

STIKIN

written by

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My name is Aaron Hill. I'm a paranormal investigator and blogger working with the Lazlo Society. I live and work in a small town in Southern California called Devil's Corner, but about a year ago, I was contacted by a man in Albuquerque, New Mexico who claimed he had a story for my blog...one that the Lazlo Society would be interested in. He told me he didn't want to tell it over the phone, for some reason. Said it would be worth the trip. I, of course, insisted on hearing an abbreviated version first, and he obliged.

I posted that shortened account on my blog, which ended up, after only a few months, being the all-time most-read story on the site.

Needless to say, I made the drive to New Mexico to meet with that man, Jason Pitman, and hear the full version of his story. Following is the transcript of his end of that conversation, sans my occasional questions, comments, and, "oh \$#!*'s."



"What was that?" my little brother asked in a panicked tone. We had both been startled awake by the same shrill, piercing sound. It was halfway between a hawk or an owl screeching, and that blood-curdling scream you always hear in horror movies when women are being stabbed in showers and such.

I snatched my glasses off the night stand and went to the window, wiping off the frost with the sleeve of my thermal top, momentarily ignoring little Joshie's question. Whatever that odd noise was, it sounded like it had been right outside the bedroom, and we were on the second floor, so I didn't anticipate any danger.

When I pulled back the blinds and peered outside, into the black, moonless night, all I could see was the outline of bare post oaks, like a mess of disembodied veins reaching skyward against the soft glow of the city beyond.

"C'mon, Jay, what was it?" Josh asked a second time, his voice a hair less frantic.

"Probably just an owl," I responded, halfheartedly. It didn't sound like any owl I'd ever heard, but I wanted to calm little Joshie's fears, and, though it was neither, owls are less scary than bats. My brother was only seven at the time and the kid was scared of his own shadow. Still is, even at forty-two, and I have to believe it had something to do with that night, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

"Okay, Jay...good night," Josh said as he laid back down, closing his eyes, pulling his Spider-Man comforter up tight around his neck as one does in the frigid early morning hours.

"Night, Joshie," I responded, my eyes still fixed on the darkness beyond my frosty bedroom window. My younger brother seemed to be buying my explanation, but I wasn't. I'd lived with my dad in the forest twenty minutes outside of town all eleven years of my life up to that point. I'd heard owls and bats at night, hawks and all manner of other birds during the day, and that sound wasn't a match for any of 'em.

I must've stood at that window, in the biting cold, listening for that sound to come again for a good ten minutes, mesmerized by the gently swaying black forest of naked oaks, but the sound did not come. By the time I dragged myself back toward the comfort of my bed, Josh was sound asleep, and as alluring as he made a warm bed look, happily snoring away, I suddenly got that late-night urge that has become such an annoyance now, in my late forties. Too much water before bed, no doubt.

As it happened—to mine and Joshie's soon misfortune—the hall bathroom had a burnt-out lightbulb which my father had been meaning to change for several weeks, but times being tough as they were, food was more important than light. That meant using the bathroom in my father's bedroom was the only option for an early-morning pee break, unless I wanted to make a detour down to the kitchen for a flashlight, so I quickly shuffled toward dad's room.

As I neared the slightly-open door, I noticed a chill blowing out into the hallway, lowering the temperature noticeably and filling me with a deep, inexplicable sense of foreboding. Why had my dad opened his window at such an hour, and on such a cold night? My dad was a smoker, but in the time before nicotine addicted parents really began taking the risks of second-hand smoke seriously. That is to say, my dad wouldn't bother cracking a window to have a smoke. He'd just sit up in bed, light one up, and, oftentimes, fall asleep with it still in his hand. And he had the burn-hole riddled comforter to prove it. It's really a wonder we didn't all die in a housefire before that night, but, lucky us, we were still around to experience it together.

I took a trepidatious step toward the door just as the breeze gently pushed it shut, with a click, not a slam. Still, it startled me, and I was instantly reminded of my full bladder, almost releasing it. I somehow held it in and ventured a few steps closer to the door, the telltale aroma of stale tobacco that perpetually hovered in dad's room growing more noticeable with each step.

"Dad?..." I called from the hall, and waited, but he didn't respond. Dad had once, several years prior, slept through a car accident, so I wasn't surprised that my small, prepubescent voice timidly squeaking out his name from behind an inch or so of solid wood failed to rouse him.

"Dad, are you awake?" I asked, a little louder this time, but still, there was no reply. Something was telling me not to go in...something primal, rising up from a place deep within, was begging me to hold it, to go back to bed, to leave well enough alone, but an inexplicable empathic dread; a sudden fear for my father's safety, dragged me closer to his room, closer to...

