



A WHISPER TICKLING YOUR EAR
By JAY CREEPY

They say, those rare souls who know, or those who pretend to know to impress the unknowing, that he used to be a man – a real live human. Flesh and blood, mortal. It's a weird thought, whether it be fact or fiction that such a creature could once upon a time exist and feel emotions. He could once upon a time feel pain.

From there onwards the stories differ. I suppose like all stories based on something which nobody truly understands yet swear down blind they do.

When I was younger there was a homeless fella who stood about in the middle of the road wearing cardboard attached to his coat. These signs had varied misspelt messages daubed and scribbled on. So like with so many characters who didn't have the mind left to explain their origins, legends built on Old Greg.

Some said he was once a university lecturer and he lost his wife or she died, his personality crumbled to dust and left this waving long bearded shell. Another story stated the same except he used to be part of air traffic control due to his frantic arm gestures.

All said and done, Old Greg was probably a clear and simple old bloke who happened to be off his head. He probably died years ago like the man who stood on top of the terrace when I was a very young boy. Every night he'd watch everyone go by under his lamppost. Through all weathers, his vigil never faltered.

Both were gone now, preserved in my memory because I'm now a late teen and the streets I walk along are so different. Roads which felt so lengthy are only round the corner. Shops I adored have given way to takeaways and mobile phone stores. I'm eighteen and I miss it all dreadfully. Why? Because they all were a part of a realm of my life I loved due to being safer.

All before I knew of The Whisperer. Like Old Greg, the tales are so far and everyone believes so much. He died and he came back. A ghost. A zombie. An idea.

Some would stand and command respect by saying he was a gangland hit-man who wore Hush Puppy shoes for silence. He'd whisper in the ear of his victim, then that was that for the victim.

He caught his wife cheating. He hid under the bed for hours and came up to whisper in their ears as they sweated over the sheets.

He was wrongly accused of paedophilia and knelt whispering his pleading innocent facts to a mob of heavy set men who tore him to pieces.

The reason I know of all this comes down to a website devoted to him and other similar wraiths. You had to type exactly what has been given to you because the site is so well hidden on the web. What the site had as his 'official' synopsis was as follows: *Anton "The Whisperer" Edwards was a soldier. Nothing is known of his rank nor his years of service, only that he was an expert in silence. A handful of ex-colleagues have stated he never truly merged with his fellow troops, choosing his*

own quiet company. Edwards had a 'sixth sense' as in, when he halted and whispered they knew the enemy was near, be it man or woman or child. Nothing has been noted of his death but he did apparently leave the service and simply faded from records.

The site, of course, invite all the speculations and the guesses but the owners do not want to find the truth as if that part of history is cursed.

Now and then a corpse is discovered. Suffocated with bruises around their nose and mouth as if a large strong hand has been clamped there. Never a reason for the death, no connections. Purely random in nature. I know for a fact they are random.

Why?

I survived.

I was fourteen at the time and leaving school one night. I had my backpack on and my crappy long hair wouldn't stop blowing about in the autumn wind. I was what was known as a mosher and on top of that in the throes of confusing puberty. I loved music and pizza. Wasn't sure at all whether I liked girls or boys. I'd already had a boyfriend of sorts. We'd kissed and had touched each other's balls and dicks. However our other friends were way too male to allow us any temptations to go further. Instead I had found a steady girlfriend whom once in a while tried to kill herself for attention.

It was one of those particular afternoons whilst Clara was in hospital that I suddenly froze in my tracks. That bowel churning feeling of purely evil hating eyes burning into me.

I nervously turned to the furnace and I was bewildered. Amongst the streams of shoppers stood a man. Average height, and average build. In his fifties maybe wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. His hair was brushed backwards. He stared at me for a long time, unflinching and such incredible concentration.

The longer this went on, the other faces melted away until only he remained, his skull like eye sockets sinking into his head. His lips moved, he was talking to himself.

I could not move. Even now, years later, what I heard next repeats sometimes in my dreams. There was a whispering noise in my left ear. I couldn't define the words but this whisper was in tune to the movements coming from his lips.

The whisper certainly wasn't harsh or loud, just on the edge akin to a lover hissing sweet nothings. Then as sudden as he had got my attention he spun around and walked away into a shop. I swear the door was closed at the time. The shoppers massed into the gap left by him and I walked faster and faster across the main road to the bus station.

My pants were moist and sodden with urine. I recovered myself and realised my trousers were

visibly wet. That was embarrassing. No way could I ride a bus and chance meeting fellow school chaps and ladies. No, no way. I had two shots. About a fifteen minute walk away was a cemetery but I recalled a newspaper article mentioning some incidents happening in there. Luckily if I nipped the opposite way, there was a wasteland where an old night club used to stand. People walked past but the light was fading so I wouldn't be noticed.

I planned to strip my boxers and sit in my trousers a while hoping the air may dry them enough. My body was shuddering from the shock of what I had witnessed. That had disturbed me so much. What was that? Nobody, I swear, nothing or nobody could do that! When I finally entered the wasteland by a side street and over a toppled wire mesh fence, I had no clues but a storm of terrors.

Vehicles and people sounded so noisy but were far away. I ducked down behind a rubble pile. Glancing around cautiously, I removed my boots and gently pulled each leg out. I couldn't believe I'd pissed myself. Really! Yeah but that geeza was one scary bastard. The eyes. I yelped in horror at the memory. Those shudders returned. I sat and hugged myself, battling for control.

