

The Monster's Other Face

by H. J. Alden

The yellowed and peeling posters of men and women with grotesque disfigurements under the slogan, “Know Your Criminals!” that peered down at him from the walls were a familiar sight. Everyone knew that people with faces like that were as monstrous as they looked and deserved to be in prison where they belonged.

The newer posters of people with pointed chins, short, stubby noses or wild eyes were more worrisome. The Thomas Browne laws had been welcomed when they were passed, and society had become much more peaceful and safer since — despite the rising trade in black market plastic surgery. But the new laws had to be some kind of mistake. He ran the tips of his fingers along his long, hooked nose — it's just a nose, he couldn't possibly be a criminal.

The persistent crying of the baby in the corner was picking at his already shot nerves. He peered at its mother from the corner of his eye; she was small and delicate with an attractive round face. It was hard to imagine how she could produce such an evil-looking infant.

He'd got a glimpse of it when he'd shuffled to the toilet. It was pretty, with beautiful dark blue eyes - at least till you got to its mouth where there was a gaping hole between its bottom lip and nose instead of a lip. Clearly a wicked child.

He was still horrified that he was to be lumped in with these freaks and criminals. Just because he had a hooked nose he was forced to sneak out of his own home in the middle of the night, change his name, get forged papers, and come to this disgusting clinic full of felons.

He jumped when the doctor stuck his head out into the waiting room and called his name. He walked over, paused at the doorway and snarled loudly, “I just want to say you're a criminal and you should be ashamed of helping monsters like them.”

The doctor stared at him, his gaze lingering on his illegal nose. He raised an eyebrow, “You mean monsters like you?”

