

Doppelganger
by
James Hyde

The mailman's blood-drenched, eviscerated body lay across the front porch steps like a rag doll torn apart by a vicious child. Through the peephole, Reggie could see that his evil twin had eaten most of the cadaver. Reggie was going to call nine-one-one, but he thought that the authorities would not take kindly to a fifteen-year-old kid calling in and saying that his evil zombie twin was eating people.

After seeing the body, Reggie ran up the stairs, climbed into his bed, and pulled the covers over his head. He could have run out the back door, but he was afraid to go outside. Maybe if he hid, the thing would just go away.

Earlier he had heard a commotion, and had looked out his bedroom window to see his evil twin attacking the mailman. He stifled a scream and ran to his bed. Reggie hid under his comforter for a long time. When it was quiet, he had gone downstairs and seen the aftermath of the thing's attack. Then, he ran up the stairs and got into his bed again.

Now Reggie's body was shivering involuntarily under the covers, even though he was afraid to move.

The doorbell rang.

“Oh, crap, oh crap!” Reggie said. Then there was a pounding on the door.

“Let me in Puke-face!” The voice was loud and braying. It was Reggie's friend, Jordan.

His curiosity and concern caused him to shake off his paralysis and run for the stairs. Reggie thought that his house looked like a cross between an art museum and a junkyard. There were perfectly good paintings and sculptures next to all the objects of what Reggie thought of as junk, which his mother called modern art. There was an elephant made out of aluminum cans next to the staircase that Reggie always almost knocked over every time he came down the stairs. He went from upstairs, where the bedrooms were, down the stairs, through the artfully decorated living room, through the foyer, and to the front door. He got to the front door and looked through the peephole. Jordan gave him the finger.

The mailman was gone. Had it just been a daydream, or a hallucination?

Reggie threw open the door and pulled his short and chubby friend inside. It was nice and cool in Reggie's house. It was hotter than Hell outside.

"Hey, hands off the merchandise!" Jordan dusted himself off as Reggie slammed the door shut and locked it.

"What's wrong with you, Home-skilllet?" Jordan said as he screwed up his face in surprise. "Did you skin a cat on the front porch?"

The blood was still there. He wasn't crazy. He didn't know what to say about the blood, so Reggie just ignored the question.

"C-come up to my room and I'll tell you all about it."

"O-okay," Jordan replied.

They went up to Reggie's room. Rock and horror posters covered the walls, with a few pin-up girls added in. Jordan turned on Reggie's stereo. Swedish Death Metal came from the speakers.

Now, Reggie was reclining on his bed and Jordan was sitting on a bean bag chair in the corner.

“So tell me what the heck's going on.” Jordan said.

Before Reggie got the chance, the doorbell rang. Jordan ran down the stairs and went to the front door, not giving Reggie a chance to stop him as he followed his friend.

When they got to the door, Jordan looked out the peephole.

“Holy Crap!” Jordan said. Reggie knew what his friend had seen. He felt like he was no longer living in reality. He felt dizzy as he thought he was in some bizarre place where the impossible was real. “It's the other me, isn't it?”

Jordan looked at him as if Reggie had grown a tentacle out of the center of his forehead.

"What?" Jordan said.

Reggie looked out the peephole.

“It's the other me!” Reggie cried. The doorbell rang again.

“What the heck are you talking about?” Jordan said as he wrinkled up his face and shook his head.

“It's the other me, he's come back,” Reggie replied, gasping for air from running.

“The other you? You didn't say anything about that. Have you been smoking crack?”

Jordan looked out the peephole again.

“Son of a bitch!” Jordan said. “I didn't know you had a twin.”

“I don't,” Reggie replied frantically.

Jordan was shaking and staring wide-eyed at the door. He opened his mouth in a silent scream.

“Hey, let me in, dude,” the other Reggie said.

“Maybe someone stole your DNA and cloned you,” Jordan said frantically as he regained his voice.

Reggie shook his head.

“They would have had to have done it when I was a baby.”

“Oh yeah,” Jordan said, his face falling. “Maybe your parents never told you about your twin, or the hospital took him away for some experiment.”

“Let me in!” His evil twin yelled as he pounded on the door.

Reggie shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

“I don't know what to do,” Reggie One said.

Jordan grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him.

“Why didn't you say anything about it the first time you saw him?”

“I don't know! He must have done something to my mind!” Jordan let go of him and started pacing in a small circle.

“Open the door!” The other Reggie yelled.

“Maybe we should call the Police.” Jordan's face was so tightly clenched that he looked like he was trying to have a bowel movement.

“They'll think we're whack,” Reggie said, and started pacing in his own circle.

“Okay, you forced my hand!” The other Reggie said. The door flew open, barely missing Jordan and Reggie One, and chunks of splintered wood flew through the air.

“Son of a bitch!” Reggie One said. Jordan and he ran up the stairs. Jordan followed his friend into his father's office as Reggie One closed and locked the door, then made a beeline for a desk with a computer on it. He pulled aside the rug under the desk, revealing a floor safe.

