

The Return

By Joe Jenkins

So here I am, back in my old village. North Cadbury, home to those who liked a quiet life and home to those who never did anything that would be noticed outside *the circle*.

Not the home to any well known Hollywood actress. Not the home to any rock star. This was not a place where dreams of this sort were encouraged.

I remember the days as a child at just this time of year. Memories of prancing about, walking from the village church, past the village hall and down to the small park near the primary school. My job had been to dress up in strange clothes and hit others on the head with balloons. I even had an official balloon-blower-upper, waiting for when my weapon exploded.

I remember being in the park and dancing around the Maypole, bringing the ribbons around to make ornate patterns. I say dance, what I actually did was lumber around the Maypole. I had never been good at such things, probably part of the reason why they would not let me near the small wooden swords for the dance.

My favourite time had been watching the dummy in the large wicca basket be burned. Much like Guy Fawkes, but without the fireworks.

Little did I know at that time. So little.

None of the children knew what they were a part of, what was taking place behind the scenes.

None of the children knew what horrors lurked so close, but just out of sight.

When I arrived here, just two days ago, I was looking forward to seeing the new generation of children repeating the process. I was not disappointed, I was struck upon the head and body many times by soft rubber, though I wouldn't have been surprised to see it being made much safer now, and soft latex used.

It was a fun time, though it was made a little less fun by the looks of the locals. Suspicious looks, grinding within my very soul, cutting through me.

I was a *Furriner*. They did not remember me, as I had left when I was twelve years old. I had changed since then, for one thing I was much taller and the fat had disappeared.

After watching the Maypole and sword dancing, I decided to take a walk down memory lane. Look for the den that had been built and kept secret over so many generations. It was just as I was walking down the secluded path between the school and houses that I heard the snapping of the twig.

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The cold knife blade hadn't hurt as much as I thought it would, but that could have been due to the sedative that stopped all but my eyes from having any mobility at all.

I wasn't looking forward to the flames though, I was sure that would crash through the pain barrier.