

I wont eat it

A lot of people ask me why I keep serving the Bureau. I'm past 50 now - I've more than done my time. I know, I know, it's a foolish question, but these days a lot of people are fools.

I misplaced my hand a few years back. I've made up a lot of stories about how it happened, because telling the truth is tedious. It provokes irritating affirmations from the mannered, and questions from the mannerless. It doesn't matter, both groups round it out with the same empty words.

"I feel so bad for you. That was so unlucky. It could have happened to anyone."

Well, it fucking well didn't, did it? It happened to me.

At first I'd tell them nothing because it wasn't their damn business, but then they'd prance off to gossip about it behind my back. And that was tedious too. So I thought I'd try to craft it into a teaching moment. There must be some kind of fable in there. Don't shove you hand into an unfamiliar place, maybe? Especially if it has teeth. But then I'd have to explain why it had teeth, and why I felt like I had to shove my hand in there, and at that point you're locked into a 20 minute conversation, aren't you?

Tedious.

Lies are easier. They can be as unambiguous as you want them to be. A jilted lover came at me with a cleaver. The lesson? Don't jilt your lovers. Easy.

And I could enjoy any rumours that circulated off the back of that, oddly enough. Perhaps because I'd pulled the wool over everyone's eyes. It's kind of fucked up. Any other time I'd be mortified if people whispered those kinds of things behind my back, but I guess there's something different about it when you control the narrative, good or bad.

I lost the leg about a decade ago. Severed my tattoo clean in two

as well. Luckily, I managed to grab it before anything had a chance to properly chew on it. Someone once told me that a person's willingness to mark themselves so openly and irrevocably was testament to their character. Sounds pretentious to me, but I like the ink, and the hexagonal pattern is pretty clean. Or it was.

The limb's quite well preserved - I keep it on display at home. Watching people squirm when they first see it is always amusing. But also... I also don't want to destroy the work. Maybe it represents a lost opportunity, with the broken pattern adding to it's artistic merit? I don't know, I'm not into art. I'm sure someone can learn something from it.

That reminds me. You want to know why I'm still here, why I still serve, and why fifty years isn't enough. It comes back around to the fools. You know one way to spot a fool? Ask them how they think the world should work. Ask them how they're going to get it to work that way.

That's the problem with progress. If it isn't slow and considered, things break along the way. Fools hate that. Some of them hate it so much they deny it, harping on about how few steps we'd have to take to reach our fanciful utopia.

Well I've been here for 50 years, chipping away at my corner of the world bit by bit, and nothing's ever that simple. I'm a sculptor that wont live to see the finished article, and I'm okay with that. I just worry the fools will knock the whole damn thing over once I'm dead, because that'll seem easier. It's visceral, immediate, and feels like it'll be so satisfying.

I'm stuck with an odd urge, every now and again. When I'm up late, hovering in the liminal space between one day and the next, I have a look at my leg, up on display in its glass cabinet.

I wonder what it would be like to eat it.

After all, who else is going to have that chance? It's wonderfully perverse. And it's mine to do with as I wish, isn't it? I never got the chance with the hand - that's been long digested by now. It makes me

wonder why they're so hungry for us. It can't just be for the meat. You can get meat anywhere, off of all sorts of creatures. Throw on enough seasoning and anything can taste good.

Sometimes when it's past midnight, I can hear it calling to me. I knows it was part of me once, and it wants to be part of me again.

But I wont eat it. Because I'm not a fool.