I gripped the frozen handle, turned slowly, and pressed against the door with just enough force to crack it an inch, and peeked through the opening. It was too dark to see anything helpful, but I could hear something...a violent and erratic clicking, joined by an oddly-familiar sound, kind of like slurping, but not just any slurping.

See, my father, he used to eat chicken legs with such fervor... It was like the man had this single-minded determination to get every piece of soft matter off that bone. Even the most microscopic shred or meat, vein, or skin. It was like a personal challenge or something, for my old man, to never send a chicken bone into the trash before it was picked and licked clean.

It was a disgusting sight, but the sound was worse.

That sound...that's the sound I heard coming from my dad's room that night, and I knew, simultaneously, that something was very wrong, and that I could do nothing to fix it. Regardless, my love for my father pushed me further in, through the door and into that room.



It opened without a squeak, for which I was relieved, and I tiptoed in, crouching as low as possible without falling over. Dad's bed was situated on the far corner of the room opposite the door, just under a large window, which I could plainly see, now, was open. To the left, as you went into the bedroom, was my father's desk where he'd sit and take care of grown-up stuff like bills and budgets. It wasn't hard for me to crawl underneath, behind the office chair, which he had left pulled out a foot or so from the desk.

So, I did. I hid under that desk, staring, breathless, past the chair as a thin, black shadow perched atop my old man's chest, craning its head down to meet his face, its movements erratically shifting between violent jerks, and gentle, almost imperceptible undulation—and I say *perched* because the thing had a very bird-like quality to its movements.

At first, I became filled with a different kind of fear than was appropriate. I thought I had walked in on my dad entertaining a female guest. He'd never done so before, at least not since mom died in that car accident several years earlier, but I was aware such things happened in the world of grown-ups on account of my dad never having caught me, sneaking into the living room late at night to watch *forbidden television*. I don't remember what channel it was, but I do remember sitting on the sofa, feeling things I had never felt before, as a beautiful woman mounted an odd-looking mustachioed fellow and started moving kind of like she was riding a horse. Or at least that was my thought as an innocent 11-year-old.

Embarrassed to be witnessing such an event, I resolved to get out of that room as quickly and as quietly as I could. Just as I was preparing to make my escape, however, all movement stopped, as well as those slurping and clicking sounds, which I had, in my small mind, decided was what kissing sounded like when the two smoochers' teeth knocked together. It was still and dead silent for what seemed like forever, then I heard the door fly open, and a flash of light landed on the face of the thing straddling my father.

It wasn't human—not entirely at least—but there was intelligence in its eyes, though...there were no pupils or irises to speak of. I could see it craning its head from side to side, trying to look through, or past the light, at whatever its source may have been, when I realized it had to be Joshie.

Filled with grave concern for my little brother, I jumped out from my hiding spot, screaming, “Noooooooo!” Why I chose that word, I'll never know. I mean, it kind of makes sense, but it's an incomplete sentiment. No, what?

I reached for the light switch on my dad's desk lamp and flipped it on, expanding the illumination from the flashlight, which had only exposed the thing's head, out over the entire

room, revealing it for the revolting monstrosity it was. A mistake I'll regret for the rest of my life. Not because of anything that happened afterward, but because the image I saw was so mind-bendingly horrifying, it has been forever burned into my psyche...and Josh's.

Now bathed in light, the thing jerked its face toward the ceiling, and opened wide its ghastly, blood-drenched mouth—which was kind of a cross between a skeletal human jaw filled with sharp fangs, and an owl's beak—and let out that same screeching wail that had started me and Josh on this unfortunate expedition to my father's bedroom. The noise was so shrill and so loud at such a close range, that I was forced, out of compulsion, to cover my ears, fearing I would never hear again if I continued to endure it at full volume. For some reason, I closed my eyes as well. I suppose because I was having a hard time coping with the horrific visage emitting that sound, but, in retrospect, it would have been wiser to keep them open.

It was truly hideous, what I saw in that fraction of a second I laid eyes on it.

Its eyes were dead, glowing and recessed; two pure white orbs set in big, black voids. It had what looked like tattered feathers sparsely scattered all over. At the ends of each spindly arm, there was a collection of very long fingers, tipped with sharp claws. Its legs resembled extremely thin human legs, but they were jointed more like an animal's legs. Not reversed like a bird's legs, but more like a dog, with long talon-like claws at the ends of each toe. And its torso...where its stomach should have been, was a concave chasm of black, flanked on either side by a pronounced ribcage below taut, gray skin.

I heard one more screech, and then the sound of the window sliding open, and a kind of a whoosh. Joshie told me later that he watched the thing's long, spider-like arms, sprout hundreds of feathers in an instant—what I suspect is the reason my brother was more adversely affected than I—just before it jumped out the window and flew away, leaving my father's ghastly corpse lying on the bed for poor Joshie and me to discover.