“I found the combination one day,” Reggie said as he dialed numbers. The safe popped open, and Reggie dug down in it until he found a black box. He opened it and pulled out a revolver.

“Damn!” Jordan said as his eyes grew as big as tennis balls, “how did you know that was there?”

“I heard my dad talking to my mom about it one day when he didn't know I was listening,” Reggie said as his eyes narrowed down to slits of concentration.

Just then, the door to the office flew off its hinges. The other Reggie walked into the room. His eyes were glowing red. Jordan and Reggie One stood up from behind the desk.

“Wh—what do you want?” Reggie One said, shaking so hard he could barely talk.

“Your souls!” Reggie Two said, but the loud and chilling voice that came out of the creature's throat as if from a deep cavern sounded nothing like Reggie One ever had.

“Well you can't have them!” Reggie One said. Reggie Two advanced on the boys.

Reggie One leveled the revolver at his evil twin.

“G-get back, I'm warning you!”

“I'm not afraid of your mortal weapons!” Reggie Two said as he walked forward, “someone has opened the door to my dimension, and you are going to be the first sacrifices!”

Reggie One pulled the trigger. The sound of the gun firing was horrendously loud, and the backlash jerked Reggie One's body back and he almost fell over backwards. The shot blew the stocking cap off Evil Reggie's head.

There was a pair of horns under the cap.

“Crap, he's a freaking demon!” Jordan said. The demon smiled, showing sharp fangs, and continued to advance. Reggie One braced himself and fired again, again. It had no effect. Then

he fired the last three rounds into the demon's chest, emptying the revolver. The blast threw the demon back, and it fell to the ground. Jordan and Reggie walked up to him. The demon was bleeding, but just a little. Its blood was green. Its eyes were closed.

“Do you think it's dead?” Jordan asked.

“I don't know,” Reggie said.

They looked down at the demon.

Its eyes popped open.

Reggie dropped the empty gun, and Jordan and Reggie ran down the stairs and out of the house. They stopped when they got out to the street and looked back. The demon had not yet come out of the house.

“What do we do?” Reggie said, pleading with his friend between gasps of air.

“Let's go see Jesse; he might know what to do. Besides, maybe we could look it up on the Internet.”

Jordan's house was across town. Jesse's house was only a few doors down. They ran toward it. The structures were Ranch style, and all looked alike in this housing edition, except for the color. They got to Jesse's yellow house and Jordan leaned on the doorbell.

“Answer the door, dammit Jesse!” Jordan yelled. A few moments later the door opened a crack, and a kid about a year older than them with long scraggly hair and cola-bottle glasses peered out. Jesse was mainly their friend because he could drive them to the comic book store.

“Let us in, man!” Jordan said commandingly.

“I'm busy!” Jesse said, and began to close the door. Jordan stuck his foot in.

“This is an emergency!”

“But—“ Jesse said. Jordan shoved open the door, almost knocking Jesse down.

“Damn!” Jesse said as Jordan forced his way in, causing Jesse to drop a video game controller. “I was about to beat, ' Demons from Hell.' ”

“We've got a real demon for you to beat!” Jordan said.

Reggie looked outside before he came in and slammed the door.

“Still no sign of it!” Reggie said, out of breath. “The bullets slowed it down a little bit.”

“What the heck is going on?” Jesse asked, staring hard at Reggie.

“Something is after us!” Jordan blurted out with a frantic tone to his voice.

“What the heck are you talking about?” Jesse said in a voice that sounded as if he were going to lose it any second.

“A demon is after us!” Jordan said. Jesse stared hard at him.

“Hey, man,” Jesse said, “you know I'm not into the drug scene.”

“We haven't been doing drugs you numb nuts, we're serious.” Jordan said. Jesse stared at him again, even harder.

“A demon? You're fooling me. This is some sort of a joke because I'm into fantasy games.”

Jordan grabbed him by the shoulders.

“It's not a joke. It'll be here any sec—” Jordan stopped as he looked at Jesse's video screen.

“What level are you at on this game?”

“Level 666, where Antony fights his evil twin...”

“Evil twin!” Jordan and Reggie said in unison.

“Shut the game off!” Reggie cried. “It must be possessed!”

“But why did it come to your house instead of Jesse's?” Jordan asked.

“I don't know. Maybe that's where the dimensional doorway is,” Reggie said.

“I wonder if it has anything to do with the experiments my dad's doing in the basement.”

“Yeah, especially since the entrance and exit is outside the house.”

“Man!” Jesse said, “I...no way! You guys are pulling my leg.”

“You won't think so when it kills all three of us!” Jordan yelled at Jesse. He ran to the video game console and shut it off.

“Do you know how long it took me—” Jesse shouted before being cut off by Jordan.

“We're all going to die!” Jordan yelled.

“Wh-whoa! You're...You're really serious? It's coming here?” Jesse opened his eyes so wide that Reggie thought they were going to pop out of his head.

“Yes, dang it!” Jordan cried.

