

## **"The Right Hand Man"**

He awoke with a start, from the nightmare, soaked with sweat. It was the same every time. He had been foraging for mushrooms in the clearings in the wood, his basket filling up nicely. Something he had done countless times. But this time it would be different. Then the pain. Oh the pain. Turning on the light, he looked wide-eyed at his right arm, and the place where his right hand once had been.

He knew he must return to the wood, if he was ever to find peace. Ever find answers. That's what he had been counselled.

He had been putting it off for too long. Not knowing what had happened. Not knowing where his hand was.

So for the first time in a long time, the boy returned to the wood. Where he and his father had foraged for so many years. His dad had disappeared at the same time of his incident. Enquiries had been made, he had been told, but no sign of his dad had ever been found. Many thought his dad was the cause of him losing his hand, and had left the area. His dad had a temper on him, that was for sure. But the boy he just didn't know.

He felt sick to his stomach, just being in the wood, but the boy pressed on, eventually coming to the clearing where he had been found, unconscious, by the gamekeeper. Blood pouring from his truncated arm.

A twig snapped behind him, and a familiar voice said "Oh, you decided to come back, did you? Didn't expect to see you here again. I hate poachers." It was the assistant game-keeper, his right hand man. "Thought I'd have time to deal with you, after I'd buried you dad. But you had gone and cut off your own hand, with your mushrooming knife, after I'd skewered you the that tree yonder. Kept your hand, hope you don't mind, didn't want anyone to find it. That would never do. Better had finish the job, I suppose, put you out of your misery." he said, matter-of-factly, raising up his crossbow.

He was too late. The boy flicked his knife, kept inside his basket, and the right hand man fell dead.