

Hollow Monsters

By

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EXT. STRAUSS FARM - NIGHT

A chipped and beaten WEATHER VANE-- molded into the shape of a horse and buggy-- turns violently on the peak of an old BARN. Rain falls in sheets, pelting the roof with large, fat drops. Black clouds roll across the night sky.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
(Voice Over)
My purpose is pure.

A TREE SWING twists and turns in the furious winds of the storm, banging against the trunk of a thick oak tree. The falling rain has made the ground beneath it a muddy pool. A BARBIE DOLL lies half-submerged in the mud, filthy and forgotten, along with several other TOYS.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
(Voice Over)
God, grant me the strength of my conviction.
(beat)
Hear me, Oh Lord.

The barn looms over the yard. A LIGHT beams from an opened window on the second story.

Further in the distance, a small farmhouse sits. Behind it, an empty dirt field stretches as far as the eye can see. The little farm is being pelted by the raging storm.

INT. BARN LOFT - NIGHT

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON:

Long, thin fingers, brown with dried clay, work at refining a large, round EYE set deep into a clay HEAD.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
Let your breath come from my fingers.

WIDEN TO:

EFRAIM STRAUSS, a gaunt and bespectacled man in his late forties, works his hands over the half-formed face of a gigantic, eight-foot tall GOLEM made of red-brown clay. The monstrosity sits lifeless on a large barrel; its massive hands lie quietly in its lap. It has no true face, only dead, round eyes-- more like the eyes of an owl than a

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human-- and a thick, crude nose with two nostrils poked into it. It has no mouth.

Standing behind her father, ELORA STRAUSS is holding a large bowl of water in her arms. She is a lovely girl of seven or eight, with her raven hair done up with a blue, silk ribbon. She, like her father, is draped in a pure white robe, now covered in brown clay. She stands quietly as her father works on the ill-formed monster.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

It won't be long now, will it,
sweetheart?

(beat)

Didn't Daddy promise you a miracle
today?

ELORA STRAUSS:

Yes, daddy.

Efraim dips his hands into the bowl of water in Elora's arms, washing them free of excess clay. Elora looks up at him, streaks of red-brown on her cheeks and across her nose. Efraim lovingly washes a smudge from her face before returning to his work.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

God will reward us, Elora. You'll
see.

Even seated, the monster looms high over Efraim, who takes a pointed carving tool and begins to work closely and intensely on the creature's forehead.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

That's what God does. He rewards
the good people.

Just above the creature's giant, dead eyes, Efraim carves the word "EMET" into the behemoth's forehead.

And then, Efraim backs away from his creation, bumping into the wide-eyed Elora and causing her to spill a bit of water from her bowl.

ELORA STRAUSS:

Is it finished?

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

I... I don't know.

Efraim waits, holding his breath, but nothing is happening. Elora tries to hide herself behind her father, but she can't take her eyes off of the monster.

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Efraim's shoulders drop. His expression changes. The monster doesn't stir. Elora looks at her father, confused.

ELORA STRAUSS:

Daddy?

He turns from the lifeless hulk and washes his hands in the bowl of water. Tears begin to well in Elora's eyes, upset by her father's disappointment. Efraim is visibly crushed by his failure.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Forsaken. God has forsaken me,
forsaken us.

And then, a massive, poorly sculpted clay hand reaches out to touch Efraim's shoulder from behind. Efraim freezes, then turns slowly to face his creation.

The floorboards creak as the GOLEM stands upright, its giant hand still on Efraim's shoulder. It is an amazing and terrible creature of nearly eight-feet, so tall that it hunches slightly as to not break through the peak of the loft's ceiling. Miraculously, the clay of the monster has dried solid, turning from a wet red-brown color to a chalky tan.

With huge, owl-like eyes that cut through the darkness like searchlights of green, it stares down at its maker.

A cloud of dust bellows from its nostrils as it breathes out heavily for the first time.

In shock, Elora drops the water bowl to the floor. She is white, a look of panic washes over her before she runs frantically towards the loft stairs, never looking back.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Elora... NO!

Itself startled, the Golem begins to pursue her, only to be stopped by Efraim who fearfully drops to his knees and holds out his hands to try to calm the creature.

With a booming grunt, it arches its back and sticks out its chest like a wild gorilla. Clouds of dust burst from its flaring nostrils as it huffs and puffs, enraged.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Forgive her.

The Golem calms, listening to the soothing voice of its creator. It lowers its head, coming nose to nose with Efraim who continues to kneel on the floor.

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EFRAIM STRAUSS:

She is just a child, she does not understand.

Efraim gets to his feet, placing his hand on the large head of the Golem.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

(Whisper)

But I understand what you are. An angel.

There is a gentle pain in Efraim's voice as he speaks, like someone confiding a prayer to God. The Golem purrs like a cat, enjoying the new sensation of contact.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

For generations my family has been protected by you, revenged by you. My daughter, my eldest daughter, Abrianna, she was taken from me.

