

The Legend of Knifemouth's Legendary Mouth Grows

by Matt Rowan

In the small towns of central and southern Illinois there lives a very indecent sort of man. What makes this fella indecent is this: he will come for you in the night with his mouth all chock full of knife. It's a peculiar affliction, having a good deal of knife in your mouth. They'll tell you it came about from that knife accident. They'll say that's how come he's got a long serrated knife wedged in the gap of his two front teeth, jutting for several inches out of it at a sharp decline, fang-like, which is a condition that leaves him with many cuts on his lower lip and chin, but what they won't be as quick to tell you is, Knifemouth's been dead so many years. I tell yer true.

Surely that isn't all there is to ol' Knifemouth, no sir. He also had that fiddle. That's how you knew he'd be coming close real soon. The fiddle was unusual, too. Made of metal and producing such cacophonous noise. Couldn't play it worth a lick, neither. Never learned on account of he picked it up after the knife accident, which I don't need to to tell you is what killed him dead. Hard to learn anything much when that's the case.

They say the knife accident itself happened one warm wintry night in Decatur or some such place. Knifemouth was at home fooling with his knife again, generally up to no good with all things knife. He probably imagined harming someone with it. Before Knifemouth was Knifemouth he was a man with a knife not in his mouth. This is essential to understanding Knifemouth, though it should be no surprise that before there could be a Knifemouth there needed to be a knife and a mouth, which is what he had. He used to laugh, putting the knife in his mouth -- the handle, not the blade. And this would be his undoing. Because when he did, he'd

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sometimes also do his jig -- imagining himself playing the fiddle that he couldn't play but did have in his possession. And it was the jig that proved fatal. What he never thought about was that he oughtn't leave his hands behind his back while doing the jig, and he certainly shouldn't have tempted fate even further by stringing that wire all about the floor for him to leap out of, for the reason of forcing him to really lift his feet as he jigged. And last, he was in a bad way if he thought banging his head around was ever a good thing to do in accompaniment of the jig. He was an unpracticed "headbanger" and it showed. It wasn't just the jig, then, but the strange way he evidently practiced his jig, that proved fatal. You can imagine, but I'll tell you, he tripped while head banging, arms pressed behind his back as he fell to the floor. The knife got slammed into the upper mouth area and his head banging was so forceful and reflexive that he about slammed the handle of the knife clean halfway through his brain. It's what got him on his way out of the life of the living, indeed. The bleeding that happened next took him all the way out of the life of the living.

You know something else? After they found the body, they lost the body, and you know, they never did find the body after losing it. Well. They found it again, near Foster's Landfill. But after they found it there, it got away from them again. They never did find it a second time. And probably this was directly because it had no desire to be found. Such is Knifemouth's will, and as ever will be.

But then there are those who think maybe just maybe that's the way ol' Knifemouth wanted it. That he wanted the knife where it was and he wasn't so bad at jigging as might have seemed to be the case. They never found the body, but there was so much evidence to point to its truth, that he had died in his jigging accident. Then there were all the strange instances of mysterious fiddling, fiddling so loud and so cacophonous that you couldn't hear your own brain scream at you to run and hide. And by the time the fiddling stopped and you could hear yer own brain again, well, by then it'd be too late, wouldn't er?

And of course there is the matter of the knife, how it fit in ol' Knifemouth. It fit in him scary as you in a small room with an ornery

ox dressed in rattlers (the rattlers are guaranteed to be ornery on account of their already ornery constitution, meanwhile).

But it's on those moonlit warm wintry nights when the weather is strange that you're most like to find Knifemouth. You'll know him by his fiddle. And when he's fiddlin' and a knifin' you to death you'll know that actually it weren't you who find him but the other way around. And you'll never be seen or heard from again, until they find your body, which I don't need to tell you will be dead.

