



# EVIL GLASSES

EDITION II

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# Glasswood Chest

by Sara Lufrano

Nick stood at his workbench and ran his hand over the glasswood board looking for catches that needed to be sanded. After he was done he wiped the board down with a damp cloth revealing its foggy grey and clear layers.

She always wanted him to make a glasswood chest of drawers for her.

“Uncle Nick!” His five-year-old nephew, Ashton, squeezed through the slim opening. He was followed by Nick’s older sister, Jen.

Nick looked at his sister and nephew. There was something else Nick would never be able to give her. Something she wanted above all else.

“Mom told me to tell you dinner is done so you can come and eat with us!” Ashton said.

Jen smiled at Ashton’s enthusiasm. “Dinner is ready,” she repeated.

Nick wet his cloth and went back to wiping down the glasswood. “I’ll eat later.”

Ashton hugged Nick’s side for a split second. “Okay. I wish you would eat with us, though.”

“Go inside,” Nick said.

Jen groaned at her brother. He looked at her and she shook her head as she and Ashton left the barn.

Nick stared at the glasswood board in his hand, unable to tear his eyes away from it. He held it so tight his fingers ached.

She opened the door as wide as she could and slid through the thin opening. Heavy, broken machinery blocked the door and prevented it from being opened wide.

“Are you ready to eat?” she asked.

He slid two pieces of redwood together creating an almost seamless joint. “Uh, I’ll eat in a bit.”

“Okay. It’ll be in the fridge then.” She knew how he was. A bit meant hours.

“Thank you.” He didn’t look at her but his voice was polite and caring.

“Everything okay?” she asked.

“Yeah.” He still looked down at his work. “Just about set on this corner.”

She watched his back and his strong arms and his bent-over head.

“See you inside,” she said.

“Thanks, babe.”

He should have gone in to eat with her, he should have danced with her in the living room after, he should have taken her in his arms and walked them upstairs to make love.

Nick didn’t go into the house until just after eleven at night. He opened the fridge and saw the plate his sister had prepared for him. Instead, he grabbed an apple and ate it on the way to his bedroom that was upstairs. He threw the core in his small trash can, took off his shirt, and fell onto his bed.

He woke up around four in the morning. He went downstairs and started coffee, got out the plate of food from the day before and put it all in a pan to heat on the stove.

“Uncle Nick,” his nephew said in a sleepy voice. Nick turned to the sound, surprised that he wasn’t the only one awake.

“What are you doing?” Nick asked.

Ashton rubbed his eyes and swayed a bit.

“I’m thirsty.”

“Okay.” Nick looked around the kitchen for a glass. “What can you drink? Milk or something?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, what do you want?”

“Water.”

Nick held a glass under the tap and then handed it to Ashton. He drank it but spilled about a quarter of it on himself and the floor.

“Go back to bed now.”

Ashton rubbed his eyes again. “Can you come with me?”

“To your room? No. It’s right down there. You know where it is.”

“Okay.”

Once Ashton was out of the kitchen his food was a bit crispy on one side and lukewarm on the other. He ate it out of the pan and put it in the sink when he was done. He headed to the barn before the sun came out.

He cut another piece of glasswood and held it up to the bright overhead light. The fog grey twisted in the clear glass.

“I’d love one made out of glasswood,” she held a pine drawer in her hands while he was working on the corner details.

“That stuff is hard to get right. And painful to cut down.”

“Well,” she put it down on the workbench, “good thing you’re the best.”

He looked at her. She smiled. “Do you think you can take a break or something?” She bit her lip.

He dropped his tool and quickly gathered her in his arms. “Yes.”

Nick was in the house by nine that night. Jen walked into the kitchen and was surprised to see him.

“Jesus, Nick. You scared me.”

He didn’t say anything.

She got herself together and sat at the table. “Ashton wants to hang out with you tomorrow in the shop.”

“No.”

