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The Silence

Oil paint, Canvas, Clay, Lamb Hide

Through my research, I aim to find the symbols and subjects that make people feel the most fear and incorporate those into my paintings and sculptures to make people uncomfortable. In this work, I wrote a creative writing piece that I want viewers to read while they view the art. I was extremely inspired by oil painter Dragan Bibin, who in one of his series of paintings uses dread and darkness to inspire extremely unsettling emotions from his viewers. I used some symbols from these paintings as well as my research such as animals, organs, and eyes, to inspire such feelings in my viewers. I wanted to give my audience the choice of viewing these pieces, as I believe that in this modern era, far too many people are exposed to fear without any proper warning. I want people to make the choice to make themselves uncomfortable, and I want them to ask themselves, why or why didn't I do this? I wanted to give the readers this choice also because I feel that with the internet being so unfiltered, so many children are now exposed to horrific things younger. I think that this is quite intriguing as it might lead someone from a younger overexposed generation to be more likely to expose themselves to this horror. Overall, I wanted to capture fear in my work, and allow people to choose whether or not to make themselves feel that fear.

The Silence Answered



Ollie H.

The Oxbow School

OS47

Author's Note: "The Silence Answered" Is a story I wrote to inspire horror and fear as part of my final project on fear exposure. This story is creative writing made to inspire feelings of fear and unease, as to ask why people may or may not expose themselves to this. This story does include sensitive content, such as Gore, Death, and Body Horror. If you are sensitive to these things to an extreme level, I would recommend against reading this story. I give these content warnings so that you may actively read this piece at your own risk and, I want to purposefully give you the choice to consume this media.

You have been struggling lately. You lost your job recently, and it seems no one is looking for new hires. You have barely been able to feed yourself and are living out of your car while you desperately search for jobs. You've heard from some friends that home invasion is quite easy to accomplish in the area you live in, and despite all of your morals, you decide to try robbing a house. Although you would rather not have to do this, you've decided that this is the only option left that isn't inherently violent. You are under the impression that this home you are on your way to steal from belongs to Greg Simon, an older man who is notoriously rich. You chose Greg, as you figured it wouldn't be a big loss to him to be missing some of his valuables. You've heard from friends that Greg Simon is an older man with a very ornate house full of valuable items that would be easy to resell. As you approach the beautiful home you notice that on the hill leading up to the front lawn there are a multitude of footprints in the mud. These footprints vary in size and style, but other than one specific footprint, they only lead into the house. As you survey the outside of the house, you see a padlocked hatch on the right side of it. Just past the house in the distance, there are groups of livestock, some sheep look oddly colored.

As you approach the house further, you take notice of more and more. You look around the front door with caution and see that the security camera has been broken and is hanging by the wires. You enter the house with a suspicious amount of ease, despite the front door seeming quite secure. Immediately as you pass the threshold a horrendous smell assaults your nose. You chose to ignore it and move on, you truly cannot be bothered right now, and it is easy to assume that because of Greg's age, this smell is from a lack of upkeep on the house. As you enter the living room you hurriedly stuff all of the valuables you can find in your satchel, vases, picture frames, and any pieces of jewelry. You suddenly hear a slight creaking upstairs, but it is slow. You pause for a moment and the creaking ceases. This pause, however, allows you to assess the living room, and as you do you notice that there are clothes and shoes placed in nice neat piles across from you. They are all different sizes and styles, which confuses you slightly. You conclude that these clothes are eventually to be donated to Goodwill, as there are more things labeled illegibly in the corner in bags, which you can only assume are also clothes.

