

Ladder Stitch

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Ladder Stitch

by [BlackBat09](#)

Summary

[JIMMY]

(Sighs) Alright. Fine.

D’you know what a miracle is, Grian? When it comes right down to it? A miracle’s a thing that wasn’t meant to happen.

Notes

a statement i’ve been wanting to write for ages, inspired by the sheriff’s villain arc as well as michael crew from the original podcast - please enjoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Répondez S'il Vous Plaît](#) by [Sixteenthdays](#)

[Click]

(Sounds of a scuffle, muffled)

[PEARL]

—get in there, *right* now—

[JIMMY]

Pearl—*Pearl!* Come on, I don't *wanna*—

[PEARL]

I don't care! You get in there and you tell him what's going on *right* now so we can fix it, Jimmy!

(Door opens; someone trips; recording jumps a little as there's a heavy thud)

[GRIAN]

...Tim?

[JIMMY]

(Sighs; chuckles) Hello, Grian. Pearl thinks we should have a chat.

[GRIAN]

Wh—Pearl?

[PEARL]

No one's heard from him in *months*, Grian! He's been dodging calls, ignoring texts—Scott even showed up at his flat, more than once, before he called me to go get him, and *look* at him!

(Pause)

[GRIAN]

(Soft static) I see him.

[JIMMY]

Don't you *dare*.

[GRIAN]

Oh, be *quiet*. Pearl, what do you even want me to do?

[PEARL]

What do I—I want him fixed, Grian! I want you to find out what's happened to him and what he's been *hiding* from everyone so we can set him right, and I don't care if that means going to that sculptor's house myself and *making* her—

(Overlapping)

[GRIAN]

This wasn't Cleo.

[JIMMY]

What sculptor?

(A long pause)

[PEARL]

(Quietly) I want his statement. If we have a statement, we can—we can figure it out, right? We just need to know where to start.

[GRIAN]

I'll do my best, Pearl.

[PEARL]

Thank you. *(Pause)* You. You stay right here and talk to Grian, do you hear me?

[JIMMY]

(Groan) Pearl, I'm not leavin'!

[PEARL]

You better not! I mean it, Jimmy! Stay!

[JIMMY]

Alright, I will!

[PEARL]

Good!

(Door slams; long pause; feathers ruffle)

[JIMMY]

Stop. Stop lookin' at me like that, Grian, I swear.

[GRIAN]

(Scoffs) Or *what*, Tim? What are *you* going to do to make me stop? Gonna scare me? Gonna *hurt* me? Look at you, you look like a stuffed *toy*, Jimmy—

[JIMMY]

Don't call me that! I'm *no* plaything, not anymore, d'you understand me?

[GRIAN]

No! I don't! *(Soft static)* So make me understand, Tim.

[JIMMY]

Why should I?

[GRIAN]

(Softly) Oh, come *on*, it's *Timmy*, it worked *before*. *(Louder)* Because Pearl wants your

statement.

(A pause)

Look, from how you've been *hiding*, whether you did this yourself or it got done *to* you, it's obvious you're in over your head and being stubborn and *stupid* about asking for help. You don't know what you're messing with, and the Institute could *help you*—

[JIMMY]

Why is it you can't even *imagine* I don't need help? Why is it, Grian, that you can't even for a second think that maybe, Jim knows what he's done. Why do you and Pearl and Scott and everyone else think I need *rescuing* and *fixing*, but only now that I've gone and done something to save *myself*?

[GRIAN]

What? (Incredulous laughter) In what *world* is this something you've done knowingly? Something that could *save you*? Save you from what, even, your stupid invitations? You never even *died*, Tim, not *really*—you know, not everyone gets the luxury of waking up in their beds after they've had a brush with death? And what happened to going to invitations to *save people*, Jimmy? What if we'd all *died* in the woods with Joel?

[JIMMY]

What if you were meant to?

(A long, tense silence)

[GRIAN]

(Softly) You don't mean that.

[JIMMY]

You don't know that for sure, do you, Grian?

[GRIAN]

...Statement of James Solidarity, regarding what he's done to himself. Statement recorded direct from subject. Statement—

[JIMMY]

You *don't* know. That's why you want a statement.

[GRIAN]

(Through clenched teeth) Statement begins.

[JIMMY]

(Sighs) Alright. Fine.

D'you know what a miracle is, Grian? When it comes right down to it? A miracle's a thing that wasn't meant to happen.

It's meant to be a good thing, of course, one that everyone's *glad* happened, that one-in-a-million chance that everything goes right instead of wrong—that's a miracle, yeah? But it's

still a *fluke*. And nobody knows how it happened, really—‘cept me. *I* knew how miracles happened, because I was the one dyin’ for ‘em. Over, and over, and *over* again.

[GRIAN]

But you *lived*, Tim.

[JIMMY]

(*Distorted*) *Don't* interrupt me, Archivist.

(*A pause*)

D’you want your stupid statement or not, G.

[GRIAN]

(*Softly*) Continue.

[JIMMY]

Thank you.

