

# **BROKEN BONES**

Paul Hart-Wilden

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## Broken Bones

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## Mr. Harrison and the Doctor

There was a man called Mr. Harrison. He wasn't tall but he was a little plump. A rather somber man, his clothes alternated between brown, grey and black. Summer, winter, spring, autumn, black, brown, grey. Mr. Harrison was prone to deep, brooding moods. In business, however, he had excelled himself. Forty years old and already in possession of a fortune that ran into the tens of millions. Having many times more money than he needed, more in fact than he could ever spend, Mr. Harrison's money meant nothing to him. There was only one thing in his life that Mr. Harrison cared for—that had become his *raison d'être*—his beautiful wife, Marjorie. Mr. Harrison loved her deeply... more than life itself.

One day, a balmy June afternoon, Mr. Harrison and his beautiful wife Marjorie were driving in the country on their way to visit Mr. Harrison's parents. Driving the aquamarine Boxster along the narrow, winding lanes, Mr. Harrison—in common with many other drivers in his position—took the opportunity to keep the accelerator pedal pressed as closely to the floor as possible.

Mr. Harrison's beautiful wife Marjorie was, as usual, alarmed by her husband's apparent lack of caution behind the wheel and many times told him to "slow down" or "be careful."

Unknown to Mr. Harrison, ahead of him, around a sharp bend, a farmer was slowly reversing his tractor and plough out of his field

and onto the lane. Mr. Harrison saw the tractor too late to do anything but scream and throw his hands up in front of his face.

When Mr. Harrison next opened his eyes he was somewhat startled to find that his world had been turned upside down. He looked across at his beautiful wife Marjorie.

She too had been turned upside down...but she was no longer beautiful. The frayed end of the seat belt was wrapped around her neck like a deflated snake and her once beautiful face had been cut to ribbons by the shattered windscreen.

In a hospital—not one of Mr. Harrison’s choosing but the closest to the scene of the accident—an eminent and highly respected surgeon, Dr. Tibbs, toiled through the night to try and save the life of Mr. Harrison’s beautiful wife Marjorie.

Outside the operating theatre Mr. Harrison paced nervously and helplessly up and down the corridor. In the tradition of most guilty parties responsible for vehicular accidents, Mr. Harrison had been unhurt.

Deep down in his heart of hearts he knew that responsibility for the accident was his, but out loud he cursed the poor safety design of his car, the thoughtlessness of the farmer and the failure of “the gods” to intervene and avert such a tragedy. The thoughtless farmer had died instantly at the scene of the accident and seventeen hours later, despite the efforts of the eminent and highly regarded Dr. Tibbs, so did Mr. Harrison’s beautiful wife Marjorie.

Mr. Harrison was driven to the point of despair and then some way beyond by the death of his beautiful wife Marjorie. Grief and guilt overwhelmed him in equal measure to the point where it began to affect his mind.

Unable to confess to his guilt, Mr. Harrison projected his culpability onto the eminent and highly regarded surgeon Dr. Tibbs. After all, the deranged mind of Mr. Harrison concluded, his beautiful wife Marjorie had been alive before Dr. Tibbs had operated on her and dead when he had finished.

Soon Mr. Harrison had convinced himself that that was the way it had been.

During the weeks that passed, Mr. Harrison brooded over the loss of his once beautiful wife and his guilt and grief gave way to anger. That anger was directed towards the eminent and highly regarded surgeon Dr. Tibbs who—through ineptitude or malice—had been responsible for the loss of Mr. Harrison’s wife.

Soon thoughts of anger gave way to thoughts of revenge.

Mr. Harrison made himself acquainted with the home of Dr. Tibbs and the details of his comings and goings—sitting for hours and hours in a rented car with a notepad and watch.

After a while, Mr. Harrison could accurately predict Dr. Tibbs’ whereabouts at any time of the day or night on any day of the week.

On a Sunday evening Dr. Tibbs was to be found at home—alone—being neither married nor keen on entertaining.

On one particular Sunday evening Dr. Tibbs had a visit from Mr. Harrison. At the side of the house, Mr. Harrison found the kitchen door unlocked. Quietly he opened the door and carried his canvas bag inside.

Sitting in his armchair in front of the fire, Dr. Tibbs heard a sound in the kitchen. He got up and went to investigate. Dr. Tibbs was surprised to find someone standing in his house on a Sunday evening. Mr. Harrison, however, was prepared for such an eventuality and expertly struck Dr. Tibbs on the side of the head, dropping him to the floor, unconscious.

When Dr. Tibbs regained consciousness a few hours later, he found himself sitting in one of his chairs at the dining room table. A rope was wrapped many times round his chest and legs, binding him securely to the chair.

Mr. Harrison stood on the opposite side of the table, a strange kind of mad grin on his face. He took something from the canvas bag on the chair beside him and leant across the table towards the doctor. Dr. Tibbs tried to ask who the man was who was in his house on a Sunday evening and who had beaten him unconscious and tied him

to a chair in his own dining room, but Mr. Harrison just continued to grin his strange kind of mad grin.

Fuelled by his fear, Dr. Tibbs started to get angry. A large vein stood out on his forehead—and throbbed. He demanded to know exactly who this man was, why he was in his house and why he had tied him to a chair in his own dining room.

