living so far out. Why?

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD

We're requesting for everyone to stay inside and keep safe at this stage until the man is found. He was last seen fleeing to Gaunts.

THOMAS

Oh. I was going to walk my dog, Defa, down in Harrow Woods tomorrow morning like I always do.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD

I've been asking residents of the area if they've noticed anything to raise your suspicions recently, missing items perhaps, or unusual behaviour?

The policewoman pulls out a pad and awaits Thomas's reply.

THOMAS

(shaking head)

No. Nothing that I can think of.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD

Do you live here in this... cabin... alone, Mr Wyatt?

THOMAS

Yes. My wife passed away a long time ago. It's just me and Defa now.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD

Well, if you do hear of anything, please contact me on this number.

The Constable hands Thomas her card. He looks at it then smiles softly.

CONSTABLE MERRIFIELD (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time.

The policewoman smiles back at him. She turns on the spot and walks away. Thomas watches her leave then heads to the cabin.

5 INT. THOMAS'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

5

As he enters, Thomas makes sure to bolt the door behind him. Taking a deep breath, he reads the officer's card. As he screws it up, he hears a noise behind him. He turns.

Stood in front of him is Jack, filthy from running through the woods.

THOMAS

(shocked)

What is this? Weeks go by and nothing and then everybody turns up.

JACK

Who else has been here?

THOMAS

Why don't you come in?

JACK

Who else?

THOMAS

A woman came, and then the Police, and now you.

(beat)

Aren't you even going to say hello?

JACK

(demanding)

The police? What did they want?

THOMAS

Not much.

JACK

Did they mention me?

THOMAS

Why *would* they mention you? What have you done, Jack?

JACK

(ignoring the questions)

Was the woman looking for me?

THOMAS

No. She was looking for me, as I do live here.

Thomas is clearly starting to lose his patience with Jack's barrage of question.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Why would she be looking for you anyway? You haven't lived here for twenty five years. I'm surprised I recognise you.

JACK

I'm meeting someone here. Lotti. That's all you need to know.

THOMAS

In trouble, are you? What a surprise, Jack.

Jack looks around the cold cabin. A shiver runs down his spine. It is small. A rustic armchair looks over a small, old television. A log burner smoulders warmly in the centre of the wall, bathing the cabin in a menacing glow. Pasted all over the walls are various crosses, figures of Christ and other religious items. Jack looks distressed, memories filling his head with dark thoughts.

JACK

Why are you living in this dreadful place? What's wrong with the house?

THOMAS

Too big for just me when you all left. I stay in here now. I prefer it anyway. It's my own.
(beat)
Coffee?

JACK

Haven't you got anything stronger?

THOMAS

That bad, is it?

JACK

Jesus, what is that smell?

THOMAS

Do not take the Lord's name in vein, boy!
(beat)
It's rosemary.

Jack sees the room laced with rosemary twigs, dressed like holly at Christmas. Thomas wanders over and settles down into his armchair.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Rosemary is the herb of purification. Cleansing. Spiritual, medicinal.
(beat)
Do you know how it got it's name?
Rosemary?

Jack doesn't answer, not bothered.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It is and was the "Rose of Mary".
Named in honour of the sacrifice
Mary made for all of us.

JACK
(ignoring him)
You're positive the Police aren't
looking for me?

THOMAS
They know nothing about you.

JACK
(demanding)
What about Lotti? Did they mention
her?

THOMAS
No, they didn't. What's going on
Jack?

JACK
It's none of your concern.

THOMAS
It is when you turn up after all
these years and decide to stay in
my house.

JACK
I never said I was staying.

Jack stares at Thomas for a long moment, then finally decides
to enlighten him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Something... happened.
(beat)
It's... pretty complicated.

THOMAS
Who is this Lotti anyway?

JACK
A friend.

THOMAS
A friend? Ha. What are you running
from Jack? Or should I say who? It
must be bad for you to crawl back
here with no warning. If this Lotti
is going to become part of the
family, then I think I need to
know.

JACK
(long beat)
She's pregnant... with my child.
Her husband didn't take kindly to
the news.