As you observe the living room further, you notice something quite interesting. In the right corner of the room, there is a pile of lampshades. One of the only things in the living room not covered in cobwebs, you assume it must be a prized collection of sorts. In reality, though, there isn't much prized about it. Some lampshades are stained darkly, and some are entirely torn apart as if ripped by extreme force. Greg Simon is rumored to be quite the eccentric person. He made a fortune as a young man selling insurance and has been spending money almost carelessly on material things since then. The clothes to be donated to the thrift store surprises you, you'd never imagine that from his reputation he would be a very charitable person. After another once-over of the room, you decide to move on to his dining room and kitchen, as you've emptied all of the valuables out of the living room. Through the hallway you assume leads to the dining room you

see the only closed door you have encountered so far in the house. You conclude that this is the basement of the house, although you find it odd that there are locks practically engulfing the door. Just under there is a small build-up of a brownish liquid. You guess it is sewage buildup and probably the same reason for the potent stench that has cast itself throughout the whole house.

Regardless of the reasoning, again, you can't be bothered, you need to continue through the house and get out as quickly as possible. You quickly make your way to the kitchen, opening all the cabinets in an attempt to find as much fine china and silverware as you possibly can. Something begins to bother you as you explore the kitchen; not a single piece of cutlery and not one plate appears to have been touched recently. All are plagued by cobwebs and look extremely old and unpolished. The only thing that shows any recent sign of use is the knife block, completely emptied. These discoveries make you a bit sad. It's been said that Greg Simon has become feeble with age, so with the context given you conclude that he must be unable to care for himself. You can't help but begin to feel sorry for this old man, and you begin to feel quite guilty. Just as you are closing the final cabinet in the kitchen, a lone plate flies off of the counter, and shatters loudly, breaking the inner monologue in your head.

“Fuck!” You whisper-scream into the emptiness

“...” The silence answers.

You pause, standing completely still, waiting for something, anything.

Years seem to have passed, and absolutely no noise. This puzzles you. Are you alone? You check the clock, 3:09 in the morning. Is Greg a heavy sleeper? Or perhaps you are quite lucky and

tonight Gregory has chosen not to be in his home? You stand in the kitchen, contemplating for a very long time. Slowly, you pick yourself up to continue and make your way to the dining room.

Your conscience continues to plague you. This old man very clearly lives a lonely life, and this is only further proven by the state of the dining room. Only the wooden chair at the head of the table appears to have sustained any use recently, with a small indentation of a nameplate that looks as though it has been recently removed. The only chair beside that one that isn't plagued by cobwebs is only slightly pulled out and has a soft red cushion, scattered with stains. Oddly enough, the dining room is hardly eccentric compared to the rest of the house, in fact, quite the opposite. The table is scratched and covered in splotches of unidentifiable liquid, and the centerpiece of the table appears to have been set to the side, the flowers completely wilted, almost decomposing. You go over to the flowers, curious as to if they are the cause of the scent emanating throughout the house, but on your way over you trip over something tucked under the carpet. Terrified that you will fall and make a sound, you catch yourself on the nearby bureau. Looking behind you, you observe a small form that appears to be tucked under the rug. You lift up the rug to find a small mouse, you go to inspect it further.

“Oh my god,” You say, horrified.

“...” The silence answers.

You pick it up to find the small mouse, nibbling on a bloodied human finger, bone exposed. You drop the mouse and the finger and it lands with a small thud, and as the mouse skitters away the floorboards ring with a hollow sound. The noise causes you to grow suspicious and you inspect the floor further. You notice a couple of corroded boards and decide to inspect it, curious if there are any valuables under the floor.

You tear up the wooden floorboards with ease, and at the mere sight of what's underneath, you feel bile begin to build in your mouth. Tens, maybe hundreds of small mice greet you below the floorboards, gnawing what at a brief glance appears to be human remains. You don't spare a moment to look at them further, hurriedly putting the floorboards back in their place. You stand in shock for a moment, asking yourself, do I bother going further? You have already seen things beyond your comprehension, even just with a quick glance under those wooden planks, Should you continue?

You carry on. Despite everything in your brain telling you to stop, you continue onwards into the upstairs area of the home.