His face was almost completely gone, and most of his teeth had been broken off. Whatever that thing was, it had been trying furiously to get down inside my father's throat. For what reason, I couldn't say, though, I'd venture to guess it wanted at the organs behind my old man's ribcage. Maybe for a creature like that, the throat was an easier route.

When I did open my eyes, and got over the worst of the shock from seeing my dad in that state, the thing was gone. Whatever had killed my dad had left my brother and me alone. I didn't find out why until several years later. And even then, I'm still not quite sure.

I don't think I'll ever make complete sense of what happened to my dad, of what my brother and I witnessed that night, but one event did give me a measure of understanding, though not the kind of understanding one seeks in situations such as the one in which I found myself.

The event in question started only a week or so after dad died. My brother and I were taken in by a kindly woman who lived only about fifteen minutes from my dad's place, in an even more secluded part of the forest. She was a little older than dad, but attractive for a woman of her age, and her house seemed to be always redolent with the alluring scent of apple pie—the

aroma of cinnamon and caramel, joined by baked Granny Smiths, is as fresh in my nostrils as it was thirty years ago...

Miss Miller seemed genuinely excited to have me and Josh come stay with her. It was only supposed to be a temporary arrangement, as she was serving as a transitional foster parent until a more traditional, “nuclear” family was found, but—and I can’t confirm this...it’s just how I remember things happening—it seemed like every time a prospective family showed interest, they experienced some roadblock—sometimes tragedy—which prevented them from taking us in. That was fine for Josh and me because we really liked living with Miss Miller. We never could call her mom, but we treated her as such, until...



I was eighteen, had just landed my first full-time job, having graduated high school only a month prior, and I was planning to move to the city. You know, not out of a desire to escape anything, but just to live closer to work and to my friends.

Well, I had arisen much earlier than usual that morning, for some reason, though I will likely never remember what that reason was, because of what happened next.

I remember stumbling, half-asleep, into the kitchen to make a pot of coffee. The sun wasn’t up just yet, and, I guess, neither was I, because I didn’t bother to turn on a light or anything. I just fumbled over to the coffee machine and pushed the button to start it brewing the grounds that were left over from the previous day—a habit I picked up from dad when I was younger, and he’d have me make his coffee. He used to make sure I rebrewed every batch once. It was weaker the second time, sure, but, “not weak enough to waste,” he would say.

So, I stood, drowsily waiting for the coffee, staring out the window, when I found myself reminiscing about that night. There I was, seven years later, looking out a different window in a different house, but staring at those same trees, backlit by city lights illuminating the early-morning mist.

Even now, I question what I saw next. I was very tired, so I suppose I could have fallen asleep standing there...dreamt it all. It really could have been a dream, and I hope with every ounce of my being it *was* a dream, but the same instinct deep inside that warned me that night to stay out of dad’s room, that instinct tells me what I saw was real.

As I stared out Miss Miller’s window that morning, I saw a large black shape light upon a treetop just beyond the open clearing we called the back yard. It was just a silhouette when I first laid eyes on it, and I wanted to believe it was just a large owl, but again, I somehow knew it wasn’t. I strained to see what was going on in that tree, but it was just too dark.

Within moments, however it flew down, holding a sack with a clawed hand that protruded from the end of one of its wings. I didn’t have to have light to see what it was. I had watched the same silhouette as it labored furiously to eat a hole down my dad’s throat seven

years prior. That silhouette was suddenly standing outside my kitchen window. It didn't notice me, I guess...I mean, I don't think it did. Because, what it did next, it probably wouldn't have done had it known I was watching.

The creature proceeded to remove what looked like organs, guts...intestines...from the bag, gobbling them up quickly, into its beak-mouth, which was, by that time, opened probably three times wider than I would have guessed it could have.

Once it was done with the gruesome task of eating a bag full of viscera, it began to move toward the back door, in bizarre, uneven jerking strides, all the while shifting, transforming, becoming something else...*someone* else.

It was becoming...*Miss Miller*.

I didn't stick around in the kitchen to say hi. I shuffled to my room as stealthily and quickly as I could, climbed into bed and pulled the sheets up, praying that she hadn't seen me.

A minute later, the coffee machine sounded off, with a long *beeeeeep*.

Miss Miller didn't mention it when I came out for breakfast later, and I didn't either, but that day, while Miss Miller was out shopping, I told Joshie to pack his stuff, and he and I left that house like bats out of hell. We drove until we hit a city big enough to hide us, and far enough that no owl could make the flight in a single night, and that was right here, the same city where we've been living ever since.

