

In The Dead Of The Night

# **In The Dead Of The Night**

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Something within the shadows waits for me. Haunting me for so long as it takes anyone who dares walk down the path. Now I must face it one last time.

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Lightning stretched across the sky, thunder and rain creating their own beat as I stared out the window. The glass was cool to my touch and I rested my heated forehead against it, wishing that things hadn't gone the way they had. I had no idea how things had gotten out of control as they did. My mind raging with the multitude of thoughts, so overwhelming that it made me want to scream in such agonizing terror. Yet, I knew to well that screaming would not give me any relief. As I stood there, I could feel my heart pounding so hard, that I thought it would burst through my chest. Through the darkness and the storm, I could see the damp, grass-splotched path that leads into the forest. The path that I felt such fear about, for what I had witnessed deep within it, so many years ago, but never uttered a word about it. That was until this moment, when I had realized that this was something more than just my own imagination running rampant. My right hand reached up, holding a smoldering cigarette in between my two index fingers, bringing it slowly to my lips. As I took a drag from it, a tear fell down my cheek, from the memories of those who this beast had taken. The latest one had been my fiancée's best friend, who had not listened to my warning. Thinking that it was nothing more than the words of a madman, lost within his own illusions of grandeur. I went after her, not fearing what fate could have in store for me. For it really didn't seem to matter, for I knew that I would soon fall prey to this beast, like all the others. I had found her half way down the path, and stood hidden in the shadows, so that I could not be seen by this abomination. Yet, I still knew that it was aware of my presence, even though it had not made any effort to try and show it. Its blood stained fangs ripping into her flesh, devouring her with an unholy hunger that I had never thought my eyes could ever witness. The only thing that I could see was the beast's mouth, its fangs, while the rest of it remained hidden within the shadows of the night. That was except for its dark, blood red eyes that seemed to glow with the fires of hell. I had turned and ran away at that point, hoping, praying that this thing would not see me. Which for some reason it didn't, probably because it had before it a beast of warm fresh meat to satisfy its hunger. As I ran through the darkness that night, I could hear the sound of the beast's horrid howl and her screaming, which in seconds became silent. The pressure of it flowed through me with such force, that I felt like I wanted to scream. But not a sound would come from my lips, as the torment ate me alive from inside. Even if I were to, it would do no good for me. For the friends that we were with would just think of me being ludicrous in thought. And in a way, I was starting to question my own sanity, that was, what could be left now from all this. Even though it was something that I shouldn't have questioned, I found myself pondering it.

My head rose up, as I slowly turned and made my way over to the leather couch, which sat across from the stone fireplace. Sitting there, my eyes gazed into the soft glow from the flames dancing across the burning logs. Seeming so hypnotic, as if I could easily fall into a trance. That and the sound of the rain hitting the rooftop and the window echoed around the room. The only other sound that could be heard was that of the crackling of the burning embers in the fireplace. Normally, this would be something that would make me relaxed, but my thoughts stayed upon the beast. Of the fact that it was out there waiting for me. For I was the only one who had seen it, that had not been attacked by it yet. Or maybe it had a different purpose in mind. To drive me deep into the paranoia and madness, which it brought about? Trying to weaken me, making me lose control of what logical thoughts I had left. In the volumes of my mind, I could still recall the first time that I had seen this beast, when it had drew me into its nightmare. The memory of it was so clear that I could almost believe that it had happened an hour ago. Yet it had been so many years ago, back when I was only seven. For before that horrid day, I had always loved to walk through the forest, the smell of the dew in the air, the crunching sound of the leaves under my feet, it was my place of solitude. But on that one warm spring day, my solitude had come crashing down and I realized I would never be able to feel such peace again. On that day, I had made my way down the path, like I had always did, feeling the small branches brushing against the sides of my legs. When I got further into the forest, the light gray shadows looming down, there was something in the air that felt different. Felt as if I had entered some sort of bizarre dream that I had no idea how I got there. But I didn't really think anything about it, for I wasn't really worried about it. In a way

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I had thought that it was because of the stories my father had told me about how there was something alive in the woods. Something evil that lurked within the shadows waiting to take someone away. Of course, I knew that was nothing more than one of those urban legends that the people around here always brought us.

