

KILLING HOOK

By Felipe D. Machado

"Hook was not his true name. To reveal who he really was would even at this date set the country in a blaze"

- J.M. Barrie

EXT. LONDON, 1871 - NIGHT

The foggy city sleeps beneath a sea of stars as we float above it. An upward glance reveals a particularly bright star blinking at us as if trying to speak.

A young woman's soothing voice hums a haunting melody. Over the tune, we hear a whisper:

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
You know that place...

We plummet down to the city, toward an old Victorian home, where the voice emanates from.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
...Between sleep and wake.

We move through an open window, flowing curtains, into...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

We find BELLE (early 30s, blonde) sitting on the side of a bed.

A YOUNG GIRL (10) lies asleep under the covers. She wipes the sweat from her forehead.

EXT. BRIGANTINE SAIL SHIP, LONDON DOCKS - NIGHT

A wooden MAST sways in the wind.

Belle enters frame, using a rope to pull herself up.

BELLE (V.O.)
The place where you can still
remember dreaming.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A tear runs down Belle's face as she caresses the girl's dormant face, continuing her verse:

BELLE
That's where I'll always love you.

EXT. BRIGANTINE SAIL SHIP, LONDON DOCKS - NIGHT

Belle reaches the yard of the mast. She steadies herself on the topmast and wrangles the hanging rope.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Belle leans in, kisses the girl's forehead.

EXT. BRIGANTINE SAIL SHIP, LONDON DOCKS - NIGHT

In a quick cutaway, we see Belle's body fly downward past frame. A rope trailing behind suddenly tightens.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Belle hurries out, she pauses briefly in the door frame, looks back to her child with tears in her eyes.

BELLE (V.O.)
That's where I'll be waiting.

She darts out. That last look, her final goodbye.

TITLE OVER:

KILLING HOOK

EXT. LONDON DOCKS - DAY

The hustle and bustle of the busy Port of London on the river Thames.

JAMES
She's a good, fast ship.

We close in on TWO MEN seemingly in the middle of an argument.

JAMES (30s, long dark hair, blue eyes), stands on the docks opposite from MR. DONAGHUE (50s, portly, bald, and very rich). The same Brigantine from earlier appears to be the subject of the discussion.

MR. DONAGHUE
My friend, you have my offer. Why don't you take a day to consider-

JAMES
You cannot possibly expect me to accept.

MR. DONAGHUE (50s) chuckles at James' indignation, moves to turn away.

JAMES

Where are you going? We're not done.

MR. DONAGHUE

Are we not? You've just declined my offer.

JAMES

Yes, you're to make a better one.

Mr. Donaghue lets out a single laugh and turns to his right hand man, BARRETT (40s), an unscrupulous character who casually leans on the brigantine while sizing up James.

A younger MINION (20s) next to him does his best to look mean.

JAMES

That's how this works. We negotiate.

Donaghue laughs harder while Barrett shifts his weight impatiently. The minion is unsure whose lead to take so he shifts and laughs a few seconds too late.

JAMES

(to Donaghue)

Look at me when we're speaking.

MR. DONAGHUE

James, you amuse me. How many other offers have you received since going to market?

James has no answer.

MR. DONAGHUE

I'll spare you the embarrassment. You say she's a good, fast ship, and I have no arguments there. Barrett here inspected every inch and she's more or less spotless.

Barrett taps on the hull to confirm Donaghue's statement.

JAMES

You won't find a better ship in this port. I know you have the money.

A desperate move.

MR. DONAGHUE
Wouldn't have much if I overspent
every time a friend got desperate.

This one hits home.

MR. DONAGHUE
James... As your friend.. I could
buy this vessel for twice the
offer, but when the time came to
hire a crew, I'd have to spend
twice s much again. Sailors are
nothing if not superstitious.

James knows where this is going.

JAMES
Don't say it.

MR. DONAGHUE
I said she's *more or less* spotless.
You and I both know why. I'm sorry,
but those are the facts. I can't
afford to crew a ghost ship.

Those words suck the soul out of James.

FLASH BACK TO:

James charges through the docks on a foggy morning. Confusion
as he cuts through a solemn crowd gathered near his ship.

Most can't bring themselves to look James in the eye.

Then he sees what they are gathered around...

JAMES
Cut her down! Please God, no.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Donaghue holds out his hand for a shake.

MR. DONAGHUE
What do you say, friend. Do we have
a sale?

James' entire being is elsewhere.

FLASH BACK TO:

In denial, James attempts to lift up Belle's lifeless body up
by the legs as it still hangs. He weeps as he uses all his
strength to hold her.

JAMES
HEEEEEELP! Somebody please help!

BACK TO PRESENT:

DONAGHUE
James?

James looks up. Emotionless.

JAMES
You and I are not friends. Tell
your servants to get off my ship.

Mr. Donaghue sighs, then signals to Barrett, who WHISTLES to his crew on the Brig. They jump down onto the dock and disappear into the crowd with their boss.

James is left alone on the dock. No prospects. No money.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

A hand stirs a stew pot.

Through a frosty window, we see James entering the front gate from the street. Steam from the stew rises in view.

Upon seeing James, NANA (60s) drops her spoon in the pot and heads for the entrance. Centrifugal force keeps the spoon twirling around the pot almost like magic.

ENTRANCE

The front door opens. Nana approaches, wiping her hands on her apron.

NANA
Back so soon?

JAMES
Strong winds. Is she awake?

James moves toward the stairs but Nana nervously steps into his path.