Thomas doesn't react to this.

JACK (CONT'D)

I told her to meet me here. It was the... most private... place I could think of, for us to get away.

(beat)

I thought at least you'd still be living in the family house. Not this old shack.

(beat)

But don't worry - as soon as she arrives we'll be gone.

(beat)

Wouldn't want to stay in this place longer than a day... I might catch something.

Jack sneers with this comment. Thomas calmly replies.

THOMAS

The house was good enough for your Mother, Jack.

JACK

(snapping back)

You're not living in the house anymore though, are you?

Jack looks at him, saying nothing.

THOMAS

Well, if you ask me, it all doesn't sound like that much of a big deal.

Thomas sits, a small smile on his face, staring at his son who won't answer him. To his surprise, Jack walks forward and grabs his arm violently - pulling him out of the chair.

JACK

Don't think I won't hurt you old man.

(beat)

I've changed my name... my appearance... my whole background is a lie because I don't want anything to do with you. There's nothing connecting you and me anymore. You're no Father to me; you're just a bed for the night.

(beat)

In the morning Lotti and I will be gone, for good.

The two men stare at each other for a long time.

THOMAS

Why did you even bother coming here?

JACK
I just told you.

Thomas stands and begins walking towards Jack.

THOMAS
For somewhere to stay... but you could've gone anywhere. A hotel, a B&B. You could've even hidden in a field - there's plenty of them. But you didn't. You chose to come back here, to this house. Why?

Jack seems unable to answer. He starts to stutter.

JACK
I suppose I wanted to--

THOMAS
(interrupting)
To see what life you left behind?
To see what life you could have had?
(beat)
To see if I was still alive?

JACK
I knew this would happen... you can't help it, can you?
(beat)
You love to play these mind games. I was stupid to even think you could've changed.

Jack starts to remember why he had left in the first place, fear striking him. He feels like a child again.

THOMAS
Come on Jack, I know that if you had the opportunity you would have got rid of me a long time ago. Is that why you came back? To finish it?

JACK
Yeah, alright. It's true. If I had the opportunity I would have loved that. But that's not why I came back. I came back because I thought we could try again.
(beat)
I came back because... I'm going to be a Father. I was willing to forget the past. But, I see now, how rotten you really are.

Jack stands tall and whispers straight into his Father's face. His teeth are clenched from anger.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You're nothing but dead wood to me.

Thomas gives Jack a stare that instantly brings back a stream of memories. Jack feels the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. He steps back again from his Father. Thomas stands up fully, his hunch cracking away and revealing his far taller stature.

THOMAS
 It's good to see you, boy. I've often thought about you. I knew you would come back one day.

Thomas grins menacingly, his eyes glinting. Jack looks at his Father incredulously.

JACK
 Well get a good look, Dad. This'll be your last time.

Jack stands down. Thomas passes him slowly heading to the door.

THOMAS
 I'm going to find where the dog has got to.

The sound of the door closing triggers a sudden flashback.

6 EXT. STATELY GARDEN - DAY (FLASHBACK) 6

The picture is misty and black and white. Jack is now a child. He runs around in the stunning stately garden alone. He holds a stick in his hand, swinging it around like a sword, making noises.

THOMAS (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Jack?

Instantly scared, Jack begins to run. He hides behind a tree. He cowers on the floor. From Jack's point of view, he sees his Father's legs walk around the garden, looking for him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (increasingly angry)
 Where are you boy?

Jack closes his eyes, and wishes for everything to go away.

7 INT. THOMAS'S CABIN - EARLY EVENING 7

Jack snaps back to reality. Quickly, reaching into his pocket, Jack pulls out his mobile phone.

He flicks through the contacts and finds Lotti's name. Jack clicks CALL. To his surprise, he starts to hear a phone ringing from outside.

8 EXT. THOMAS'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS 8

Jack leaves the cabin swiftly, starting to panic. He listens to the dead silence of his surroundings - the phone rings again. Jack follows the sound. It leads him to the side of the cabin. The colour drains out of his face as he sees a large, locked wooden door in front of him.