As I made my way further down the path, I heard a sound, which I wasn't sure about. It sounded like someone's voice, but it was so faint and muffled. I figured it was probably one of the teenagers from town that brought their girlfriend up there to make out with. Even though I knew that I should have turned around and walked away, I didn't. I was curious to see what they were doing, which were probably normal for a kid my age. In a way, I was hoping to see that, for I never seen anyone make out with a woman (and the chance to probably see something that I shouldn't either). After about a minute, I heard a woman scream like something out of a horror flick. I was standing at the edge of a clearing and was able to see clearly what was going on when the scream filled the air and whom it was. It was Monica Tillman, a seventeen-year-old girl who lived up the road from my house. She was lying on the dirt ground, the white tee shirt and black shorts she wore covered in blood, her blonde hair fanned out around her head as her blood ran over the ground. But that was not the only thing that I was able to see, which terrified me. It was those large fangs that were stained pink with fresh blood that ripped into her flesh. And a jaw and upper lip that looked like from the face of a wolf that had been severely burned. The rest of the things body was covered in the shadows of the forest, making it impossible for me to see it. That was, except for its glowing, blood red eye. Luckily, it didn't seem to notice me, as it feasted upon Monica's flesh, which gave me the chance to make my escape. The only thing was, I wasn't sure if I could. My body was paralyzed in terror, and I couldn't take my eyes off of this thing. After a second, (which felt more like an hour to me) I carefully started to back up. Making sure not to make a sound that would alert this thing to my presence. When I had gotten far enough away from it, I turned and ran home. Tear filling my eyes as my mind felt as if it was screaming in my skull. I didn't stop for anything till I got home, and even then raced into my room and closed the door behind me. Never to speak to anyone about it, for I knew that no one would ever believe me.

I had not thought about that moment in my life for so many years, making my past to be nothing more than one large blank page. I sat there, taking the last drag from my cigarette, and then crushing it out in the ashtray that sat on the coffee table in front of me. My mind still remembering the sounds it made, which haunted my mind. The crunching and slithering sound it made when it moved. The more I sat there thinking about it, the stronger the pressure started to build inside of me.

It was then I heard the soft, loving voice of Jennifer, coming from the soft shadows of the room. Yet, I didn't look toward her right away, for my mind was still focused on the beast that lurked out within the darkness. When I heard her voice again, I looked toward her, seeing her angelic face glowing from the soft glow of the fireplace. At first, I was not sure what it was that she had said first, as she made her way slowly toward me. The illumination from the fire shined softly upon her flesh, as I saw her smile, which touched my heart so many times before.

“Are you alright, Mark? I got worried when I woke up and you weren't lying next to me.” she said as she moved closer to me.

The glow from the flames in the fireplace showed through her nightgown, showing the silhouette of her sultry frame. Its glow shining partly on her face—that angelic face, that I had fell in love with so long ago, and still did. She sat down next to me; her hand gently touched my thigh. Those light green eyes staring at me so lovingly, waiting to hear my response. Even though she probably knew what I would say.

“I just have a lot on my mind. Nothing that you should worry about.” I said, looking at her.

In a way she already knew what it was that I been going through, for she had heard me speak about it in my sleep. The look on her face was that of such concern and compassion. I found myself wanting to tell

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her everything that I knewâ everything about what hid within the forest. But did I want to draw her into this nightmare? That was the one thing that I could really not answer. When I looked at her, I found myself wanting to tell her everything. Those green eyes staring at me, as her hand gently touched my chest. Her fingers lightly scratching through the fabric of my shirt.

â Mark, tell me what is wrong. I know that you are suffering with something. Donâ t shut me out, that isnâ t a good thing.â she said as her head rested on my shoulder.

I wanted to tell her, felt the words forming in my mind. But yet my lips didnâ t utter a word, which started to kill me inside. For I loved her too much, to put her in the path of this horrid beast. And worse, to push her into madness that this thing had already brought me into. How could I let that happen to her? But if I didnâ t, what if she decided to go looking for her friend who was now missing for a day now. There were so many things that I wanted to say to her, to explain that which I had been feeling and thinking every since we came back to my parents cabin a couple weeks ago. For when we did, all those old memories that I had forgotten suddenly came rushing back. Having to face it, along with the memory of what waited out there in the storm.

â I just donâ t want to get into it right now. I want to enjoy this quiet time that I have with you, sweetie.â I said softly.

â This has to be about those nightmares that you have been having lately. Doesnâ t it?â she said as she looked at him.