Eventually, Mr. Harrison stopped grinning his strange kind of mad grin and told Dr. Tibbs exactly who he was and exactly why he was there and tied him to a chair in his own dining room.

Despite Mr. Harrison's candid admission of who he was and why he was there, Dr. Tibbs was confused. He had never killed anyone in his life and he did not remember either Mr. Harrison or his once beautiful wife Marjorie.

Before Dr. Tibbs could ask any more questions, Mr. Harrison took hold of the medic's hand and held it down on the table. Then with the hammer he had taken out of the canvas bag, Mr. Harrison proceeded to smash Dr. Tibbs' hand to a bloody pulp. Dr. Tibbs' eyes bulged in their sockets but he neither shouted nor yelled. Instead he made a soft whimpering sound and started to cry. Mr. Harrison frowned and then repeated his hammering on the doctor's right hand.

Dr. Tibbs stared down at his ruined hands, the fingers bent and twisted, pointing in different directions. Tears dribbled down his cheeks.

Mr. Harrison untied the rope from the chair and put it back into his canvas bag with the hammer. Dr. Tibbs rolled sideways off the chair and lay on the floor sobbing, his mangled hands clutched to his chest. Mr. Harrison grinned his strange kind of mad grin and left the doctor to himself.

Dr. Tibbs was taken into hospital. One of his colleagues had become suspicious and raised the alarm when the doctor did not show for work on the Monday morning. In the operating theatre a surgeon not so eminent or highly regarded as Dr. Tibbs amputated the doctor's smashed and lifeless hands. Onto the doctor's stumps were grafted

two metal claws. The lifeless appendages hung from the ends of his arms as uselessly as his mangled hands had done. Dr. Tibbs cried, cried with anger, pain and frustration.

After a brief period of unwinding on a tropical island, Mr. Harrison returned to his former life in the business world. As a year slipped slowly by, Mr. Harrison gradually withdrew himself from public life, shunning social contact and taking an increasingly less active role in his business affairs. His sole avenue of pleasure was to take an evening stroll in the woods behind his expansive home, where he would sit and remember better times.

Dr. Tibbs also withdrew into his own private world. A single spark flickered within him—a purpose, a reason. During the days he struggled with the two alien beings that had replaced his hands, willing them to obey his commands. Finally they began to respond and Dr. Tibbs convinced them to pick up a scalpel and eventually to wield it with the skill and precision that had earned him the respect and admiration of his peers.

It was a dark and stormy night. Mr. Harrison retired early. Someplace not too far away Dr. Tibbs smiled at the appropriate atmospheric as lightning flashed across the sky and thunder rumbled above the heads of the sleeping city.

A window creaked as it was levered open from the outside and a figure slipped into the basement of the darkened house. Dr. Tibbs wore a long dark coat and a wide brimmed hat, which cast a shadow across his face, which was already concealed behind a surgeon's mask.

The doctor made his way to the room at the top of the stairs where Mr. Harrison lay dreaming of happier times.

Dr. Tibbs dropped his medical bag silently on the table beside the bed and took from it a syringe and a bottle of straw-colored liquid. He filled the syringe and carefully injected the anesthetic into the neck of the still sleeping Mr. Harrison.

Having given the drug sufficient time to have done its work, Dr. Tibbs pulled back the sheets and carefully divested the soundly sleeping Mr. Harrison of his floral motif pajamas.

From the medical bag on the table beside the bed, Dr. Tibbs took a scalpel and a surgical saw.

It was several hours, possibly even days, before the effects of the anesthetic had worn off and Mr. Harrison woke up. The first thing he noticed was the daylight streaming in through the bedroom window. Then he noticed a chill over his body and then the strange tingling sensation in his arms and legs. Mr. Harrison tried to sit up and find his pajamas to cover his nakedness but he was unable to move.

He raised his head from the pillow and looked down at himself. For a brief moment his brain either refused to admit what it saw or initially found nothing out of place but as Mr. Harrison looked again he realized that his arms and legs were missing. His brain screamed as it tried to comprehend what it was seeing, tried to understand the implications of what had happened while he had slept.

Mr. Harrison wished it had all been a dream, that he was still dreaming but he had no fingers to pinch himself and wake up.

Mr. Harrison, the amputee, stared up at the ceiling, a trunk with a head lying in the middle of the bed.

Mr. Harrison had always assumed that only women screamed—but he screamed now. He screamed and he screamed and he screamed.



### **Author's Note: Mr. Harrison and the Doctor**

Mr. Harrison and the Doctor is my homage to one of my all time favorite movies of all time. Can you guess which? Probably not. “The Abominable Dr. Phibes.” Never heard of it? Well, it was made in 1972 by Bob Fuest and starred Vincent Price as the titular character (I always loved that word... titular).

Dr Phibes' wife—played by the very lovely Caroline Munro—was involved in a car crash. When she died on the operating table, Phibes was so distraught that he blamed the surgeons for killing her and decided to act out the plagues of Egypt upon them.

It's a great film. If you've not seen it then I highly recommend checking it out. There was also a sequel involving Robert Quarry who played the titular character in “Count Yorga, Vampire.” Yay... titular!!!