Efraim, his eyes burning with tears and rage, pulls the Golem's face to meet his own.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Taken by men, by animals! Soulless, Godless filth!

(beat)

Protect this family again!

The Golem looks into Efraim's eyes for a brief moment, then nods, a quick puff of dust escaping its nostrils. As the creature walks away, Efraim turns from his creation--

--only to walk to the edge of the loft to witness the Golem lumbering across the hay-strewn floor. It marches toward the opened barn doors, leaving a trail of footprints on the ground where it steps.

The rain still pours outside.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Punish our enemies! Bring her back.

CLOSE ON:

Efraim closes his eyes in prayer. Tears roll down his cheeks.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

(whisper)

Bring my Abrianna back.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBS - NIGHT

The Rain still falls, but the storm has lessened and has already begun to pass.

A small, one-story suburban HOUSE sits in the background with a row of square-trimmed bushes lining the house on either side of the front door. A white minivan is parked in the driveway next to a red Neon.

JAMES MOORE, an African-American man in his early-thirties, rushes from the van to the front door-- briefcase in hand and covering his head with a newspaper. In the foreground, a barn-shaped mailbox reads: The MOORE Family. A tiny American flag, waving in the wind, sticks up from its roof.

Light pours from a large bay window, adorned with white lace drapes.

WILLIAM MOORE:
(Voice Over)
You're dead, you're so dead!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON:

A TELEVISION SCREEN. A colorful ninja knocks off his opponent's head with a fierce uppercut. Blood shoots from the loser's body like a fountain. The words "DRAGON MASTER WINS" appear, written in blood.

WILLIAM MOORE:
I told you, you're dead.

WIDEN TO:

James, absolutely soaked, enters through the front door.

James drops his briefcase to the side and begins to slip off his overcoat. Beneath it, he wears a white button-up shirt and black trousers, as well as a "power tie" with a Keith Haring painting printed on it.

He is greeted by his brother, WILLIAM, an African-American man in his early-twenties. William raises his arms in victory as he props his feet on the coffee table.

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BARRY, a Caucasian man also in his early twenties, sits on a black, leather couch next to William. He shakes his head in defeat. They are both holding video game controllers in their hands. The coffee table is littered with beer bottles and empty pizza boxes.

JAMES MOORE:

Jesus, it's freezing out there.

Barry stands, stretching his back while William continues to celebrate in his seat.

BARRY:

That's my cue for another beer, you guys need anything?

WILLIAM MOORE:

Nope.

James sits in the vacant seat next to William, picking up the controller. James' shirt is unbuttoned and his tie hangs loosely around his neck. He doesn't look happy.

WILLIAM MOORE:

You ready to take on the Dragon Master?

JAMES MOORE:

Did the "Dragon Master" happen to look for a job today?

WILLIAM MOORE:

Man! It's raining outside!

Suddenly, the room explodes with flying glass and debris as the Golem barrels through the bay window taking most of the wall with it. Its head is lowered like a bull and dust pours from its nostrils as its eyes blaze with green light.

With a wide swing of its massive arm it bats away the couch, sending it flying. William manages to roll out of the way, but James is thrown forward with the impact of the charging monster.

James lands hard through a dining room table on the other side of the room as Barry comes from the adjoining kitchen in a panic. A young, Caucasian WOMAN in her late twenties follows behind him, screaming in horror.

Barry tries to shield her from flying glass with his own body.

William, injured and trying to crawl through the rubble to his brother's aid, writhes in agony as the mammoth FOOT of the Golem steps on his legs.

It pins his lower body to the ground, and with a quick, clean jerk of his torso, William's upper-body is torn violently from his lower half which is still trapped beneath the foot of the Golem.

WIDEN TO:

The room is gone. The front wall of the home crumbles to the ground as electrical wires spark in the rubble. Only the front door frame still stands, perfectly unharmed. The rest of the neighborhood can be seen from the missing section of wall. Some neighbors have begun to gather out on the street, not sure what is happening.

The remains of the coffee table and couch litter the floor next to the crushed legs of William. The ceiling has begun to collapse in on itself, allowing rain to pour into the room where large parts of the roof have fallen in.

The Golem lumbers slowly through the destruction, dragging the torso of William behind it. It makes its way toward the unconscious and bleeding James, half buried in a pile of broken wood and metal. Barry and the young woman try desperately to pull him to safety, but his legs are pinned beneath a ceiling beam.

The Golem's green eyes are thin with rage, and dust spews from its nostrils in a large, windswept cloud trailing outside into the night sky. It is a perfect killing machine, created to only punish the enemies of its master.

The Golem is upon them. Within its massive shadow, the woman continues to try to free James while Barry, his face contorting with fear, attempts to run...

BARRY:

Oh GOD, oh GOD!

...but he is pound violently to the ground as the Golem brings the torso of William crashing upon him like a bloody, wet club.

From the floor, Barry looks up into the face of the Golem, dust hissing from its nostrils and its eyes piercing and terrible.

The Golem pounds Barry's head and shoulders with its massive foot, sending an explosion of gore in all directions.

