

The wooden man: 12 fragments for Easter

by James Knight

The wooden man came to her in a cloud in a vision in a dream in a story. When he spoke, his tongue clacked against his teeth.

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As soon as she woke up, she knew the wooden man was in her belly. She felt heavy with him, fatigued. All she wanted to eat was sawdust.

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The wooden man was born on the night of a storm that felled a thousand trees. He fell from his red confinement and jittered across the floor.

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The wooden man had no time for childhood. He set to work immediately, splicing humans with sheep in an underground laboratory.

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The wooden man slept in a coffin. Every morning was a new life. The broken animals he fabricated bleated and cheered every time the lid flew off.

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The wooden man lay down on the sea and floated. Seagulls perched on him, shrieking with laughter as the waves swelled.

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The wooden man made enemies fast. They feared his stiff authority. When they grudgingly shook his hand, he gave them splinters.

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On the 13th of every month, the wooden man stepped into a wardrobe, to commune with his father. His heart glowed. Words fell like ashes.

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One day, the wooden man's enemies caught him breaking the laws of physics by being in two places at once. He was sentenced to burning.

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The wooden man requested lamb chops as his last meal. He washed them down with human blood. Then they stuck him on a bonfire and partied.

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The day after the wooden man's burning, the wind puffed his ashes into a cloud. The sheep-men swore it made the shape of a fish.

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The factories closed years ago. The city belongs to the rats. The wooden man's ghost sits in a skip, carving forgotten names into his arms.

