

# Bert - By Gavin Burgess

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## **Parental Note:**

This story is intended for young teens. It contains content which some parents may deem unsuitable for less mature children. It is suggested that parents review the contents of this publication prior to making it available to their children.

## Bert

Once upon a time in a fantasy far, far, far away, in the dark, dank, dirty, dangerous lair of an evil man who we'll call, for the sake of our tale, the D, there lived a beast. The beast was the creation of the D (who's D may have stood for doctor but no-one was really sure) and was his captive tool of evil. The beast was made like a man but even more broken and twisted. His body appeared to be made up of strangely disparate parts and his face wore a grimace, which was a mixture of longing and pain. His mind was a papier-mâché like pulp, which didn't think much and knew little for sure of right and wrong. His heart was nickel-cadmium and was recharged by standing in the path of lightening storms. This heart also carried a spark, not an electrical spark but a small spark of unease, a feeling of dirtiness, a small awareness of unworthiness. It was this spark, and not some phantom pain from his twisted limbs, which caused the grimace on the beast's face. None the less, it could be said, he knew not what he did.

For every night, rain hail or fine, the beast (who, if he'd been given a name, would've liked to have been called Bert), armed with only a torch, would set forth, at the bidding of his master, to seek his prey. And hunt them down he would, through the villages and farms far and wide. Girls; warm, soft and so lovely. Stealing an arm here, a leg there, a torso, a head, to bring back to his master. For the D was building again. And he was building himself a mate.

On one such night Bert returned, as usual, with a new part, a head, freshly plucked with his own hands from a young girl who had been caught half way between the house of one boyfriend and another.

For some time now, Bert, on the instructions of the D, had been catching only heads. The time had nearly come when the D's new creation would be complete. She had the most beautiful arms, slender hands, one long leg and one slightly shorter one, and a soft pale torso, which Bert longed to touch. The D, however, seemed oddly fussy on the selection of the head and rejected, night after night, the offerings Bert presented.

Not surprisingly, the villagers and neighbouring farmers were becoming decidedly testy at the growing shortage of women to tend to their meals and various other home comforts, and Bert's work was becoming harder and harder to execute as more and more of the locals began to lock their womenfolk away at night rather than risk awaking in the morning to the prospect of a cold kitchen.

So, on this particular night, when the D rejected yet another of his catches, Bert became, some may say quite understandably, angry. Very, very angry. Fumingly, quietly, vengefully angry.

But he knew, in his ponderous, papier-mâché like brain, that he must wait. And wait he did. Until it was late. Really late. Way past his bed time late. Way, way, way past. Until the D was asleep. And then he waited some more. Until he was sure, really sure, that the D would not stir.

And then he moved.

Decisively!

He.....

.....crept into the D's laboratory.....

.....and picked up the head of the pretty but naughty young girl.....

.....and stuck it.....

.....on.....

.....the.....

.....body!

And absolutely nothing happened.....

.....because.....

.....the girl.....

..... had no batteries in her!

Bert hunted around. He looked everywhere he could think of. And a few places he couldn't. And a few places I can't bear to mention. And he found a lot of stuff and some of it not very pleasant, I can tell you! But he didn't find any batteries! Not even one!

So he looked some more, this time using his torch, which wasn't much brighter than the light of the moon, and he wished that D wasn't such a scrooge and had installed electric lights instead of forcing them to rely on torches which were no use at all once the batteries ran out. Thank goodness, he mused, that the ones in the torch were still OK otherwise he wouldn't have a chance of finding any batt....

Bert took them out of the torch and put them in the girl.....

.....who he named Emily!

.....and who immediately sat up

.....and said.....

'I'm hungry'.

Bert fed her.....

.....and then he gave her a big cuddle.....

.....which she didn't seem to mind.

And then they ran away!

.....A long way away, up into the hills, where Bert watched Emily dance, silhouetted by the wind swept sky, and thought that she was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.....

....which she was!

And he felt his unease and dirtiness and unworthiness fly away and felt a new feeling and a new purpose and a new reason for living. Bert was in love. But he knew not what he did, he just knew it was pure, and right, and good, an absolution.

And, as he watched, Emily began to look more and more delicate, and more and more precious, and more and more pale, until, like a beautiful white feather, she floated to the ground, gave a little moan, and lay still.

And as she fell he saw, by the gauges at her breast, that her batteries were almost completely, totally, fatally, dead flat.

And he cried.

And he looked at his own chest, and his healthy dials, and his warmly humming nickel-cadmium battery, and he howled, and howled, because life was so cruel and unfair and because he knew he was about to be parted from the one that he loved.

And he took the leads to the muscles in his legs and he pulled them out of his thighs, and, leaving them connected to his heart, he thrust them into Emily's chest, where they sparked and arced until they had fused into the terminals of

her makeshift batteries. And he felt a rushing as if his soul had merged with hers and would leave a part of himself in her heart forever.

Then, with his heart struggling to support them both, he removed her exhausted batteries and carefully transferred his heart from his own torso into hers.

Then he disconnected himself,

.....and,

.....with a last small gasp,

.....he died.