I knew how miracles happened because I was dying for them. I didn’t know *how*, mind you, but I knew when I showed up an’ I *died*, everyone lived, an’ when I didn’t, well. They didn’t. And looking at it, that seems pretty simple, doesn’t it? If you could step in an’ prevent a whole lotta hurt, just by showin’ up and being a bit injured for a moment and then waking up the next morning, right as rain in your bed, you’d do it.

Well. Maybe *you* wouldn’t, anymore. But most people, they’d like to say they would, y’know? That they’d save lives. And so I *did*. I mean, how often d’you get to play the hero in real life, right? That’s—it’s *fantasy* stuff’s what it is. S’why people go off to be soldiers, or firemen, or doctors. I could save a life.

And lots of those folks get the short end of it when it comes t’getting hurt an’—and *traumatized*, and all that mess. I’m not the only one who’s ever died to keep people safe, an’ I know that.

I just never really got the bloody choice, did I?

[GRIAN]

You did, though. You told me you didn’t accept the invitations, at first. You *chose* to start attending.

[JIMMY]

Yeah, once Scott’d nearly died an’ I knew in my stupid gut I could’ve stopped all the other ones!

I thought I couldn’t—that I couldn’t *live* with myself, if I didn’t step in. If I just let it go, I could never look myself in the mirror again an’ not see a killer. An’ so the next one came and I went. And I went again. And again, and again, over an’ over, ‘til I—*Christ*, d’you know how many times you have to die to stop being *afraid* of it?

[GRIAN]

How many?

[JIMMY]

I don't remember! Too many!

I stopped being afraid to *die*, Grian. When it started, I wasn't—I didn't know I'd wake up again. I didn't know I'd live, but I knew, I *knew*, I had to be there. An' I went an' I died and there was always part of me that wasn't sure it'd *work* this time. That maybe this—ski trip, or wedding, or poetry reading or whatever, would be the one where me an' everyone else in the room just died. For *real*. But it never *came*, an' eventually I just realized—

It wasn't coming. I— (*Laughs*)

I couldn't die.

So I stopped being *scared* of it. I started—man, I dunno what I was *thinkin'*, but I started trying to—I wanted to do more. I tried to *talk* to people, at the events, even though I'd tried it before an' they were all real polite and said they knew *of* me even when they didn't. I really tried askin', y'know, where we'd met an' why I got the invite and how long I'd been best friends with their sister's mother's cousin's boyfriend or whatever—

But I could never get an answer. I just wanted—just *one* straight answer, from someone that wasn't like, Scott. Or *Pearl*. But they couldn't give it to me. An' the more I pushed, the *harder* I pushed, the more they started to push *back*. At first, it was like—I was like a ghost, yeah? They just stared through me.

But then I kept asking questions, and making noise, making a *fuss*, and it got—worse. It felt more *wrong*, every time I spoke up, and less *real*, because they just couldn't *give* me anything. There was an invite and a few rote lines of, “yeah, we know you, or *of* you,” and then some uncomfortable flounderin' at my questions and then they were back to just—standing there. Going through the damn motions. It felt like—

(*A quiet, shuddering inhale*)

Like they weren't *real* people.

(*A pause*)

[GRIAN]

You said you'd started researching them. That they *were* real.

[JIMMY]

I had! And they were! Every last one of 'em, I mean—I never showed up to an empty building or nothing.

But the more I went and the less anyone could *tell* me about anything, the more I—I started wonderin' if I was being tricked. O-or lied to, or *something*. The way everyone talked and *acted* 'round me, I thought—I thought maybe it was all fake. That *they* were all fake. Actors,

or—*somethin'*. Because surely—surely, if whatever this was could track me down to send me invitations, every time, surely it could also *fake* all of it. It could be—it could be a lie.

I thought—I dunno what I thought. I was just so scared of going to another stupid party and getting all those dead-eyed *stares* that I just—I cracked, G. I got halfway to an invite an' I just—stopped.

I hit the bell for the next stop, even though it wasn't the one I was meant to go to, and I got off the bus and just started walking 'round the city. Ended up in some—little charity shop, out of the way of everything, just lookin' at stuff, trying to shake the feeling that none of it was *real*. The lights in the shop all felt artificial, an' everything on the shelves seemed like—like *props*. Like I was on some *set*, or something, had just wandered my way onto some building set up to *look* like a charity shop for shooting a scene, that'd go back to bein' a vacant storefront the next day. I don't even remember what the cashier looked like, I just—it felt like they weren't real. I didn't want talk to 'em more than I had to.

The only thing in the shop that seemed—*real*, was the box.

It was up on a shelf with a bunch of other boxes, all bright cardboard and shiny plastic, board games and puzzles that looked like they'd just been bought from a different shop, brand new, and brought straight here. It just added to that feelin' that—that something wasn't *right*. Like someone had put it all together an' forgot to make it *believable*. But that box was—it was wood. Old, with rounded edges, like it'd passed through a bunch of hands and been *loved*, in all of them, enough that the label was wore off the top and I had to open it to really *see* what was in there.

