

## Archival

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| Character:       | <a href="#">Hunter Aloysius "Hap" Percy</a>   |
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## Archival

by [boltplum](#)

### Summary

Hap remembers what brought him to Prairie, he remembers the before.

### Notes

This was originally posted 12/25/2016 under my other handle, mrhiddles.

In the beginning, it was nothing like this.

The first one. He hasn't thought about her in a long time. But the first...the first was something precious, even moreso than the five—four—he currently held for study.

When he heard the flutter of her heart—rabbit fast and flighty with illness—his own would seem to slow, and deepen. Something heavy beneath his ribs, laden with something *more*.

But that was a dangerous feeling. Even in the beginning he knew that, but still, at the start he believed he could be above anything despite being so green behind the ears.

He wondered often back then how long it took someone to grow accustomed to his sort of work. The careful, calculated hunting and gathering he'd taken to with a riotous effort. Months, years. Now he knows it's longer.

But back then it was only her. And she was easy. A smart, solemn and complacent thing. He would cook her meals every day and night that he could, and back then it was every night, lest the city call him away for a meeting. He would eat with her at least two times a week. He even gave her a

watch so she would know the time. He would have given her a television had the wiring not crossed that of the gas, rudimentary though it had been in the first stages.

She was more than a test subject, and he knew it. Knew it and didn't care, back when he could afford such a notion.

Back then, sleep came easily, and in his dreams he shook, trembled down to his bones. He'd jolt awake, sweating through his nightshirt with her face a dark reflection behind every blink of his tired eyes.

She would ask him questions.

One day she asked him about the cells. There had only been two back then, an extra in the event of a chamber malfunction. She called them the box.

He would think of how he knew every morning she woke up crying but she didn't know about the cameras.

"I took an interior design class in high school. Hardly something I want getting out," he'd said with a light laugh.

An eyebrow had raised, but that was all the reply he thought he'd get from her.

Until, as he was turning to leave, she said, "You would have made a talented architect. It's a shame death attracted you so."

He remembers that not too long from now, every time he descends the stairwell and looks into *her* eyes. He feels filthy.

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She'd died in the night. He'd made the mistake of letting her keep eating utensils for easier access to the food he provided. Meant cutting down on the washing.

But he remembers the blood on the sheets of the cot, shining on the plated shale, so sharp in the light. Remembers the red of the water, trailing in thin tendrils into the world beyond.

This place is an archive of sorrow, and he knows that. It always had been.

It's been so many years since that day. Even now, he feels that slow guilt, that filth pool inside him, making his flesh itch. He felt it just the day before, when he'd set August in that tub, her newly decaying flesh milky amongst the ceramic.

Now, he watches a blind woman move about her instrument as if the wind itself was playing it, and the sound rings in his ears. Stays with him even as he lies in a piss poor hotel bed that night, nearly giddy with the knowledge that same woman would be flying out with him in the morning.

It will happen again, it must.

It has to be done, he tells himself.

He's changing the world, for everyone.

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