Monsters

A sequel to A Night Under the Stars. Our drifter finds himself witnessing a brutal crime in a small Texas town. When a vicious biker gang, a nameless thing and a man with no compunctions clash who is the real monster? Monsters is a 2,700 word short story previously published as part of a mini anthology titled Drift. It is presented here in a revised form.

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by

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He nursed his beer while trying to guess the petite brunette’s name. She was sitting at the bar sipping on some fruity concoction through a straw. When she had first walked in he immediately noticed her blue sundress but then moved north to her puffy eyes and lack of makeup. She looked like a Mary or maybe a Miranda. In the end it didn’t matter he thought as he raised his bottle to his lips. Pickups usually went south as soon as they found out that he lived in RV parks. He decided that he would finish this beer and then leave.

There were exactly four people in the bar; the brunette, Susie maybe, the bartender, a dark haired young man in a black pea coat, and himself. The young man was slumped over the counter with a shot of whiskey in one hand and an empty beer bottle in front of him. Several more empties had already made their way to the trash. He raised his shot glass with a shaking hand, sloshing whiskey over the edge, and tilted his head back to drink it. When he set it down his head dipped even lower towards the countertop. The bartender was watching him as he cleaned up and it was obvious that he was going to ask for his keys soon.

He turned away to glance out the window behind him. Dusk was rapidly turning into full dark. He still had half a bottle left so he leaned back in his seat and watched the sun set over west Texas. He was lost in thought when he heard the approaching roar of a motorcycle, several motorcycles actually to judge by the volume. The rumble continued to grow louder until it was right outside and then the sound died away as one by one the engines were shut off. Heavy boots tramping preceded the door being thrown open where it bounced off of the wall behind it.

Six men wearing matching leather jackets stomped in talking loudly and swearing among themselves. At the counter the woman, Jackie maybe, hunched in on herself and turned her head away slightly. The bartender’s expression never changed and the young drunk just continued to sink ever lower. One of the bikers walked over to the jukebox and fed it coins before making his selections. In moments Cat Scratch Fever began pouring out of the speakers.

The rest of the bikers wound their way through the tables to the bar. Just as they came to a stop in front of it the young man’s head finally succumbed to gravity and booze hitting the counter with a hollow thump. The bikers started laughing wildly and joking amongst themselves about how he couldn’t hold his liquor. The bartender just rolled his eyes at him before turning back to ask for their order. They each asked for beer and the bartender started popping tops off of bottles. While he was doing that one of the bikers, a skinny man with pale skin and lanky hair, spotted the brunette sitting on her stool. He nudged one of his companions, a tall man with broad shoulders and blonde hair that hung to his shoulders. When he saw what his friend was looking at a smile crept over his face and his eyes lit up eagerly. He moved over to lean against the bar beside her, reaching out his hand to brush her cheek.

“What’s your name sweetheart?”

She flinched away, but otherwise sat rigid and still on her stool. His companions gathered around her in a looming circle and began making crude comments to her.

“Leave her alone or I’m gonna have to ask you to leave”, interjected the bartender.

The blonde leader attempted to stare him down, but to the bartenders credit he met his stare and refused to be intimidated even though the biker towered over him. A toothy, maniacal smile spread across blonde biker’s face after several moments of this. He turned to face the rest of his gang and jerked his head back towards the bartender. Two of them immediately leapt the counter and grabbed his arms before he could run. He struggled, but they both outweighed him by close to a hundred pounds. A third biker took his time in sauntering around the counter, cracked his knuckles, and without a word began pummeling the helpless bartender. The brunette that he had been attempting to defend began crying hysterically. Blonde biker’s smile never faltered.

None of them had taken any notice of the drifter in the back corner. He had continued to sip his beer while debating the merits of getting involved. The trio beating the bartender finally dumped him on the floor unconscious. Blonde biker had stopped paying attention, however, and was leering at the Brunette and stroking her tear stained cheek. He made gentle shushing sounds as he did this, but they only made her tears flow faster. Then suddenly his hand slipped behind her neck and he jerked her face close to his. She gasped in air and her whimpering stopped suddenly. She tensed up momentarily and then began frantically beating on his chest. He laughed and lifted her off of the floor. She struggled and flailed until other members of his gang grabbed her limbs. They threw her onto one of the pool tables. Her crying grew louder as they pawed at her and tore at her clothes. She begged them to stop, but they were indifferent to her pleas.

