

Homo Luminous : Cut Materials from Chapter 1

Written by Mike

Saturday, 08 January 2011 10:06 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 August 2013 19:21

For your reading pleasure, here is a section of back story that I removed from Chapter 1.

"Why cut it," you ask? Well, the first draft of Homo Luminous was running about 130K words, for one thing. Another was that this was WAY too much back story to start the novel. I wanted to drop you, faithful reader, into the action more quickly. So, as Steven King puts it, "You have to kill your darling."

This section met the ax earlier in the revision process. I was, and still am unable to kill it completely, so it rises again here, as an example of what not to start a novel with.

David sat alone at the small bar, contemplating the beer warming in his glass. Charleen, the night manager and organizer of the all night poker game looked on, her temper short because the game was going too quickly, her patrons not drinking enough to justify keeping the dive open late.

"Refill, sweetie," she said. He ignored her and continued to watch the room. The lights were bright, and the music low, muffled by the large wooden door separating the back room from the main bar. He hadn't wanted to come tonight, but Chris had dragged him out anyway.

"Your friend is really cleaning house tonight," she said, not taking the hint. "Why don't you ever play?"

"Because I'm not fond of loosing money," He said. "Besides, a \$500 buy in is just not in my league."

"Mike doesn't seem to have a problem coming up with the cash," she said. "Where is he

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working now a days?"

"Nowhere, as far as I know." David thought about that. Where had he come up with the cash. Mike hadn't worked in at least four months, sending Becky off to get his unemployment checks because he didn't have the time, but he always had cash. He was a good poker player, but these games were only once a month, and he had been flat busted last month by some old guy in a Stetson hat.

He got it any way he could, David guessed. Most likely borrowing it from his parents or in-laws, not that Chris's mother and father had the money to spare. He didn't want to think about it too hard, or he might start to worry, so David took a long pull from the remainder of his beer, and set the glass back on the bar.

"Well," said David, "it looks like he is going to clean everybody out early tonight Charleen. But maybe you can take some of it from him and the two groupies before he leaves."

"Every dog has his day, Dave," Charleen said, taking the glass and shoving it in the sink. "Every dog has his day."

* * *

David and Chris went back a long time. They met on the football team in high school: a bond of

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both glorious and painful memories. Neither was a starter, but both worked hard, making friends of both starters and second string alike. Linemen all, they formed a close circle, and would drink warm beer and smoke a little pot in the woods together. Mike was not part of their crowd.

All three had gone to the same college. Chris joined a fraternity; David opted out. Mike had been Chris's frat brother, and had met Becky, during one of her frequent visits to her older brother in college.

Becky was the only little sister of any of the original football crew, and all were protective of her, especially David. She was then a senior in high school, on the down hill side and looking forward to joining David and Chris in the fall. She visited the two often, going to Chris's parties or just hanging out with David in the Library.

It was no surprise to David that Becky came to him first when she thought she was pregnant.

"But It's been two weeks? I should have got it by now." Becky said, sitting on the beer stained couch of David's first apartment.

"Did you take one of those test?" asked David.

"No, I couldn't bring myself to buy one."

"Well, let's at least do that before you jump to any conclusions."

David took Becky to the store. She couldn't bring herself to go in with him, so alone he walked directly into the pharmacy section. He didn't know which one to get, so he picked two, and paid with what little cash he had in his wallet.

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David sat, parked in a Wendy's parking lot while Becky went in to take the test. The ten longest minutes of his life went by, before she walked out, crying.

"It's OK, little one," David said. He stroked her hair, and held her as she cried. He silently clenched his fist, his anger directed not at her, but at Chris. He had been to their parties, where women and booze flowed freely, and Chris had left Becky alone with those sex perverts once too often. He finally asked, "Who is the father?"

"Mike," was all she could say, not even knowing his last name.

David quietly planned the destruction of Mike Mathews.

David did not kill Mike that night, but often times since, he wondered if it wouldn't have been better if he had. Instead, he took Becky to Chris's apartment, and sat there with her while she told her big brother.

"You're what?" Chris said, storming around the room, knocking over furniture. "Why did you have to keep coming down here to see me, I mean, don't you have any friends of your own?"

David sprang from the couch, and took Chris by the shoulders. He shook him off in a fit of rage, "I never knew my sister was a whore. How can you defend her?"

David dropped Chris with a single blow to the solar plexus, sending him to his knees grasping for air.

"If there is anyone you should be pissed off at, it's Mike," said David, poised to land another blow if required to drive home the point. "What the hell are you thinking?"

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Coming to his senses, Chris began to cry, and his little sister ran to comfort him as he spewed apologies all over her.

Chris and Becky's parents took the news much better. Mike's family was one of the 'good' families in town, and they were sure that they would do the right thing. Being a deeply religious Southern Baptist family, that was marriage as soon as possible.

David, not being part of the family, was not there for that conversation, but asked Chris once if anyone had actually asked Becky what she wanted. Chris could not recall.

Mike did not take to the idea right away. But after a conversation with Chris, David and a few other friends from the old gang, he came around.

* * *

David shifted uneasily on the narrow barstool. He never understood why Becky stayed with Mike. He was sure that she didn't love him, but simply tolerated him, which was more than David could say about Mike. Unconsciously, he put his hands in his pocket, searching for the pack of cigarettes that he had given up almost two years ago. Only when he thought about Mike and Becky did he really want a smoke, and tonight he was almost desperate for one.

But Mike kept on winning, and David realized that if he didn't leave soon, he would never be

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able to get up for work. He looked across the room at Chris, who was chatting up a blond co-ed wearing a short sun dress and flip-flops, one of the hangers-on of the girls circling Mike. Chris was a big guy, slightly larger than David. They both still carried their football size, but time softened them around the middle and Chris wore a full beard. He looked like someone who could chew steel and spit out nails and still be eager to party. His size was one of the reasons Mike still liked to bring Chris along on his nights out. It never hurt to have a couple of large friends around when you were a smack talking jerk, plus they usually had bail money.

David wondered how Chris felt about the way his brother-in-law treated his sister. They were very close, but after her wedding, Mike became Chris's more common companion, and after the baby, it was rare to see Becky outside of the house at all.

Becky's oldest, Suzzie, was born six months after the wedding. Suzzie was a shining star, the first child David had ever really been around, and he loved her. She was growing to be a lovely girl, with the looks of her mother, slender with bright brown hair, grown long and lovingly brushed every night. David missed seeing her, and her two brothers, Johnny and Sam, but since Mike had been out of work, he had avoided spending too much time at their place. For Becky sake more than Mike's.

Becky would never cheat on him, but if he was home, he was drinking, and David never wanted to be that close to him when he was drunk. Of course, David was suspicious of some bruises and scrapes he saw on Becky's arms, but he never voiced his concerns. David could not answer the question of what he would do if he actually knew Mike had hit her, and did not want to find out.

Chasing away that thought, David got up from his seat and went to Chris. "I'm out," he said.

"Leaving so early man, the party is just getting started," Chris said, the blond co-ed smiled.

"Gotta go make a living."

"All right, holler at you later."

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“You want to keep an eye on Mike, see that he actually gets home to his wife?”

“Hey, the man has it, you have got to give him that.”

“Humf,” David said, and turned to leave the room.

David glanced back at Mike, who now had a girl across his lap. He shook his head and left the bar.