“Come on. Since we’ve been here you’ve probably spent no more than 24 hours with him.”

“I don’t want to watch him.”

“He’s a good kid. If you tell him not to get in the way or touch something he won’t.”

“No.”

“What if I watch him while we’re all in the shop?”

“I don’t want to hang around a baby.”

“He’s your nephew and he’s not a baby.”

Nick pointed his finger at his sister. “No.”

She rolled her eyes. “Fine. But maybe a dinner once in awhile would be a good compromise. I’m sick of making some bullshit excuse about why he can’t see someone he loves so much.”

“I haven’t done anything for him to love me.”

“I know.” She got up and left the kitchen.

Nick heard Ashton call for her from down the hall.

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She had stopped going to the doctor to hear the same thing over and over again. Brain tumor, four months to live, this type of thing rarely happens.

He stared at her while she slept. He was always terrified that it would be her last night. He ran his hand along her thinning arm. The thought of him not being there when she passed consumed his thoughts. Having her be alone in her last conscious seconds was his own nightmare. His throat felt iced and he struggled to keep his tears from falling.

Nick ran his hand over the top of the hollow chest of drawers. The design of the piece was all based on things he had to remember she said.

*"The wood is so beautiful, there's no need for embellishment."*

The lines were straight, the corners smooth.

*"Three drawers are too small."*

The even sides, three and three, all the same size.

*"I love you."*

I miss you.

"Uncle Nick." Ashton was standing almost by his side. "What are you doing?"

Nick stared at Ashton.

*"I think my second biggest regret is that we didn't have a baby. My first is leaving you so soon."*

If they had a baby he would have had a piece of her forever.

"What are you doing?" Nick asked.

"Mom said I could come watch you."

Nick grumbled and picked up a completed glasswood drawer.

"Where did you get these?" Ashton asked of the wood furniture.

"I made them."

"Wow." Ashton struggled to climb on a chair that was too high for him.

Nick helped him up by quickly grabbing him under the arms and placing him squarely on the seat. "Stay there," Nick said.

"Is this your job, Uncle Nick?"

"It was."

Nick slid the drawer in the bottom left slot.

"What are you doing?"

"Making a chest of drawers."

"What's it made of?"

"Glasswood."

"I've never heard of that."

*"I would have liked to have a son so that he could have been just like you."*

But he didn't want anything to be like him.

"It's very rare but we live close to a small clearing of glasswood trees."

"Can we go there?"

"Maybe."

Ashton kicked his feet.

"Can we maybe go now?"

"If you want to be here with me in the shop you can't talk this much."

"Okay."

Ashton was quiet but he still kicked his feet. He played with his hands and hummed to himself.

Nick watched his nephew from the corner of his eye. He was a good kid.

"Come here," Nick said.

Ashton slid off the chair and went to Nick's side. "Can I help?"

Nick looked through the clear glasswood. "Bring me that drawer over there."

# Memories of the End

by Marshall Bowles

You float in the black soup. You have no body, only your eyes, your consciousness, suspended on the metaphysical plane. Small dots of glowing light surround you in all directions, millions, billions, too many to imagine. You feel the weight of them and it makes you claustrophobic.

Your thoughts are hazy, and you struggle to focus. You can't remember who you are or how you came to be. There is no past, future, or present. There just is. After an instant and an eternity, you *move*. Your consciousness brushes against the closest points of light—

*My wife sits across from me in our booth at the diner. Today is our 50th anniversary, and we celebrate in the place where we had our first date. I smile at her as I take a bite out of my toast, and that's when my heart stops beating. I fall face-first onto my plate, unable to move. I hear my wife screaming in the last few seconds before I lose consciousness.*

*I'm seven years old. The kids in my neighborhood play baseball in the yard in front of a light blue house with white trim. Eric—my best friend since kindergarten—hits a long one. It's easy to do, because the yard is small. I jump as high as I can, but the stupid ball flies by just out of reach. I run into the street to get it. I only see the car briefly in my peripheral vision before it runs over me.*