And it was nothing! An old sewing kit, for *kids*, really—with some bits of fabric, some stuffin' and buttons, even a little needle and thread, in a little square pocket, all on top of some pattern for how to make rag dolls.

I remember the paper was... delicate. Soft, at the folds, like the box was 'round the edges, like I was meant to be—careful. With it.

(A pause)

So then I took it up to the front an' I bought it, even though I didn't wanna talk with the shopkeep. But I don't even think she *said* nothin', just had me tap my card an' sent me on my way with the box all wrapped up in plastic. I went *right home*, an' I remember—

I remember not checkin' the news. On purpose. I knew, because I'd skipped that invitation, that people were gonna be *dead*, an' I just... I didn't wanna know.

I started makin' dolls, instead.

(Laughs) The first few were rubbish, of course, barely even *dolls*—I was just usin' the bits in the box to learn how to sew, really, see if I could cut off a few little pieces and get 'em to hold together without pricking my big dumb fingers too many times. Most of 'em I tossed to Flick and Norman, to let them tear to pieces, but—I got *better*, after a while! Dug out the little repair kit my mum got me, ages ago, with the thimble and the seam ripper, and really started

goin' to town, making more and more of them. Bigger ones, that held up longer than a day with the cats, until, well—

I ran out of the fabric, in the box. I *really* thought I'd been trying to save it, but it was gone, and I—I didn't want to *stop*. So I did what anyone'd do, and I went and dug through my wardrobe. Found some old clothes at the back, or the bottoms of drawers, stuff that, y'know, I never wore, or, well—that *no one* did, anymore, and I cut them all up to make more dolls.

The invitations were still coming. It felt like *more* of them than before, but I just... I ignored them.

I kept making dolls.

They got better, every time, and I still pricked my fingers sometimes but—look, it sounds crazy but I *swear*, they were *better* when there was blood on the needle. Or they—they felt better, at least, especially once I was taking all those *stupid shirts* and actually doing something with them instead of just letting them just—just *sit there* and *haunt* me! The more that I pulled them apart and made them into something new, the less it felt like—the less it was like the things they meant to me were *real*.

It was as if everything that they meant—all those memories, and the feelings, and the *hurt*—it felt like they'd never happened to me. Not that I'd *forget*, but, like—sure, they'd still *happened*, but not to *me*. They might as well have been *stories* someone told me once.

I was in the middle of pullin' apart one of those old shirts when my seam ripper slipped, and, before I knew it, it'd gone right through my palm, just like—(*Snaps*)—just like that. Tore me open, easy as that flimsy shirt from uni Tango'd left in my pyjama drawer. But I didn't even *flinch*, I just—did what I'd been doing for months.

I sewed it back up.

(*A pause*)

I've *died*, G. A lot. I know how that hurts. I knew, when I cut myself, *and* when I fixed it, how things like that are *meant* to hurt, and I can't explain to you, not even a little bit, how much of a *relief* it was, when that didn't hurt how it was supposed to.

The last time I bothered with an invitation, no one recognized me. They didn't even let me in the door, not even with the invite in hand, and *none* have come since.

I know what Pearl asked for, but— (*Slightly distorted*) I don't want to be *fixed*, Archivist.

[GRIAN]

So, that's it, then. You... did all this to yourself.

[JIMMY]

(*Proudly*) Yep. It's my biggest project so far. Y'know, when I replaced these guys—(*A quiet tapping, rattly and slightly metallic*)—*that's* when you stopped showin' up in my dreams. Helped me figure out I was on the right track.

[GRIAN]

They're... gold?

[JIMMY]

(Slightly mocking) You wanna try'n' head down to the shops askin' for hazel buttons?

[GRIAN]

It's just an observation, Tim.

[JIMMY]

Yeah, it always is, with you, isn't it?

(Chair scraping)

Can I go, now, then? Are you done?

[GRIAN]

(Audio crackles) No. Sit back down.

[JIMMY]

(A soft chuckle) Sorry, Grian. You tried, mate.

(Door opens; shuts)

[Click]

[Click]

[GRIAN]

Right. Well.

If I'm honest, here, there's really not much I can do to *protest* what Timmy's gone and done to himself, not without sounding like a massive hypocrite, considering, well. Everything. Which isn't the answer Pearl's going to want to hear, but she's in a similar position to me, quite frankly.

I guess what gets me is just how... I dunno. How *angry* he seemed. At the invitations, at all his friends, at—*me*. It was like something just... *snapped*. *(Softly)* It wasn't even what happened in the park, with Joel, apparently, because he *still kept going*.

(Sighs)

I wish I could've gotten a better answer out of him than I did, but even trying the few times I did has given me *quite* the start of a headache. It seems whatever Jimmy's gotten himself into, or in *with*, it's not very happy about him being *known*. I'm not even sure how much I influenced that statement, versus what Jim told me on his own.

(Hums)

'No plaything...'

I hope it makes him happier than following the invitations did, I guess. That's all.

[Click]

End Notes

thank you so much to the MCYT Recursive Exchange mods!

if you'd like to see more of my brainrot, you can find me at [blackbat09](#) (18+) on tumblr.
comments and kudos are love~

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