The man in the corner, still unnoticed, glanced down at his empty left hand. He stood up slowly and slid along the back wall to the door. His shoulders were hunched and he kept low trying not to catch the attention of the gang. Luckily for him, if not for the brunette, all eyes were on the woman struggling on the table. He slipped through the front door and ran bent over to his truck parked along the side of the building.

As he ran he heard the music from inside swell, presumably to cover the sounds of screaming and raucous laughter. It would also help cover the sound of him cranking his vehicle to make a quick getaway. He started his truck and brought it around to the front of the building, leaving it idling. Inclining his seat he retrieved a double barrel 12 gauge shotgun. He pulled out a small box that held an assortment of rounds from buckshot to slugs and even a round known as Dragon’s Breath. He broke it open and loaded it with two shells. Several other rounds, including the Dragon’s Breath, went into his coat pocket. Snapping it closed he walked stiff legged back to the bar.

Back inside he was greeted with a scene straight out of a thriller movie. The bikers were in a half circle around the pool table laughing at the brunette’s struggles. Their leader had not quite gotten around to his full intent luckily. He was standing beside the table holding her wrists down against its surface while making shushing sounds and laughing. She was throwing her head side to side with her eyes tightly shut. Tears leaked down her face. Her feet were beating a staccato rhythm against the table that could be heard even over the jukebox.

Immediately in front of him, with his back to the door, was the lanky haired rider who had first spotted the woman.

Holding his shotgun in a two handed grip he approached him on the balls of his feet. When he was behind him he struck him with the butt of his weapon just like Uncle Sam had taught him to. Lanky hair dropped to the floor in a heap. He stepped over him as the other members of the gang finally noticed an armed man in their midst and began frantically backpedaling. The leader looked up just in time from his sport to see the drifter level his shotgun to his shoulder.

They locked eyes for a split second before the shotgun blast permanently erased his smile. A red spray drenched the woman on the table and several of the bikers who were diving for cover. He grabbed the woman’s arm and pulled her off the table to her feet. She had stopped crying, but she was breathing quickly and shallowly as she stared at the blood covering her.

He pushed her behind him and raised his shotgun back to his shoulder. The next shell was buckshot. If any of them charged he wanted to catch as many of them as possible when he fired. He shuffled back towards the door keeping an eye on the bikers, waiting for them to find their nerve to attack. He had hoped that taking out their leader would rattle them enough to buy them the time they needed to reach the door. That’s when the juke box cut off and they heard the giggling.

He spun around towards the sound. Standing in front of the door holding the power chord for the juke box was the young man who had passed out on the counter. His eyes were bloodshot and his face was pale. He slowly smiled revealing sharp jagged teeth running a forked tongue over them. Shocked gasps and more than a few expletives came from the bikers around them.

He swung the woman around to place her behind him again and trained his weapon on the thing in front of them. It crouched down spreading its arms wide showing that it had grown thick, black claws on the tips of its fingers. It opened its mouth and its throat expanded, almost like a frog, before letting out an earsplitting scream. It leaped in the air in an arc designed to land in the middle of its targets.

He followed it with the shotgun and as it passed over head pulled the trigger putting a round of 12 gauge buckshot in the center of its torso. It landed in a crouch and hissed in pain. That didn’t stop it from attacking the nearest unlucky biker who screamed as it tore at his flesh. Blood sprayed from a torn throat. To their credit the others tried to come to his rescue. They beat at the thing with bottles and fists but they were no more effective than the shotgun had been.

He yelled at the woman, “Get outside now. “

“What about the bartender?” She cried.

He glanced to where the bartender was still laying on the floor. He was beginning to move his head weakly but it was clear that it would be awhile before he could stand on his own, much less run for his life. The screams of the bikers were growing more frantic as they were being torn apart. He snapped the shotgun open and removed the spent cartridges. In their place went another slug and the Dragon’s Breath. He doubted that either would kill this creature, whatever it was, but it might slow it down enough for them to escape. He ran to the downed man with the woman right behind him.