9 INT. STATELY GARDEN (FLASHBACK) 9

Jack suddenly falls back into his memory. Still cowering behind the tree, he still has his eyes closed. A hand suddenly grabs him and pulls him out of his hiding place.

THOMAS

I warned you, Jack!

YOUNG JACK

No, Dad! Please!

The Father drags the struggling young boy out of the garden and into the woods. He throws him into the storage room.

YOUNG JACK (CONT'D)

(screaming hysterically)

No! PLEASE! NO!

THOMAS

Some dark time for you to think about your sins.

The doors slams shut and the boy is trapped in the darkness.

10 EXT. THOMAS'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS 10

Jack pulls the chain away from the door and opens it slowly. It takes his eyes a moment to adjust to the darkness. Glowing softly on a shelf is Lotti's phone.

Jack cancels the call on his phone, filling the shed with an eerie quiet atmosphere. Jack stands in the silence for what seems like an eternity, staring at both the mobiles.

Jack then notices something else in the dark of the storage room. He wanders over slowly.

JACK

...Defa?

Their old dog stands, stuffed in the centre of the shed, a **rotting taxidermy piece.**

Suddenly - Thomas THUMPS his son round the back of the head with a small bat. Jack falls to the ground, mumbling incomprehensible random words, his head bleeding profusely. His Father bends over and stares down at him.

THOMAS

(sinister)

You took your time. I didn't think you were going to find it.

Thomas's yellow smile is the last thing Jack sees before Thomas kicks him with his booted foot.

11

EXT. STATELY GARDEN - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

11

Thomas walks through his large garden, a lake glistening in the morning sun. He then stops. A beautiful young woman is standing in front of him - her blonde hair reflecting in the sunlight.

THOMAS

Who are you, my dear?

LOTTI

Oh, hello. I'm Lotti...

He smiles through yellow teeth at her. Still hunched over, he walks slowly over to her.

THOMAS

And what can I do for you, Lotti?

LOTTI

(nervous)

Sorry - no one was in. I'm looking for Jack. Is he here?

Thomas freezes for a moment as his heart skips a beat. He keeps a straight face though.

THOMAS

Jack? No, no. He's not here. I'm sure he will be soon though if you're waiting for him. Cup of tea?

Lotti shakes her head with a small smile. She turns back and looks over the stunning lake and garden.

LOTTI

Do you live here? It's beautiful.

THOMAS

Thank you, dear. I do. It takes a lot of work to make it look this nice all year round. A man has to have hobbies.

Lotti puts her hand on her very slight baby bump. Thomas looks at her, something dark in his eyes.

LOTTI

I should go. I'll come back later.

Lotti begins to walk away. Behind her, Thomas starts to follow. Seeing this, her pace quickens. So does his. She starts to run - but he kicks out her leg, knocking her to the floor. Lotti turns, kicking and scratching at Thomas as he holds her to the floor - but it is to no end. He reaches over and grabs a rock, bringing it down on her.

12

EXT. HARROW WOODS - NIGHT

12

The night is now pitch black. Thomas stands in the woods next to a large lake. He takes sips from his hip flask to keep him warm in the cold air of night.

Thomas walks across icy grass, making it crunch like broken glass. He walks up to Jack's body, which has been slumped nearby. A creepy smile of violent success creeps across the old man's face. He strokes Defa, who still stands stuffed nearby. A walking lead round the dead dogs neck.

Thomas stands over Jack's body and pulls out a small craft knife and a beaten up old tin. Bending down to his unconscious son, he places the tin nearby on the ground. Thomas opens up his son's jacket and is surprised by what he finds. He stares down at the blood stains across his son's shirt.

THOMAS

Maybe we're more alike than I
thought, Jack...

(beat)

No wonder they're after you...

Thomas begins to unbutton his son's dirty shirt. Looking at the chest underneath, he puts his blade to the skin.

This pain triggers Jack's eyes to burst open. His son screams out in pain. Jack sits bolt up right and tries to focus on the image in front of him. Thomas falls back, dropping the knife in shock. Jack feels across his chest with his hands. He comes to the incision, and the blood flowing from it.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I've waited a long time for this,
Jack.

