Cobbled Together + Mirror + Self-Loathing + Digust

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Cobbled Together + Mirror + Self-Loathing + Digust

by A_Nameless_Gremlin (Cryptid_Kel)

Summary

The first breath after resurrection is always the hardest and most painful, especially if you've been beheaded and had your head reattached. Most people don't know that, or have any reason to.

But Papa Emeritus the Third did.

Notes

Written for Days 2, 3, 22 and 23 of Sintember 2026.

The first breath after resurrection is always the hardest and most painful, especially if you've been beheaded and had your head reattached. Most people don't know that, or have any reason to.

But Papa Emeritus the Third did.

After being assassinated, embalmed, beheaded, re-headed, put posthumously on tour with his equally dead brothers, then stored away in a crypt...he suddenly found himself awake, eyes wide open, and gasping for breath. And oh, did that *hurt*. Like a bitch. The air was sucked forcefully into his mouth and through his stitched and scarred windpipe, scratchy and sharp pain radiating from it and feeling far worse than any bout of strep throat he could ever remember having. At least his lungs were okay, eagerly taking in oxygen with no pain or irritation.

A few more deep breaths, each just slightly less painful than the last, consciousness returned to him properly, his brain and other organs regaining their functions. Most of them, anyway. He was still processing everything, and had absolutely no idea what the fuck was going on.

After a cough (also more painful yet still reminiscent of strep) and a few seconds of blinking, Terzo looked up at his surroundings, wincing at the bright light shining in his eyes. For a split second, he thought it might be the lights of Heaven, but that idea was put to rest as quickly as he had been. A Satanic Pope? In Heaven? Hell truly would have to have frozen over for *that*.

No, this light was artificial, electric. Man-made. He was somewhere on earth, presumably by the will of human forces.

With much effort and more than a little bit of pain, he managed to turn his head slightly. From what he could see now, he was in a room. A white one. Sterile-looking, and full of surgical instruments, bottled liquids of some kind, and...

He was in a laboratory.

His olfactory senses were now working again, and he took a big sniff, letting the scents from the room travel through his nostrils and waft around his brain. Cleaning supplies, nitrile gloves, a sort of generic hospital smell, and...something else he couldn't quite place.

He wondered just where the fuck he was, and who had brought him back.

"Hello?" he croaked weakly, after a few tries, shaking the (metaphorical?) dust from his vocal cords.

"Oh good!" replied a disembodied, chipper voice. "You're awake!

"Where am I?" Terzo twitched as he tried to wake up his limbs, eager to sit up and move.

"You're in my lab," the disembodied voice answered again.

Terzo coughed again, and winced in pain before rasping, "Who...are you?"

"My name is Doctor Stein," the owner of the voice stepped into his view. "But all my friends call me Frankie."

It was apparently a woman...or meant to resemble one. She was pale, almost deathly so, with a bit of green undertone. That wouldn't have fazed him usually, but paired with the blatant scars and stitches that ran across her (otherwise quite pretty) face, and he was a bit taken aback. Was she even human?

"Doctor...Stein?" Did he hear her right?

"Yes. Doctor Franziska Stein."

Franziska...Frankie. Stein. In a laboratory. With a formerly dead man, and looking not entirely naturally alive herself.
He would have laughed, if he hadn't been certain it'd hurt. And start an even more painful coughing fit.

"You...brought me back?" he asked, hesitantly.

"My brothers?" He briefly twitched himself into a slightly more upright position. He'd been too absorbed in figuring out his surroundings and circumstances to think about his brothers. Shameful and selfish of him, really.

"Don't worry," Doctor Stein said, gently patting his chest, "You'll get to see them again soon enough. They're recovering, too."

Recovering? So they'd been through this process as well. Though presumably with their heads still naturally attached.

"How did you...?" He struggled to finish his question and sit up, but the good doctor seemed to know what he was asking, and was happy to help him.

"With techniques pioneered by my grandfather." She planted a firm hand behind his back, and gently helped him push himself up into a sitting position, on what he assumed was some sort of operating table.

"Your grandfather?"

"Yeah. Doctor Viktor Frankenstein."

He laughed this time, and predictably went into a painful coughing fit. Doctor Stein patted him on the bank, and produced a bottle of water from her lab coat pocket, offering it to him.

He took it, slowly managed to unscrew the cap, stiffly and shakily raised to to his lips, and took a tiny sip; a bigger one and he feared he may choke on it.

They were both quiet as Terzo slowly sipped the water, tiny mouthful by tiny mouthful, careful gulp after careful gulp, the water soothing his throat. When he decided he'd had

enough, he screwed the top back onto the bottle, and closed his eyes as he let all of this new information settle into his mind.

After a long few minutes, Doctor Stein asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Heh," Terzo responded, managing to avoid another coughing fit. "That is a good question."

He honestly wasn't sure. One minute, he'd been playing Uno with his brothers, having just been informed that he and they were to be "reinstated". The next, he'd felt a sharp jab as the skin of his neck was punctured, and a hazy feeling had overtaken him. Other than that, he, so far, had only a few fleeting memories of fire and brimstone, and waking up suddenly in this lab. *Her* lab.

Doctor Stein patted his shoulder. "It can be a lot to take in."

"That is a bit of an understatement, Doctor."

"Your brothers also took some time to adjust," she continued, pulling off her nitrile gloves to reveal hands as beautiful and elegant (and equally stitched and scarred) as her face. "The eldest recovered the quickest, and he was mostly upset that I had 'ripped him away from his promised infernal reward' once he did."

