

Darkness

The last thing I saw was my alarm clock flashing 12:07am before she pushed her long rotting nails through my heaving chest, her other hand muffling my screams.

I open my eyes, bolting upright. Relief floods through me as I realise it was only a dream. But as I look at my alarm clock, reading 12:06am, I hear my bedroom door creak open. I shift to arouse my husband, before remembering he left, after I gave birth. The creaking doesn't stop until the door slams into the wall, leaving a shadowed figure. My breath returns to heavy panting, while my shaking hand reaches for the bedside lamp. The light engulfs the hallway; a groan comes from the doorframe. "Are you alright? You were screaming," a voice questions. I relax into the sweat-stricken mattress.

"Yeah, yeah I-I just forgot you stayed the night."

"Oh okay, I thought you just saw your reflection."

"Wow, sister of the year." She smirks back at me. "Now I need my beauty sleep."

"I'll wake you up after winter then," she chuckles, before walking back down the hallway.

POV- FOETRAM

It just lays there ignoring me, pretending it can't hear me; I'll get it. I crawl next to it and hear the steady heartbeat, too calm for a dark soul. Lavender wafts from its hair, making my head spin in distaste. I pounce on it and before it can process what is happening; my teeth sink into the flexible flesh of its left ear. Moulding and cracking under the pressure, the sound of tearing wet paper fills the room before a pleading cry awakens my darkest thoughts. I grab a piece of rope and shove it into its mouth; the obnoxious begs quieten. The river of sins runs down its neck, puddling next to its scar-ridden body. The 'Duiwel' is shaking slightly as I move to its stomach. I dig my nails down its thighs, making sure it knows this land is mine. I lift the thin material off its abdomen before plunging my white bullets deep under the surface. The muscle contracts around them, spasming rapidly nonstop.

I move my jaw, submerging my dry lips deeper until I hit my target. Sobs and whimpers are spilling from its mouth but no saviour is coming. I scrape my teeth along its bottom rib, getting the same sensation as when you gnaw your teeth together. I sharply turn my head, keeping a firm grip on the smooth bone. The 'Duiwel' arches its back; guttural screeches infiltrate the air. I keep turning my head, gathering momentum, until a deafening crack rings in my ears. I pull out, taking my prize with me.

I'm still vigilant from last night; my dream felt too real. My first round as a nurse at Metropolitan State Mental Hospital is to bring breakfast to all of the patients in Ward B. I like talking to them and getting to know how they think; that's why I applied for this job. Ward B is for the murderers and medium mental state inmates, so they keep you on your feet.

"Hey Foetram, how are you today?"

He looks around his cell which contains a metal-framed bed, a sink and a toilet. No windows, no bold colour scheme. I would go crazy if I got locked in here. Foetram never answers. He never talks, to be honest and always carries a bone around his neck; they say it's from his sister. I walk out and continue my round until the air rapidly cools. The lights start flickering when my eyes drift to the ceiling. I quickly run down the corridor, panicking slightly. "There's no such thing as ghosts," I mutter to myself.

“Do you remember telling me that story about the ghost hauntings here?”

My co-worker, Isaac, sits next to me at the staff’s cafeteria table.

“Yeah...Ann Marie Davee disappears, a fellow inmate owned up, shows guards three separate graves but they found out where he had kept seven of her teeth. He got restrained in a shock chair for the rest of his sentence and the hauntings have been happening ever since.” My breath hitches in my throat; maybe it’s her? The rest of the day progresses as normally as the sun setting.

I wake up to a soothing voice calming my newborn through the baby monitor. I look at my alarm clock, 12:06. I stiffen before a chilling fact hits me, I live alone. I bolt out of my bedroom and nearly collide with my baby’s closed door. Turning the knob I find out it’s locked. “No...please don’t hurt him. I beg of you.” Tears roll down my cheeks as I bang on the door, shoving all my weight against it. My baby boy starts crying again, high and loud. Panic overcomes me and I go seek out my old baseball bat. I swing with all the strength I’ve got, but truth be told, it was never going to work. My baby is howling, pain evident in the tone and I try desperately to open the door. I live on the 6th floor without a balcony, this was the only entry point. Suddenly the air is filled with a stench of rotting meat and leather. My entire body starts shaking but I continue to shove at the door. All of a sudden my baby’s cries stop altogether, just before the lock clicks. I rush in and crumble to my knees beside his cot. I wish I had stopped breathing.

I don’t know why I decide to go to the hospital. I just had a feeling that this will be the place where the ‘spirit’ lives. I check my phone but halt mid-step in the narrow corridor. A picture of me sleeping pops up. I continue walking; this is too far. I walk up to an open door, I control my fear. A guy sits restrained in a shock chair, several teeth protruding from a wound on his arm. A hand slithers onto my shoulder.

“They didn’t tell me it was a two for one sale on ribs”.

Written by Hannah Cain