*I trudge through knee-deep snow. My hands and feet have been numb for the last hour, and I'm barely going anywhere. The camp is less than a mile away, just over the next rise, but I don't think I can make it. I'm so tired and—that's odd—I'm not cold anymore. I stopped shivering at some point. Huh. I'm going to take a break, just for a minute. I lay down in the snow to build up my energy. I close my eyes and take a deep breath.*



You spiral back into the black soup, your mind reeling from the intensity of the visions. You were those people. Are those people. Will be. Their pain is your pain, and their deaths cut razor sharp into your soul. You don't want to move again.

You wait.

And wait.

You have no way to measure the passage of time. Nothing exists except the lights. You grow weary of staring at them. The lack of stimulation is painful.

You drift toward the closest lights.

*I check the clamps on my harness to make sure I'm secured to the tower. I'm hundreds of feet up in the air, a maintenance technician repairing a radio tower. The wind picked up unexpectedly in the last few minutes, and the tower is swaying. I've never been afraid on the job until today. I call it early and start my descent. I'm going faster than I should, not being careful, and I don't secure my harness. A heavy gust of wind throws me off balance, I lose my grip, and I fall the last ninety feet onto the pavement below.*

*I'm the lookout for my boy Thomas while he does a drug deal. He's one of the bros from my frat, Kappa Sig, and the dopest fucker I've ever met. We came up with a plan to pull off a big score while we were doing an 8-ball one night, and Thomas made it happen. I hear yelling from the alleyway behind me, where Thomas went to meet the dealers. I pull the .38 out of my jacket pocket and run towards the noise. I round a corner and all I see is a gun barrel pointed at my face. The shot is loud and brief.*

*I lay in the hospice bed, all three generations of my family standing around me. Every breath hurts, but I am content. It is my time. I look up into the sad, heavy eyes of my children and grandchildren. I try to speak, to tell them it is ok, but all my cancerous body can manage is a croak. Tamil, my eldest, places his warm, strong hand over mine. "It is ok, mother," he says. I smile and the world fades away.*

You lose something of yourself with every death, a part of your essence that you don't understand but you know is important. This bothers you. Boredom bothers you more.

You move again.

*I run through the jungle, holding my rifle vertically in front of me so it will not get caught in the undergrowth. The other men from my village are close behind. I hear them yelling to each other, tightening the noose, trying to surround me. They believe I betrayed them to the government troops. I did. I wanted a better life for myself, something other than being a guerrilla fighter in a hopeless war. Mugabe is suddenly in front of me, appearing out of the dense jungle like a ghost. I raise my rifle to shoot, but I cannot pull the trigger. I've known him all my life, and I consider him a friend. He has no such qualms.*

*The mountain road is icy. Driving in the snow terrifies me, so I go slow. Tim is in his car seat in the back, playing with his rattle and giggling. My tires skid for a second, my heart almost jumps out of my chest, and I once again curse my husband for moving us into these mountains. Tim coughs. In the brief second that I turn to look back at him, a car speeds around the corner ahead. I turn around in time to see it lose control on the ice and slam into me. I scream as my car flies off the edge of the road and down the steep cliff. Oh God, what have I done to my child? The rocks below rush at us.*

*The asshole prison guard straps me into the chair and lowers the dome onto the top of my head. This is it. Ain't going to be no call from the governor, not for me. There's people watching from the other side of the glass, but I don't recognize none of them. They'll all sure be happy to see me die. But I ain't giving them no satisfaction. I smile, best I can do with all my missing teeth. "See all y'all in hell!" The man pulls the switch and electricity burns through my body.*

This is all there is now. Death. Nothing else exists, no meaning, no purpose, no escape. You can stop, just for an infinite instant, but you will eventually move again. You have to. There are no other choices.

The lights beckon to you. You go to them.