

**Five Nights**

**at Freddy's**

**FAZBEAR FRIGHTS #9**

**THE PUPPET CARVER**

BY

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# THE PUPPET CARVER

nstage, the banjo-strumming animatronic pig slowed in its movements, emitted a sputtering sound, and then ground to a halt.

“Really? Another one?” Jack yelled. The stupid pig was the third animatronic to break in less than a month. And fixing those things cost money. Money that Jack didn’t have.

This place was bleeding him dry. When he bought it three years ago, he had thought that the Pizza Playground, a kiddie pizzeria complete with games and animatronics, would be a great investment. Pizza, games, talking and singing animal characters—those were all things kids loved, right? And parents were always looking for ways to keep their little brats entertained, especially on their birthdays. He had anticipated a lot of birthday business.

But the fact was, the kids weren’t showing up, and Jack didn’t know why. Was it because parents these

days packed their kids' schedules so full of sports and lessons that there was no time left for mindless entertainment? Or did kids today just prefer mindless entertainment of a different sort on their computers or video game consoles? Whatever the reason, Jack was losing money like it was water pouring through a sieve. Just this morning, he had to order the kitchen staff to throw away expired ingredients for the pizzas nobody was going to eat. And now he had to figure out how to pay for repairs of the animatronics that nobody was going to see.

“Porter! Sage! Get out here!” Jack yelled. He was so angry and stressed he felt his face heating up. He remembered the doctor telling him to be mindful of his blood pressure, but how could you keep your blood pressure down when everything around you was flying out of control?

Porter came out from behind the stage, and Sage

emerged from the custodial closet. Both were in their early twenties, young enough to be Jack's sons. But these boys were no sons of his. *What a couple of losers*, Jack thought as they shambled up to him like dogs making a futile attempt to please their master. Well, Jack wasn't *pleased* with either one of them. Porter, the short one with glasses, was a handyman who was supposed to be in charge of the animatronics. He claimed to be some kind of inventor, and when he was not ineptly trying to follow Jack's orders, he was always tinkering with the tools and equipment in the storage room. Sage, the tall one who wore his long black hair in braids, was supposed to keep the place clean. He fancied himself a writer. He spent his breaks sitting at a table in the dining area, hunched over a notebook, scribbling away on his so-called "novel."

*Clearly neither of these idiots are going anywhere*, Jack thought. They were lucky he saw fit to pay them minimum wage and let them take home leftover pizza.

"The pig's busted," Jack said. "Take it back to storage."

"Wow, those things are dropping like flies," Sage said, looking up at the almost-empty stage.

"I don't need your commentary, Captain Obvious," Jack said. "I just need your muscles to take the porker to the storage room."

“Yes, sir,” Sage said, but he looked like he was suppressing the urge to roll his eyes.

Jack couldn’t stand insubordination.

“Well, soon all your animatronic problems will be solved anyway,” Porter said, stepping up onto the stage to help move the broken figure. “I’m almost finished with the prototype of my machine. It will create low-cost but highly functional animatronics made from only an inexpensive slab of wood. You’re going to be amazed, Jack!”

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” Jack muttered. Something about the little guy’s ungrounded optimism was especially irritating.

Porter grinned like he was being issued a particularly satisfying challenge. “Oh, you’ll see it. And you’ll believe it.” He turned to Sage. “You ready to lift this thing? Let’s do it on the count of three. One . . . two . . .”

With Sage’s help, Porter set down the deceased pig animatronic in a corner of the storage room. “I get so tired of the way that ogre talks to us,” Porter said. “Once I get a patent on my invention and find a buyer, I’m going to be out of here so fast I’ll leave a dust trail.”

“And I’ll be stuck here eating your dust,” Sage said with a sigh. “Maybe someday you’ll take pity on me and invite me to your mansion and feed me a meal.

You know, remember your old coworker who's still living on leathery reheated pizza slices."

Porter gave Sage a pat on the shoulder. "Hey, you won't need my pity. You'll get your novel published. Your book will be on the bestseller list. You'll tour the country doing signings. No more reheated pizza for you."

Sage grinned shyly. "You really think it's good enough to be published?"

"Of course I do!" Porter said. He was happy to give his buddy a pep talk, but it was an honest pep talk. Sage really was talented. "It's way better than a lot of published books I've read. And it's not just me who thinks so. Your creative writing teacher says so, too, right?" Porter and Sage attended the local community college together, though they majored in radically different fields—mechanical engineering for Porter and English for Sage.

Sage nodded. "She's been very complimentary of it, yeah."

"Well, there you go! And actually, I've got to say, I find your work not just entertaining but inspiring. My invention is partially inspired by your novel."

Sage raised an eyebrow. "How's that?"

"Well, *The Puppet Carver* is about a wooden man who wants to be real, right?"

Sage nodded.

"Well, my Puppet Carver takes an ordinary piece



of wood and transforms it into something that seems alive.” He hadn’t heard Jack yelling, so he figured the grumpy boss must be temporarily distracted. Porter pulled back the glittery purple curtain that hid his invention along with several broken animatronics. “Come check it out. If Jack comes back here, I’ll pretend to be working on the animatronics, and you can pretend to be cleaning something.”

Sage smiled. “You’re a bad influence, Porter.” He followed the shorter man behind the old curtain that had probably hung in front of the stage once.

“Here it is!” Porter said, gesturing with a flourish to a clunky-looking piece of equipment. “The Puppet Carver!”

“It looks kind of like a giant wood chipper,” Sage said.

“Well, that’s the basic concept,” Porter said in a salesman voice. “But it does so much more!” Like a wood chipper, the puppet carver had an opening where the wood was fed in. But what happened once the wood was inside the machine was far more sophisticated. Once he got a few of the kinks worked out, Porter planned to apply for a patent. He hoped that the Puppet Carver would be the first of many patented inventions. “Here, help me load this log into it, and I’ll show you what happens.”

“Okay,” Sage said, but he sounded a little unsure. “This is a safe piece of equipment, right?”