

Hollow Monsters

By

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Kevin Buckley 2008

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EXT. STRAUSS FARM - NIGHT

A chipped and beaten WEATHER VANE in the shape of a horse and buggy turns violently on the peak of an old barn during a raging storm. Rain falls in sheets from rolling black clouds in the night sky, pelting the roof with large, fat drops.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

(Voice Over)

My purpose is pure.

A wooden tree SWING twists and turns in the furious winds, banging against the trunk of a thick oak tree. The falling rain has made the ground beneath it a muddy pool. A BARBIE DOLL is lying in the mud, filthy and forgotten. A small table lies toppled, cartoon bears dancing in a circle printed on it. Pink plastic cups and saucers of a little girls TEA SET are strewn about in the wet grass and fallen leaves.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:

(Voice Over)

God, grant me the strength of my conviction.

(beat)

Hear me, Lord.

The small FARM is being beaten down by the storm. The tree swing hangs from a massive oak tree, almost completely bare, its own leaves swirling at its roots. A tall barn looms over the yard.

Further in the distance a small farmhouse sits, behind it an empty, dirt field stretches as far as the eye can see. Bright light comes from the open window on the second story of the barn.

INT. BARN LOFT - NIGHT

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:

A single, hanging, bulb casts the claustrophobic loft of the barn in a yellow hue, leaving the shadows dark and ominous.

EFRAIM STRAUSS, a gaunt and bespectacled, dark-haired 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 laying quietly in its lap. It has no true face, only dead, round eyes more like an owl than a human and a thick nose with two nostrils poked into it. It has no mouth.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
Bring us, oh God, your champion.

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, 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.

The rain drips inside through the open loft window, lightening streaks through the sky.

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, hiding fear behind her soft, brown eyes.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
God will reward us, Elora... you'll  
see.

Even seated, the monster looms high over Efraim in the foreground. He takes a pointed carving tool and begins to work closely and intensely on its forehead as he adjusts his clay smudged glasses into place.

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. Efraim backs away from his creation cautiously, bumping into a wide-eyed Elora, 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, barely breathing, but nothing is happening. Elora tries to hide herself behind her father, but can't take her eyes off the monster. Efraim's shoulders drop. His expression changes to an anxious disappointment. The monster doesn't stir. Elora looks at her father, confused.

ELORA STRAUSS:  
Daddy?

He turns from the lifeless hulk, just off screen, and washes his hands in the bowl of water. Elora begins to tear up, upset that her father is upset... crushed with his failure.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
Forsaken. God has forsaken me,  
forsaken us.

A massive, poorly sculpted, clay hand touches his shoulder from behind. Efraim turns slowly to face his creation.

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 it hunches slightly 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. It stares down at its maker with huge, owl-like eyes, glowing green and cutting through the dark like searchlights.

A cloud of dust bellows from its nostrils as it breathes out heavily.

Elora drops the water bowl with a large, wet crash. She goes white, a look of panic washes over her as she runs frantically towards the loft stairs, not looking back. A trail of wet footprints lead from the puddle on the floor to her.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
Elora... NO!

The Golem begins to pursue her, only to be stopped by Efraim as he fearfully drops to his knees, holding his hands out to try to calm the creature. It pays him no attention, its gaze fixed on the direction Elora ran as it arches its back, sticking out its chest, trying to appear even larger like a wild gorilla. Clouds of dust burst from its flaring nostrils as it huffs and puffs.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
 Forgive her - -

The Golem calms, listening to the soothing voice of its creator.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
 - -she is just a child, she does  
 not understand.

It lowers its head, staring nose to nose with Efraim kneeling on the floor. Like a child it looks at him in wonder, its glassy, green eyes reflecting Efraim's face. He looks serene, as if looking into the eyes of God.

EFRAIM STRAUSS:  
 (Whisper)  
 But I understand what you are, an  
 angel.

Efraim gets to his feet, placing his hand on the large head of the Golem, weeping. There is a gentle pain in his voice as he speaks, like someone confiding in a trusted pet. The Golem purrs like 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, a look of guilt somewhere in his eyes.

Efraim walks to the edge of the loft looking down at the floor of the barn. A steep, wooden staircase descends to the floor next to him, large, chalky footprints on each step. The Golem lumbers across the hay-strewed floor, leaving a trail of footprints on the ground where it steps. It marches toward the opened barn doors, its mission is clear.

The rain still pours outside, as several chickens try their best to avoid the monster.

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 already has 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.

An African-American man rushes from the van to the front door, his 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:  
(from window)  
You're dead, you're so dead!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON:

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

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

WIDEN TO:

JAMES MOORE, an African-American man in his early-thirties, enters through the front door, absolutely soaked. The room is finely decorated with hanging pictures and potted plants and looks to be very clean and well kept.

James drops his briefcase to the side and begins to slip off his overcoat. A coat-rack hangs on the wall next to the door with a few jackets and coats already hung there. He wears a white, button-up shirt and black trousers beneath his coat, as well as a "power tie" with a painting of Keith Haring's printed on it.

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

BARRY, a Caucasian man also in his early twenties, sits on a black, leather couch next to him. 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, gets up from the couch, 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 leather 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, black-haired 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. With a quick, clean jerk on his torso, William's upper-body is torn violently from his lower half still trapped beneath the foot of the Golem.

The room is gone, in its place, a war zone. The front wall of the home crumbles to the ground, electrical wires sparking in the rubble. Only the front door frame still stands, perfectly unharmed. The rest of the neighborhood can be seen from the missing 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, rain pouring 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 like a savage ape. 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. 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, the Golem bringing the torso of William crashing on him like a bloody, wet club.

From the floor, a broken Barry looks up into the face of the Golem, dust hissing from its nostrils, 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.

The Woman 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 now and dying.

WOMAN:

What 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 lay 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 reflecting in the cracked glass, 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!

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

EXT. SUBURBS - NIGHT

With powerful legs, the GOLEM leaps into the air, a mile high from the earth below.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Through dark clouds the entire suburb fills the background, the damage caused can be seen even from this height. Little is left of the home but a smoking hole. Police cars and ambulances rush down the street.

INT. EFRAIM'S DEN - NIGHT

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.

WIDEN TO:

Efraim stands in front of the clock, now turning his head to stare out a window. 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. Rain falls on the windowpane, casting strange shadows on his worried face.

And then he sees it. Startle, he drops his glass. Efraim faces the window with both hands pressed against it. Outside, the Golem stands in the pouring rain. He stares at Efraim, hidden in shadow but his green eyes smolder in the darkness.

EXT. STRAUSS FARM - NIGHT

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.

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.

A light from above catches their 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 his grip, dropping Efraim to the wet ground. Efraim gasps for air, clutching his throat. Efraim 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, he comes face to chest with the Golem leering up at him. 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.

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