Time does have a tendency to blur the past, but, despite losing large chunks of my childhood memories, and even plenty from adulthood, some things remain fresh as the day they happened, for better or for much, *much* worse.



Okay, Aaron here again. I lied. I didn't omit myself completely. This next part is the rest of our conversation, word-for-word. I'm labeled with, "AH," and Mr. Pitman with "JP."

JP - "Well, I want to thank you for listening to my tale again, mister Hill."

AH - "Please, call me Aaron."

JP - "Sounds good, Aaron. Well, it's a fantastical one, I know, but it really did happen, just like I said. Scout's honor. And I do apologize for the lateness of the hour. Some stories you can't just spit out in the time it takes to watch a sitcom, you know? You've gotta tell them just as they happened, slowly, deliberately...with feeling! Not leaving anything out. Every element of all the best stories have meaning, you know? Even the minutest of details. Even full bladders and coffee machines."

AH - (I laughed here. Jason was an entertaining man. Despite all he'd gone through, he still had a mirthful way about him...)

JP - “And you don’t have to go, you know, Aaron? You’ve got a long drive ahead of you and you should get some rest first, so I don’t end up reading about you veering off into a semi or something. Why, I couldn’t live with myself...”

AH - “Oh, that’s very kind of you, Mr. Pitman, but—”

JP – “Well, now, if I’m calling you *Aaron*, you’re calling me *Jason*, and that’s that.”

AH – (I laughed again and began considering his offer as he continued.)

JP – “And I insist. Listen, you’re welcome to stay on the sofa, if you like. The sun will be up soon, anyway, so you may as well—”

(At this point, Jason and I were both startled to hear a long, *beeeeeeeep* come down the hall from his kitchen. Neither of us had gotten up in over an hour, and I doubt Jason had his coffee maker set for 4:13 a.m.)

Jason’s countenance fell as a grave expression crept across his face. He sat there, speechless, staring down the dark hall for over a minute. And believe me when I say, that was the longest minute of my life. Suddenly, though, Jason broke the silence. He looked at me and said, “You know what, Aaron, I’m going to have to take back my offer. I’m not feeling too well. There’s a cheap motel down the road...”

He had gone pale, and his speech trailed off. I asked if he was alright, if I could do anything for him, but he insisted I leave. When I refused, concerned for his safety, he became irate. Very unlike the man I had gotten to know over the course of emails, phone conversations, and an overnight interview. I tried to get him to come with me, get some coffee at a Denny’s or something, but he shuffled me out the door and slammed it shut. I heard the deadbolt turn and I knew I wasn’t getting back in.

I had no choice. I had to go, but I immediately called the police, and waited in my car for the cruiser to arrive. I watched, filled with dread, as the officers knocked on the door, but, to my shock and surprise, a moment later the door opened, and there was Jason Pitman, all smiles. The cops weren’t too happy with me, but they understood. I think.

I drove home without stopping for anything more than a tank of gas, and I tried to call Mr. Pitman several times the following week, but there was no answer. I then emailed him two or three times, with no reply, so, out of morbid curiosity, I did a search for obituaries in Albuquerque.

What I found gives me chills, even to this day.

I found two *Pitmans* listed. Both Jason and his brother, Joshua. I did some more searching and found the news stories about their deaths. They had both been found in their respective homes, the same day—the day I left to drive back to California—and in the same condition: faces mostly gone...torn off. Hearts missing, having been ripped...or eaten, right out through their throats by some profoundly determined wild animals. Wild animals that attacked two brothers in their homes, across the city from each other, within hours of one another.

Yeah right, animal attacks...I mean, what else could they call it, really? To admit the truth would be madness.

But the truly odd thing is...Jason was killed around the same time I left his house. The police were there, spoke to him. He was healthy and in good spirits. Nothing like how I'd left him. None of it was adding up.

It is my strong opinion that the deaths of the Pitman brothers, as well as their father decades prior, cannot be accounted for outside of a supernatural explanation. This fact, to me, is undeniable, but the only records we at the Lazlo Society have on such an entity amount to a handful of ancient Native American oral traditions and the questionable ravings of a few elderly members of the Seminole people. Ravings about a shapeshifting hag known as the *Stikini*.

Based on Jason Pitman's firsthand account, the mysterious murders of he and his brother, and the findings of our paranormal team, we now have reason to believe the Stikini legends are rooted in reality, but we are at a complete loss as to why we have so little data on such a creature.

All I know is, if I ever hear my coffee maker go off in the wee hours, I'm not gonna bother sticking around to test the *sacred arrow* I was given by a Seminole shaman. I'm gone!

Probably to Denny's.

No one ever gets killed by a monster in Denny's, right?