“I, oh, wow, I, uh. What does it look like?”

“It looks like Reggie, except it has horns. Bullets don't kill it. Its blood is green.” Jordan waved his hands in the air to denote a sense of urgency.

“It looks like Reggie?” Jesse asked.

“Yes!” Jordan said, his voice rising to a thin scream.

“Wow, oh, uh. A Doppelganger,” Jesse said, matter-of-factly.

“What's that?” Jordan asked him, his eyes wide in terror.

“A demon, an evil supernatural replica,” Jesse replied, staring hard at Jordan.

“What we need to know is,” Reggie said, still gasping and out of breath from the run over there, “do you know anything about dealing with a real live demon?”

“I, uh, well. You know I'm just into games. I, uh, do, however, have one real spell book. I mean, it's supposed to be real. It presents itself as if it's real, but I don't really believe in that

stuff. I just got it out of curiosity when I saw it at the thrift shop,” Jesse said as he headed for his bedroom.

“Let's look at it!” Jordan said. “It might be faster than looking it up on the Internet.” They made their way to Jesse's bedroom, which was a mess of computer equipment and gaming manuals. He dug through stacks of books while Reggie watched him with mounting anxiety; finally he pulled out a big, black, leather-bound book.

The Dark Grimoire.

“Here it is,” Jesse said, brandishing it at Jordan and Reggie

“Look for a spell on banishing doppelgangers,” Jordan said. Jesse unclasped the cover, then began thumbing through the book.

“I should see if it's coming,” Jordan said.

“Go. Be careful,” Reggie said. Jordan left the room.

“Here it is,” Jesse said, “How to banish doppelgangers. Uh, there's more than one spell.” Jesse was turning pages frantically. “Let's see. There are eighteen spells.”

“Well hurry and pick one! Before it gets here.”

“Okay, okay. Here's one that doesn't require any special objects. All it says you need is fire and a righteous heart. The directions are in rhyming verse. ' To make a demon from hell depart, you must invoke this dark art, while the spell to recite, you start, blow it away by lighting your ...' “the last word is smudged.”

Jordan rushed into the room.

“He's coming! He's about a block away!” Jordan screamed, in full panic mode now.

“Fart!” Reggie yelled.

“What?” Jesse and Jordan both asked, sounding surprised and perturbed.

“It rhymes. Blow it away by lighting your fart.”

Jesse looked at him with an expression that said he didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

“That couldn't be....” Jesse said.

“It's all we've got,” Reggie said, in a calm, take-charge voice. “Show me the spell you're supposed to say while you do it. Do you have a lighter?”

“Sure, I use it to light candles, but—”

“Give me the book and the lighter, now!”

“What the heck is going on?” Jordan asked.

The front door crashed open.

“Y-you mean,” Jesse said, “you're actually going to—.”

Reggie ran out into the living room, Jordan and Jesse behind him.

The demon stood there, a little crusted green blood on its shirt, its eyes glowing fiercely red like twin death orbs, its huge jagged teeth glinting wickedly as yellow drool poured out of its mouth.

“I'm going to kill you all and take your souls!” The demon shrieked.

“Fiend from Hell!” Reggie yelled. “Hear my spell: I shall send you down the deepest well! I invoke the light, your evil to quell. With this flame, I sound your death knell, and send you to your prison cell!”

The demon laughed at him. Reggie turned around and dropped his drawers. He held the lighter to his anus, and called forth his gas.

Nothing happened.

“Oh crap, we're in for it.” Jordan said.

“Pathetic mortal!” The demon said. “For this affront, I shall make your suffering all the more exquisite.”

The demon advanced on them. *Oh no!* Reggie thought. *We’re all going to die!*

Reggie didn't give up. He thought about all that was good, fighting against all that was evil.

He felt a stirring within his bowels. All of a sudden, he felt a great weight in his gut; the most tremendous pressure he had ever felt.

He released it.

A great cloud erupted from within him. A huge orange fireball shot out, and enveloped the demon. The beast screamed as the fire ravaged its flesh, the blood-curdling yells making an indelible mark upon all three of the boy's souls. Then the fire evaporated and the demon disappeared, leaving behind only the smell of brimstone.

Reggie pulled up his pants and all three of the boys stared in stunned shock at the place where the demon had been. Then Jordan grabbed the video game and threw it in the fireplace.

“That was the craziest crap I've ever seen!” Jesse said.

“That goes without saying,” Reggie replied. “Hey, I wonder what happened to our mail?”

“Who'd even have thought you could get rid of a demon that way?” Jesse said.

“Well, who's up for a pizza?” Reggie said.

“I'm game,” Jordan said. “From now on I'm going to eat all the gassy foods I can. You never know when a passing wind might come in handy.”

The End

Bio: James Hyde is a writer from Norman, OK, who attended O.U. where he obtained a Professional Writing degree. He belongs to The Dorsal Fin Society writer's critique group. Some

of his favorite writers are H.P. Lovecraft, Dean Koontz and Stephen King. His favorite genres include Suspense, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, and Humor.