# Mister and Miss Marital Bliss

*by* Stephen Heger

The canvas bag lay crumpled and moaning in the middle of the room as Mister and Miss Marital Bliss contemplated what to do to it next. Spots of deep crimson blossomed like spring flowers all over the white sack and a large pool had gathered underneath. Rivulets of blood pooled in between the boards of the hardwood floor and seeped across the room. Unintelligible sobs and whimperings rose from the undulating bag containing whatever their imagination made it. Neither knew exactly where it came from or how it got here but they had adapted to it quite well. In the beginning it would, at times, quietly appear for a few minutes or an hour during an argument or altercation and then disappear. But as their disdain for each other and their life together deteriorated it would appear more and more frequently. In between the yelling and verbal barbs they would hear crying and eventually find the canvas bag in a corner of the room or somewhere downstairs. As their marriage spiraled downward the canvas bag simply moved from room to room. It eventually took up residence within their home and their lives and became a permanent fixture within it. Though at first the appearances were disconcerting, it became as commonplace as their hatred and contempt for each other. Their curiosity was not enough at first to see what was in the bag, but day after day of the growing and nagging curiosity eventually lent itself to this inevitable conclusion: they decided to try and open it. After a severely brutal argument over who knows what, the creature began wailing with such intensity that it overshadowed their altercation. This momentary distraction drew them in close to examine what was nothing exceptional about the bag itself save its contents. It was simply a white canvas duffle bag that was very much like the ones used in a typical laundry service. Towards one end were a series of

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loops that a draw string was run through and tied off. For hours they tried to untie it, cut it, burn it, all to no avail. Nothing they did could penetrate the bag or undo its knots. It was one of the few times that they seemed to work together. All the while the bag cried and sobbed and twitched. Inside they could feel something humanoid in shape but broken. A bag of meat with bones jutting but with no discernible shape. As if the bag were its skin and the contents a pulped version of their own. But as quickly as the alliance had formed for achieving a goal it deteriorated just as quick. A critical remark here and a jab there and soon their attention turned back towards each other. They stood above the sniveling and sobbing grotesquerie on the floor and pointed fingers while casting blame and dispersions. This time the bag began wailing and writhing on the floor as its bony protrusions pushed against the canvas flesh. The more intense their fighting became the louder and more agitated the bag became. Their screams of unfulfilled promises and failed vows echoed through the room in unison along with the lamenting of their child of abhorrence. On this particular occasion, as their rage grew and frustration overwhelmed them, they began to kick and pummel the creature at their feet. Once again the blame shifted from each other to the new focus of their hate. Solid, crunching thuds turned to heavy, wet sounds as blow after blow rained down on the crying wretch at their feet. Shoes and boots and fists were soon replaced by any object their cut and bruised hands could find. A bat and a hammer gave way to a chair and a metal mallet. Minutes turned to hours as the brutal beating continued in this savage fashion. Everything about the other and themselves manifested and exploded out in a blinding rage and was taken out on the defenseless creature. Chair legs were broken and used until they were broken again. Rolling pins and frying pans became instruments of pain as the floor became covered in blood yet the thing would not die. Hour after hour they beat and pummeled the contorted monstrosity only ending with them tired and fatigued. In a moment of sheer exhaustion they looked into each others eyes and saw the clarity of the others plight. Their anger and frustration. The

hurt and devastation. And the ending to it all. Their eyes locked and in them they saw absolution and forgiveness for what they had done and that which they had become. In that split second of time they finally knew. Their breathing fell shallow and a silence fell in the room with the exception of the sacks mewlings. In the pain and suffering of their misbegotten spawn they became one again. They joined hands and walked into the kitchen together and opened a drawer as each grabbed a knife. They walked back to where their offspring lay unmoving on the floor, arms at their side, knuckles white with anticipation. Purity and absolution washed over them as they embraced for what felt like the first time. Their last time. Their lips gently touched and their arms held the other with warmth and love. A love long thought dead. They placed the blade against each others throat with all the caring they deserved. Their eyes looked longingly at the other and for the first time in forever they felt deep in themselves the love they had lost so long ago. The progeny at their feet lay silent and, with a flick of the wrist, the cold steel bit deep into the flesh. Blood erupted from the wide gashes in their necks and washed down their chests and cascaded to the floor. Their mouths formed the words ‘I love you.' as their eyes rolled back into their skulls and their lungs gasped for air. A freezing cold rushed in through their veins to fill the void where blood once pumped and they slowly pulled apart. Smiles passed momentarily over their lips as they collapsed to the floor and onto each other in a final embrace. As the life pumped from their open veins the canvas slowly split at the seams and oozed thick viscous black that mingled with the blood of the dying lovers. In their final moments the lovers eyes wandered to what they had birthed and saw that it was nothing. Nothing that ever mattered anyway.