Jerking him up roughly by the arm he turned to the woman and said “You have to help him walk. He’s still out of it and I need my hands free.”

She nodded and sniffed once but her tears were mostly dried up. She was in shock but was following orders and still moving. That gave them a chance of making it out alive he thought.

The screams of the embattled bikers were growing louder as were the growls of the thing that was killing them. The trio ran for the exit. They were almost there when the abused, bloody corpse of the lanky haired biker flew by them to crash into the door. It made a wet splat and slid to the floor in a heap leaving a wide red streak.

He turned around to cover their escape and was confronted by a scene from Hell. The thing, be it demon or ghoul, was crouched in front of him. Its mouth was spread wide showing wicked rows of teeth and its forked tongue was moving lazily side to side. Its hair was matted with dark blood making it stick out in erratic angles. Hissing it began creeping towards them on all fours. He promptly fired a slug unto its open mouth jacking its head back and bowling it over. It landed on its back but kicked its way to its feet like someone out of an 80’s martial arts movie. Meanwhile the trio of survivors was still backing towards the door.

The drifter was looking for an opportunity to clear the doorway before a now enraged monster could pounce on him, when out of nowhere the last surviving biker came crashing into the fiend that had killed his companions. He must have been 6’3” and looked to be made of solid muscle. He brought a full bottle of Jack Daniels crashing down on its head. The glass shattered drenching them both in whiskey and broken shards. The creature slashed at him causing him to jump backwards. Then the creature really did pounce.

Miraculously the biker caught both of its wrists in his hands and held them away. They struggled back and forth across the room. The drifter took one appraising look at the liquor soaked monster before raising his shotgun back to his shoulder. There was a boom from the gun and twenty feet of burning magnesium pellets leaped out striking both combatants as they fought.

The whiskey they were covered in caught fire instantly causing them both to shriek in pain. As they burned they fell into the bar, which was itself soaked in alcohol. The counter lit up with flames which started to spread immediately. He grabbed the body blocking the door and heaved it out of the way before hustling the woman and her load through. Then they were running towards his truck supporting the bartender between them.

He pushed the semiconscious man into the cab of the truck and the woman slid in next to him holding him up. The drifter ran to the driver’s side, jumped in, threw the vehicle in gear and sped away. In the rearview mirror he could see the flames spreading to engulf the entire building. He pushed the speedometer up, way up, until they got close to town. He eased off the pedal when he spotted the city limit sign. He turned to his passengers to speak for the first time since they had got into the truck.

“Where is the hospital” he asked.

“We don’t have a hospital”, the woman replied. “We have an emergency clinic on 2nd street.”

He turned back to watch the road and a mile later flipped on his blinker to turn onto 2nd St. He pulled into the parking lot of the clinic, but parked by the street where there were no lights. He climbed out of the cab and walked around to help get the bartender out. He was conscious now, but still groggy. Likely he was concussed. The woman put her shoulder under his arm to help him stumble to the door. They took several steps before she realized that the drifter was no longer with them. She turned her head and saw him walking back towards the driver side of the vehicle.

“Aren’t you coming in?” she cried.

“No” he replied.

The woman chewed her lip for a minute, working up her courage, before speaking again.

“You scare me. Maybe even more than those monsters back at the bar. The way you just killed them. You didn’t even hesitate.”

He just shrugged in response.

She started walking again bent over from the weight of carrying an injured man. Before he shut his door he called out one last question.

“Hey! What’s your name?”

Over her shoulder she responded, “Christina. My name is Christina.”

He smiled at how far off he had been as he got behind the wheel. He drove off planning how to keep his involvement being known by the police. A new paint job for his truck was a definite. A new license plate might be in order as well. Maybe he would paint it black. A dark blue might be nice as well. He’d have to think it over.

About the Author

Stewart Felkel lives in Sterlington, La with his beautiful wife and their three fur babies. He has been a band director, music minister and optician. His hobbies include an eclectic mix of things including boxing, archery, bowery, medieval combat and writing. For more freebies, news of upcoming works and the occasional book review check out his website www.stewartfelkel.weebly.com.