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The Woman, in obvious shock, cradles James in her arms. Blood drips from his mouth and nose. In vain, she screams at the Golem, tears streaming down her face. James is barely awake. He is dying.

WOMAN:

What the hell are you!?

(whisper)

God, Please... you killed him.

The Golem crouches next to her, its face no more than a foot away from hers. It looks her over, sniffing at her inquisitively. She refuses to look at it as she pulls James close, resting her head on his and closing her eyes, waiting to die.

JAMES MOORE:

(Very Weak)

A-Abrianna... run... Go...

The Golem recoils, shock behind its glowing eyes as it recognizes the name.

JAMES MOORE:

(dying)

Abrianna.

A number of picture frames lie wet and broken on the ground. They are pictures of ABRIANNA and James together: skiing, hiking, among other things. The Golem picks up one of the larger picture frames, its silhouette reflects in the cracked glass with its green eyes blazing.

It is a PHOTOGRAPH of James in a tuxedo and Abrianna in a beautiful white gown standing next to a large fountain in a park. It is their wedding photo. The words of his master echo in his head.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

(voice over)

My daughter, my eldest daughter,
Abrianna, she was taken from me.
Taken by men, by animals! Soulless,
Godless filth!

Abrianna looks up at the monster, her eyes wide, finally realizing what is going on.

ABRIANNA MOORE:

Oh God. He sent you, didn't he?

That racist son of a bitch!

(beat)

He sent you!

(CONTINUED)

The creature lumbers slowly away through the death and destruction that it caused, a haunted look in its strange eyes. Somewhere in the distance police sirens are getting closer. Abrianna sits with her dead husband on her lap, screaming at the top of her lungs.

ABRIANNA MOORE:

That's it?! You just leave?!

(quieter)

And you just go back to him, don't you?

The Golem turns to face her. There is something different in its eyes, a knowing and a rage it didn't have before.

With powerful legs, the Golem leaps into the air, a mile high from the earth below, leaving Abrianna alone.

INT. EFRAIM'S DEN - NIGHT

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON:

An elegant grandfather clock reads 3:47. It is ornate and beautiful. In the glass of the clock face, the reflection of Efraim Strauss can be seen checking the time. He is wearing his pajamas and holds a glass of wine in his hand, but pays it no attention-- he has more important things on his mind.

WIDEN TO:

Efraim stands for a moment in front of the clock, before anxiously turning his gaze toward a nearby window. The rain falls on the windowpane, casting strange shadows on his worried face.

And then Efraim sees IT. Startle, he drops his glass.

Outside, the Golem stands in the pouring rain. The creature, hidden mostly in shadow, stares at Efraim. Its inhuman green eyes smolder in the darkness.

EXT. STRAUSS FARM - NIGHT

CUT TO:

The Golem waits, motionless, as Efraim exits his two-story farm house slipping a rain slicker on over his pajamas. As he descends the steps from the front porch, he is giddy with excitement.

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EFRAIM STRAUSS:
Is it done? I don't see Abrianna,
where...?

Efraim's excitement turns to rage as he wipes the rain from his face.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
You didn't do it.
(enraged)
It is God's law! You must...

With inhuman speed, the Golem clutches him by the throat. Efraim's eyes roll back in his head as he gasps for air in the monster's grasp.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
(choking)
You can't. She was my little...
girl.

Efraim's feet dangle a foot from the rain-soaked ground. One of his slippers has fallen off.

The Golem squeezes his fist tighter, yet stops when a light from above catches its attention. Both Efraim and the Golem look upwards.

The light comes from the second floor of the farmhouse. Elora looks through the curtains of her bedroom window. Her face is frozen in horror.

The Golem releases its grip, dropping Efraim to the wet ground. Efraim gasps for air, clutching his throat. He begins to pick himself up from the mud, minding his tender throat. He glares at the monster.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
(gasping)
How... dare you judge me?

Finding his bravery, Efraim comes face to chest with the Golem, leering up at it. It returns his gaze but does nothing.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:
You, you're an abomination! Just
another mistake of God!

CLOSE ON:

Efraim wipes away the first "E" in "EMET" from the Golem's forehead with his hand.

(CONTINUED)

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

A mistake I am willing to correct.

Elora runs from the house, still in her bed clothes, crying. The Golem collapses into large, wet chunks in the rain. It is dead, now nothing more than crumbling clay.

Efraim looks down at his creation, a look of disgust on his face.

ELORA STRAUSS:

Daddy!

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

Daddy's okay, sweetheart, come here.

He kneels down to embrace his daughter. Confusion in her eyes, she looks at the lumps of clay in the foreground.

ELORA STRAUSS:

Abrianna?

Efraim shakes his head "no" sadly.

ELORA STRAUSS:

You said the Angel was going to save her from the niggers, daddy?

CLOSE ON:

The head of the GOLEM dissolves in the rain, its eyes open wide and dead, the word "MET" carved into its forehead.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

It wasn't an Angel, honey, it was just clay.

FADE TO BLACK