Terzo nodded. Yep. That sounded like Primo. More concerned with no longer being in Hell than actually being alive again.

"The other one, well..." She chuckled. "Once he recovered, he tried to flirt with me."

Terzo chuckled. Yep. That sounded like Secondo. Seeing a beautiful woman and trying to get into her pants. He'd probably even made a dirty joke about stiffness and rigor mortis. Admittedly, Terzo himself would have, too, if he'd had the wherewithal to do so. Though not quite as lecherous as his slutty older brother, he *did* enjoy flirting and charming beautiful women. And Doctor Stein was indeed one.

Actually, speaking of appearances...

"How do I look?" he asked, probably sounding as unflatteringly vain as he felt.

"I was wondering when you were going to ask that." Doctor Stein shuffled off to a table, haphazardly sorting through the various items on it (including...jumper cables?), and came back holding an antique handled mirror.

She kept it clutched to her chest, a serious look on her patchwork face.

"Now remember," she said her tone firm-yet-gentle, like a doctor counselling a patient, "I had to reattach a part of you, and you had already been embalmed, but you do look better than I initially expected!"

Well, *that* was reassuring...

She handed him the mirror, he wrapped his stiff fingers around the handle, held it up to his face, and...

"Cazzo..."

The first thing Terzo noticed was the sickening, corpse-like pallor of his skin, even paler than his papal paints had been. Which was to be expected, since he *had* been a corpse until very very recently. But it was still unnerving. Ah, well. He supposed his circulation would improve soon enough and bring some colour back to him.
The second thing he noticed, was his lack of mitre. Which was also to be expected, as why would Dr. Stein leave it on him? He supposed he'd recover that too, soon enough.
The third thing he noticed, and the thing that *really* turned his stomach, was the stitches. On his neck.

He'd been expecting that, of course. Dr. Stein did mention having to reattach part of him, so that made sense. But it making logical sense didn't stop it from also really unnerving and unsettling him, from flipping his reaction to his own resurrection upside down.

To this point, he'd been absorbing all of this, trying to process it tiny bit by tiny bit, as he could. Trying to make sense of his new reality, and the actual emotions hadn't quite hit him yet.
But now? Upon seeing the evidence of his posthumous beheading? The clear proof that he had once been little more than a headless corpse? His stomach churned, and he felt and saw himself become even more pale than he already was.

He raised a shaky hand to his throat, gently touching the stitches (with his bare hand, he noticed, so his gloves were also gone), and just stared at his own reflection for what felt like forever. Eventually, though, he shakily lowered the mirror, and glanced down at his body. The telltale Y-shaped scar where he'd clearly been opened up, stitched up as expertly as his neck, greeted his eyes. More evidence that he'd been dead, gone from this world, not in his body on this mortal plane. His life taken from him.

The mirror fell from his now trembling hand, the glass smashing into pieces on the floor. His shallow breaths filled the otherwise silent room, and he felt himself shiver like a sapling in the wind.

"You must be cold!" Dr. Stein patted his shoulder and briefly disappeared into a supply closet, bringing back a large, plush robe. She draped it over his shoulders and helped him ease his still-stiff arms into the armholes, and pulled it snug around his middle. Not unlike a mother dressing a child.

"There you go," she said, softly. "Your brothers were chilly, too. But don't worry, you'll warm up soon enough, like they did."

His brothers...Terzo's stomach churned again. All three of them had been put through this, pulled from Hell and back into their previously dead bodies, having to adjust to life and their new existence as...whatever the heaven they were now. They all had that shared trauma.
But Terzo had the dubious honour of *extra* trauma, of having to see that he'd not been in once piece this whole time, an extra remembrance to his death. And how he'd been treated.

He expected tears to fall from his eyes, but nothing came, even though they stung. It was as though his tear ducts weren't working yet...and possibly never would.

Another shiver went through him. Lucifer, what *was* he now? An undead man who couldn't even cry? Some kind of zombie? A *monster*?

Could he even eat now? Drink? Sleep? Defecate? Urinate? Fuck? Did he even still have blood? Could he even heal properly, and eventually see these scars fade? Could he ever forget? Could he even be a fucking *human* anymore? Or was he cursed to always look and feel like a mistake of science, like a warning against going against the natural order of things, of life and death itself?

All of a sudden, memories of his deposal and forced retirement and that fateful Uno game came rushing back to him, overloading him with emotions he truly wished he could no longer feel.
He'd nearly succeeded in his goals, but was betrayed and given an untimely end. If he'd only been fired and forced out, he could have continued his preaching, his sermons, he could have kept trying to change the world, to enlighten others as he himself had been. But instead he'd been murdered, mutilated, discarded, and then brought back into this empty existence by a deranged patchwork woman who'd never known what it was to live a human life. He had failed, he had been failed...and now he found himself longing for the sweet embrace of his fiery grave, a burning, meaningful end to a now cold and empty existence. The embrace of Lucifer, the Dark Lord, would feel more merciful than *this*.

He, with some creaking and difficulty, curled in on himself, clutching his knees through the hospital blanket covering his lower half (at least Dr. Stein had allowed him *some* dignity). The robe, while warm, did nothing to deter the horrid chill than ran through him, nor the tearless sobs that wracked his body.

Dr. Stein allowed him a few minutes (or an eternity, Terzo couldn't tell, not anymore, as time and everything else was now meaningless to him) of silence, then spoke softly, encouragingly.

"You're handling this better than I thought you would."

A loud cry escaped him. Her gentleness and care, even after what she had done to him, after what she had turned him into, made him sick.

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