My boxers went in my bag and I fished a few old tissues out, pressing them to my trousers crotch. Imagine some bloke discovering a boy my age half naked here. A pervert seeing my skinny body and long hair. Probably take pleasure in bending me over or making me do things to him. My penis grew erect. I also pictured a gang of girls finding me and making me their play toy. Whoa, that made me throb.

No! *No!* Dress fast and hurry off. I fasted my trousers. Not much better but it would do.

I reached across for my boots and instantly recognised the dark suit. In fact it was a dark grey striped suit, neatly pressed. The black shoes were muddy through following me. I looked up into his face. *That face!* A grimace of utter malice. Whoever he was really didn't like me. As he whispered I again heard the sound in my left ear. Pure nonsense, no words, just the hushed static of a radio.

Any hopes I had of running was forgotten as the sockets seemed to collapse backwards and I could see his skull, oh my God, he was a dead man. *I was a dead man!* A massive shovel like hand clamped over my mouth and nose. I was unable to fight him because the moment his scalding hot flesh met mine, all will and ability to operate any motions escaped me. Drained and lifeless I hung from his noose and his eyes became more of an aged cadaver.

This time I knew I'd soaked my jeans but it didn't mean a thing anymore because my head was about to explode. Silly things you notice as you die, this man had really bad dandruff.

All of a sudden, he looked to his right and he appeared confused. Then a flash of fear flickered across him. He let go of me and backed away. In a split second, a blink in fact, I was alone. The wasteland was empty. It was dark. I decided to walk home, darting looks left and right and behind at regular intervals.

Clara returned to me days later, broken but smiling. Her wiry and black hair ruffled about, she hadn't bothered to brush so I sat and performed that for her. She smiled again. The overdose had left her exhausted and weak. Her frail torso and her anorexic limbs barely held together anymore. The night before the fair, she told me. "I might be used up here, Lee, but on the other side of the curtains I'm so strong."

The fair was a major tourist attraction for our city. Once a year for one week only, rides and food vans rode in from the UK and Europe to make a lot of money. Hull had this thing going on since, I think, nineteen o one or.. whatever, a long time ago. Maybe further back. Dunno to be honest, I'm just a kid in a city. Me and Clara had decided to go and have something to eat, perhaps bounce onto a couple of high flying rides.

Well, until she shrugged and admitted she wasn't feeling up to much, just a look around to see what was there. Fine, saved me money. We wandered quite early before the humdrum and clustered rush of people arrived. It had been raining so the ground and the fair rides glistened in the autumn sunshine which attempted to survive. Most of the larger faster and higher constructions were still closed until later that evening.

Passing stalls which had hook a duck, darts, bingo, rifle shooting, and selling all variety of greasy or oriental foods, the two of us happily hugged close and watched the dodgems circle and crash. I felt the people around were mulling closer so I knew the mass arrived after work. It was close to six o' clock. Rain trickled once again and hoods came up here and there. Music played from the stalls and rides, all louder and louder.

Then above all the chaos, I heard that whisper again. I had planned to take her on a few standard slower rides just to cheer her up, but all plans vacated when I heard it. I peered around myself and couldn't detect him at all. Yet that hissing continued and became more and more frantic.

There he was! Whilst the big wheel was loading with a handful of people next to the Bomber, his face was visible at the peak and stared downwards at me. Clara must have felt me stiffen for she asked what was wrong. She followed my gaze, oblivious to him. Yet something strange happened.

Upon seeing Clara, he sank slowly into the carriage and was gone. I turned and stared at her. She frowned. "What?"

"Could you see him? On top of the wheel?"

She furrowed her brow. "They're still loading at the bottom, nobody is on top yet."

"Fair enough." I forced a smile.

"Look, I don't feel well, I'd like to go."

That ended our night on the fair.

I know I'll never have a relationship after Clara. The next day she relapsed, her shattered body finally giving in. Or did she try again to die? It's a blank canvass in my memory now, something I'd rather not think about. Either way, Clara was gone. Much to the vile anger of her family and some of my own, I refused to attend her funeral. I simply could not bear the weight of her departing finale.

I have found my way in a minor league band. We gel perfectly and tour the UK in a bucket like camper van playing gigs which range from packed to the roof to empty, depending who we support. I ignore the groupies, plus the advances of the girl in our collective, Bailey. She's chubby, she's sweet. However, Clara was the only one and always will be.

On the wasteland, when The Whisperer had me, he stalled. On the fair he recognised her again. Maybe she slipped temporarily between the curtains and found me in danger. She scared him. Now she's permanently on the other side and she's fighting him. Sometimes I'll hear him and more rarely I'll see him, but he goes. Once he crouched as if ready to pounce an enemy.

As for Clara, out of the corner of my eye, or from the windows of the van, in a crowd, for a second or so in my dreams, she is there.

Each time she looks troubled and battered, as if she's been in a serious scuffle with someone or something. After this tour I'm considering joining her side in her battle. Maybe if we unite we can beat The Whisperer.

Clara looks so exhausted, suffering. I don't know how long she'll hold out or how often she can fight him back.

She always manages to smile at me though. I love her and I need to be with her.

THE END.