

**The Water Harvest**  
**By Chris Lee**

**John - Audition Piece 1**

*John hurls himself at the audience. All out attack.*

Now let's get one thing straight, ok. He was never my friend.

Not a friend in any way, not a friend, whatever friend might mean, even in the smallest degree.

There was not a hint, not a whiff of the friend about him.

Everything about him is unsavoury, unpleasant, unhelpful and unhygienic. There. That's all there is to it. That's the summation of everything. That's the end point of the history. The history of him.

And when he dies, let me say this most sincerely, when he dies, I hope that eternal damnation, even though I accept that eternal damnation is an infantile proposition, even though, I hope in his case they will make an exception, and fling his spirit, or whatever it is that might remain when the worms have gnawed through his flesh, fling it far into the heart of unfathomable, unceasing misery, where vengeful infinity, if I'm very lucky, will suck it in and roast it and not stop such roasting until the whole might of the universe collapses back on itself at the end of time.

Why? Why not? Why not indeed?

Does anyone have a right to know? Isn't sheer naked hatred enough? Perhaps not.

Perhaps there is the wish to go picking through the past. Perhaps there is the need to analyse.

Everybody wants a fucking story. To comfort them and reassure them that there is hope after all.

So, there'd better be a story then, hadn't there.

Let me describe him.

Let me describe Jim. Even the name. Timid, ugly monosyllable. A wet whisper, a half notion. Jim. A man with no defining characteristics. On the dull side of normal.

A face that doesn't linger in the memory. A slight odour of mould. Average everything, but also, partly sagging.

Colour of eyes, undecided. Watery bluish greenish greyish. The colour of slush. Eyebrows weak and flimsy. A good indication of character eyebrows. Unless the eyebrows are prominent there is unlikely to be much in the way of personality.

Jim's forehead was furrowed, as is not uncommon, but less with the woes of the world than with the traces of continuous befuddlement.

Nose, with hair protruding from each nostril, longer with the passing years and occasionally picked but never plucked, chicken pox scars on the left side and a tilt in the bridge to the right.

Not enough to lend distinction.

Ugly but not conspicuously so.

If only he had been ugly, if only he had been unspeakably foul, then the channel of my rage would be warmed with fear and the words of his reply might be worth heeding.

But he was not ugly, he was merely unhandsome. Thin lips to indicate a life unknissed. Sunken cheeks, floppy jowls and a neck like boiled mutton.

Be fat if you want to, but be heavy and rolling and bask, please, in the courage of obesity.

Jim was a fat thin man, or perhaps he was a thin fat man. A little pot belly, propped up on two spindly legs.

I will omit a full account of his genitalia.

He had a meagre portion in the nether region, as unspectacular as the rest of him.

So I finish then, with his feet, with his pale stumpy feet, starved of light all their life, like the horrible eyeless fish in underground caves. I cannot remember him ever cutting his toenails. Not even Jim could bear to touch those feet.

That's Jim.

That's all of him. Jim.

And I wish he was dead.

Of course he may be dead.

## **John - Audition Piece 2**

I never went back to the hospital after Jim left.

*Pause*

I went to the pub.

*Pause*

I hadn't been out in ages.

It seemed like the thing to do. Go down the pub and have a few drinks. Pretend you're normal. Listen to bad jokes, drink bad beer, get drunk, come home.

Uneventful. A planned night of the uneventful.

But fuck what a problem going out through the door.

Not obsession with how I looked, no. Comb through the hair maybe, smart casual dress, but fuck, I mean for the pub.

The reluctance. Move those feet. The door held open. There I was, staring out into the drizzling night.

A street lamp spluttering. Spitting out a message, so I thought, knew it was ridiculous. Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you.

Street lamps don't talk. I'm not that kind of mad.

No, I'm tortured intellectual Dublin 4 type mad, not muttering dirty raincoat speaking in tongues last Dart to the North-side mad.

So I took stock.

Take stock my father would say, clearly not taking stock himself.

I sucked in a deep breath and stepped outside.

It was cold but I had begun to sweat.

I had begun to sweat and when you start then even in the shivering dark Niagara Falls can pump from your brow. The pub, the pub, the fucking pub, you're only going to the pub. I heard the clack of my boots on the concrete pavement.

Each step with a shuddering echo, the sound of walking, so step step step, so heavy, so tense and loud. Just the sound of my feet.

Paranoia.

No, calm down I thought, calm you down, rest you.

There it was, the pub.

My hand on the door. I pushed. I was inside.