As you continue up the stairs, the smell only intensifies. You keep thinking you have found the source of it, only to find it is stronger somewhere else. As you scale the staircase you notice that from this point onwards none of the picture frames seem to have "normal" pictures in them. The only pictures you see are either completely unidentifiable or very clearly non-human figures. You move on, and once you reach the top of the staircase, the smell almost entirely overwhelms all of your senses. You make your way through the hallway upstairs, surveying each individual room, only to find that each is practically barren. You only find very few valuables, and after searching nearly every room, you finally approach the room in which the smell is most potent. All of your instincts are begging you not to enter, but you feel as though you haven't collected enough of significant value. Collecting your thoughts and your spirits, you open the door to the final room upstairs.

Upon entering the room, the smell is so intense that you can hardly see, and after clearing your vision, you nearly vomit at the sight before you.

“No no no no no,” You start crying.

“...” The silence answers

Laying before you in the master bed is the butchered body of Greg Simon. Absolutely gripped by fear, you stand there, staring. His organs are almost completely outside his body, his long and short intestines twisted together like a soft pretzel. His face is completely skinned, and the only way you are able to identify his name is the nameplate that is missing from the dining room table, nailed into his bare skull.

Finally coming out of the state of shock you were in, you immediately sprint out of the room and down the stairs. As you rush out of the house, you hear the basement door begin to unlock from the inside. Running as fast as you can, you realize you exited through the back door. Rationally, it would be easier for you to try and run around to the front of the house, but just as you think this, you see a large man with a black mask covering his whole head exit the back of the house. As you two lock eyes, and shortly thereafter you lock eyes with the knife in his bloodied hand, you understand, at this point, you need to pick a direction and start running.

Running father towards the sheep fields you decide to attempt to hide amidst the flock, seeing as they are all gathered closely together. As you get closer and close to the sheep, a horrible sight forms in front of your eyes.

Some, if not all of these sheep, have the skin of humans wrapped around their bodies as if blankets. You wish you couldn't, but you recognize this as human skin because of the almost leathery texture, and the faceless skins staring at you. Some still have completely hollowed faces and limbs attached to them. As soon as the realization hits you, you vomit in the grass beneath your feet, panting and sobbing as you look upon the sheep. One sheep approaches you and with a gentle “*baa*,” you are snapped back into reality.

Seeing what you understand to be Greg Simon's killer approach you quickly, you decide you can't possibly hide in the flock at this point. Surveying your options, you decide upon the nearby barn. And yes, this seems stupid, and it feels stupid to you, but at this point, you cannot be bothered to make the “smart” choice you are just trying to survive.

Sprinting quickly towards the barn, you turn around to see the killer has stopped to tend to the sheep. Extremely unsettled by this behavior, you remain grateful that it's bought you some time.

As you approach the barn, that all too recognizable smell attacks your nostrils. Not knowing what to expect when you enter the barn, you gently press the door open.

“How could anyone...” You gasp, choking back vomit once again.

“...” the silence answers.

Standing before you, are entirely skinned human corpses hanging off of meat hooks. You begin to try and count them, but you are absolutely overwhelmed and terrified by the sheer amount of human insides that are exposed to you. One of the worst parts is the lampshades. Covering each individual's head is a freshly adorned lampshade. Some patterned, some stained, all disgusting.

You collapse. The sight became unbearable for your eyes and in a final measly attempt to hide, you drag yourself behind a haybale you find near the entrance of the barn. As you hear footsteps approaching, the only question you can ask yourself is, “Why?” Suddenly, you feel the pressure of a large hand engulf your entire skull. The hand of the assumed killer crushes your skull ever so slightly, and you hear a small crack as your vision begins to fade. Before you completely black out, you ask,

“Why?”

“Humans, none of them are innocent, not me, not you. We are born guilty, we live guilty, and we die guilty. If I can preserve innocence and beauty, I will. I would surrender millions of human lives if it meant preserving real life. The life that a newborn lamb sees in this world is incomparable to monsters like us. We are born screaming, crying, and bloodied. A lamb is born, and quietly, slowly, and without complaint, it learns to survive. To live for people is to be guilty of the greatest sin of all, hurt.” The silence answered.

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