SUDDENLY, as fast as lightning, Jack is hit round the face with the spade his Father used to dig the grave. Blood and teeth shoot out from his mouth with force. Jack stays upright, barely conscious.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I won't let you ruin it for me.

Thomas watches, wondering if his son is dead. Jack gurgles blood quietly, he is still alive.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I've got to give her credit where credit is due. Lotti put up far more of a fight than you did. Not how I often spend my Thursday mornings.

Thomas searches the grass for his knife. It is nowhere to be seen. Giving up, he crawls over next to his son. He reaches over and picks the rusted tin up off the ground. Prizing the lid off carefully, he looks inside.

There are a few sprigs of rosemary, a needle and thread and a single pale maggot. Thomas watches Jack, drifting in and out of consciousness.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You know Jack, when I look at you, all I see is dirt and grime and bad.

(beat)

I know you can hear me.

Thomas kicks Jack's leg, but there is no response.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

As soon as you were born, I hated you.

(beat)

You see, you're not my son Jack... you never were. Your cheating whore Mother will be burning in hell for the sins she committed in the life God gave her. You need to be purified. Both of you.

Thomas stares down at Jack, and then focuses on the rosemary in his fingers. He pinches at the herb, smelling his fingers.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's a shame about Charlotte though, I think I would've liked her.

Lotti is sprawled out on the jetty, bathed in beautiful sunlight. Her mouth is covered with a gag. She sobs into it.

THOMAS (V.O.)

She was feisty. If you had arrived before her... who knows, then things may have been different.

Thomas makes a small incision through Lotti's yellow shirt. She screams out in muffled pain.

14 EXT. HARROW WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK) 14

Thomas drags Lotti's dead body through the woods, by her feet. Her shoes come off and are left amongst the dirty leaves and twigs.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I did what I could for her, but her spirit was too decayed, and left before I finished the rite.

Thomas stops and leaves her where she lies - dead, looking up to the sky. He then sees Constable Merrifield through the trees and starts to wander over.

15 EXT. HARROW WOODS - NIGHT 15

Thomas looks up to the dark night sky.

THOMAS

She's in the Lord's hands now.

Thomas bends down and violently pushes the rosemary into the incision on his son's chest. Warm blood flows over Thomas's fingers and down Jack's body as he pushes it ever deeper.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You'll need this. It will cleanse your soul.

Thomas takes the maggot from the tin. He watches as it writhes and wriggles in his fingers.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

This little terror will eat away all of your evils. They are the natural healers of the Earth. Removing only decay and leaving everything that is pure behind. I don't know why people fear them so.
(beat)
He's hungry.

Violently, Thomas pushes the maggot into the hole in Jack's chest. Thomas then starts to sew the wound up - sealing the contents inside. Jack twitches and moans on the floor, unable to do anything.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Don't worry Jack, we're nearly there. The baptism is the final stage and then you can let go.

Thomas stands elegantly, looking at his work. The corner of his mouth turns to a grin. He then pulls a bible out his pocket, opens it on a bookmarked page and begins to read.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;
Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,
But with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Thomas loads Jack onto a rowing boat by the side of the lake, and casting off. He paddles slowly towards the middle. The moonlight gives the lake a haunting, sinister yet pretty glimmer.

THOMAS (V.O.)

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.
Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Jack's eyes flicker open. He remembers his time with Lotti. Beautiful images haunt his memories, happiness and love.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,
For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

Thomas stops in the middle of the lake. He wraps Jack up in a white shawl, padding the inside with a few bricks. Only his face remains showing at this point.

THOMAS (V.O.)

For, all flesh is like grass, and
all its glory like the flower of
grass. The grass withers, and the
flower falls off,
But the word of the Lord endures
forever.

Thomas looks over Jack, smiling softly as a Father would to his son.

THOMAS

By the way, Jack... it was a boy.
Sleep tight.

Jack's eyes burst open as he realises his own demise suddenly... but it is too late. Thomas rolls Jack over the side of the boat. The bricks pull Jack in the white shoal down to the depths of the water, into the crushing darkness.