NANA
Won't you let her sleep a little
longer?

He attempts to walk by her.

JAMES

I'll just give her a kiss and let
her rest. Quiet as a mouse.

She extends her arm to the railing, completely blocking his path.

NANA

I had a hard enough time getting
her to fall asleep. Why don't you
come get warmed up? Try the stew.

James senses something is off. He pushes past her arm.

Nana exhales defeat as she watches him go.

We hear James open the door upstairs as Nana grabs her coat from the rack. She knows where this is going.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We fly through snow-covered woods, tracking a frozen stream.

Rhythmic CLANKING metal sounds. A child's heavy BREATHS.

Metal braces on a girl's legs are the source of the clanking. The same 10 year old girl we met earlier in the bedroom. Her name is JANE, but the children, in all their heartless cruelty, call her *Clank*.

Her mobility may be impaired, but the way she runs through the woods would make you believe she could fly.

As she runs deeper and deeper into the woods with a joyous smile on her face, the sounds of children and laughter grow louder around her, until...

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - CONTINUOUS

...She arrives at her destination, sloppily maintaining balance as she slides to a stop.

Before she can stand up straight, Jane gets hit with a snowball and falls hard on the ice.

A few kids laugh, but most of them go quiet. Ready to run if she starts crying.

Jane sits up and wipes her face, now red from the ice.

Surprisingly, she smiles... laughs.

Off her laughter, a giant snowball fight erupts between the other children.

Jane slowly pulls herself up. It's a struggle since her braces mean she can't bend her legs, and she's standing on i-

JAMES

Jane!

She sees James rush onto the ice. Her smile disappears.

James tries to stop but slips, clumsily getting to his knees near his daughter. A few kids laugh.

JAMES

Never do that again, do you hear me? What were you thinking?

The laughter stops.

JANE

I was just playing.

Tears well up in her eyes.

Another snowball flies in, hitting James' shoulder.

OLDER BOY (O.S.)

Ah, shit.

OLDER GIRL (O.S.)

Ye hit 'er dad, ye barmy idiot!

James turns and goes off on the other kids.

JAMES

Just leave her alone! What's the matter with you lot? Can't you see she's had enough?

James has gone too far. The children are afraid of him. Some even run away.

He turns back to Jane but she's gone. Running back upstream.

James knows he's mishandled the situation.

INT. JANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A well-kept but worn room. Jane spends a lot of time here.

Her toys and contraptions are indicative of a child who's had to make great use of her imagination.

A medicine cabinet by her bedside, filled with serums and remedies, is adorned with the words, "magic potions" in her own handwriting.

As we move through the room, a whisper is heard.

JANE (O.S.)
(whisper)
That sounds lovely.

The bed is bare because its quilted blanket is draped between two chairs in a corner, forming a makeshift tent.

From darkness, a light slowly begins to glow through the tent, revealing Jane's silhouette sitting inside.

JANE
(whisper)
Much better.

We hear the muffled sound of a door closing.

Jane's silhouette turns toward us. The light source flickers.

JAMES (O.S.)
Jane?

FOOTSTEPS coming up the stairs.

Jane's silhouette turns back to the light.

JANE
(whisper)
Please don't leave me here.

The room suddenly goes dark before the door opens slowly.

JAMES
May I come in?

He gets the silent treatment. Steps inside.

James takes a deep breath.. Exhales.

JAMES
You must understand...

Jane grabs hold of the blanket and pulls it down onto herself as if it were a cloak.

JAMES
I know you think I'm the bad guy...
I suppose that's all right. I don't
want you to feel bad about that.

Jane is so still we can see her back rising and falling as she breathes.

JAMES

You're not going to talk?

Jane tightens the blanket around her head.

JAMES

That's it... You've brought this upon yourself.

James takes a child-sized umbrella from the coat rack and quietly steps toward the other side of the bed.

Jane lifts her head slightly toward her father, cracks the faintest smile.

He points the umbrella at her as if it were a cutlass.

JAMES

Arm yourself, you rotten scoundrel.

James steps forward in a faux stab.

Jane rolls away as gracefully as a child wearing leg braces possibly can, and grabs a leg scratcher as her weapon.

James strikes again at half-speed but she parries.

JANE

You'll never take me alive you dirty pirate!

James breaks character for a moment:

JAMES

Easy.

Jane realizes she got too excited.

JANE

Sorry.

They resume.

James is obviously a skilled swordsman. He spins and deflects as Jane tries to hit him. He slows his swings, giving her ample time to dodge them.

Jane retaliates with a flurry of uncoordinated strikes. James pretends to strain with each one until he makes his move...

He swings at Jane's leg, but his attack is blocked by the metal "armor," leaving him exposed to...

STAB. The leg scratcher "pierces" James' heart. He drops the umbrella and buries the scratcher under his arm as if it has gone through him.

JAMES

I should've known. Your armor is too strong.

JANE

I warned you about this, pirate!

James feigns shortness of breath as he collapses to the ground.

JAMES

(strained)

Now you've done it.

Jane crawls over to her father, now unsure if James is actually hurt.

JAMES

(whisper)

You broke my heart.

Despite being a better swordsman than an actor, James "dies" dramatically, sound effects and all.

JANE

Father...

She shakes him.

JANE

It was just a game. You're not a real pirate.

James jolts awake, startling Jane into laughter.

He embraces her as she laughs. He smiles but in moments it fades, an emptiness shows through. His mind is at once present and elsewhere.

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