I wanted to tell her something else, but how could I when I knew that it was the truth. There was no way that I could really hide the truth from her, for she had a way of always being able to know when I was lying. And in a way I was never able to lie to someone, to hide the truth from someone even when I had to. Of course, this was one of those times. For a moment she said nothing to me, just held me there as the warmth of the fire glowed on us. Within that silence, I could hear the faint sound of something breathing, hanging in the air. And first I thought it was her, but knew to well that it wasnâ t that. It sounded so soft and close as if it was right next to me. The more I tried t ignore it; the stronger it seemed to become. My mind was so consumed by it that I didnâ t hear what Jennifer was saying to me. But her voice had been able to pull me away from the trance I had been able to pull me away from the trance I had been in. Before I had regained consciousness, I head a voice echoing in my head. Its words repeating over and over again, slowly fading each time. *Soon shall I be there. Soon.* My eyes looked over at her, while my mind tried to comprehend what could be happening.

â Iâ m sorryâ what were you saying?â I asked, acting as if nothing was wrong.

â I was asking if you had seen Monica? I havenâ t seen her since she went out for a walk. I am worried about her, she is going through so many problems.â she said.

Even though I said that I hadnâ t, I knew to well that I did. That I had warned her not to go down the path, before the storm came. She just looked at me, as if she was not sure if I was telling the truth. Then Jennifer sat up and got to her feet, as she said she would be right back. I watched as she walked away, as she made her way to the bathroom. Looking back at me twice, showing that same loving smile. And then I found myself alone again, as my thoughts went to Monica. And for some reason I could picture her going into the woods, as if I as following her. Yet I remained inside the cabin, refusing to go there. Still, the vision was overwhelming me, as all I could do was to give into the vision, in my mind I could see her walking down the same path that I had years ago. The gentle breeze blowing through a few strands of her long blonde hair, eyes red from crying, as her arms crossed over her breasts. She looked around her as if something or someone was near her. But she was alone within the silence of the dark forest. Her breath becoming rapid, as the fear

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coursed through her veins. Feeling her body shivering for a reason that she didn't know. She had reached that same clearing that I had seen so many times before. Standing there, motionless, as she started to cry. The darkness closed in on her, like a predator closing in on its prey. It is then that I could see the silhouette of the beast moving toward her, the crunching and slithering sound growing even stronger. This time though the only thing of the beast that was showing was its deformed arms and large razor sharp claws. Reaching for her as its low, ungodly growling voice filled the cool air. Speaking in a language that she had never heard before. Its claw-like hand ripping into the flesh of her back, bursting out of her chest, her still beating heart within the palm of its claw. Her body convulsed wildly, head tilted back and mouth opened as if she would scream. Blood flowed from her opened mouth, down her chin and flowing onto her black blouse.

It was then I heard the sound of the bathroom door open, which pulled me away from the vision. My eyes looked across the room to see Jennifer coming to me again. Even though she still showed the same loving smile, I could feel that she was worried about me. She moved elegantly, like an angel floating on a cloud. I had no idea what I had seen in this vision was real or not. The only thing that I knew was that Monica had fallen prey to this abomination.

Jennifer sat down next to me and then kissed me so passionately. Our arms wrapped around each other, feeling her body against mine, was exactly what I longed for right now. So that I could know that this was real and not some bizarre vision that this thing created or from my mind. There was nothing that I wanted more than to feel her kiss and her touch right now. Feeling her fingers running through my hair, awakening once again the passionate love I had for her. Her head tilted away from me, eyes opened and staring at me with such love in them. and because of it, I wanted to tell the honest truth about what I was dealing with. Of this beast and the nightmare that it had thrown me into.

“What is it? What are you thinking about?” she whispered.

“There is something I need to tell you. But, I don't want you to think that I am crazy.” I said, in a uneasy tone.

The expression on her face changed to such a serious expression, and yet there was a brief look of fear on her face. Still, she held me close to her, her eyes looking into mine.

“Tell me sweetie. I would never think you are crazy, never say that.” she said and then kissed me briefly. “I love you and always will.”

Just hearing her say that, brought about more confidence in me than that I had thought I could feel. My hand gently reached up and touched the side of her face, and I knew that couldn't hold back the truth that I had been hiding for so many years. The nightmare that had haunted me ever since I was ever since I was seven.

“I know what happened to Monica. She had been taken by something in the forest. Some beast—some phantom that is now waiting for its next victim to come forth.” I said.

“You mean, that thing from your nightmares? That was only a dream, it can't be true.” she said.

“I saw this thing when I was seven. It was since then that this thing was after me. It has haunted me ever since then.” I said in a serious tone.

“You know that this can't be true. You are letting your imagination corrupt your thinking.” she said.

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“It is true. There is a beast out there, waiting for the right moment to strike. And each victim, there was nothing left of them, no evidence, except for a trace of blood.” I said.

I didn’t want to scare her, (that was the last thing that I wanted to do) but it was something that needed to say. The look on her face was a cross between worry and confusion. She just sat there, holding me close. It was then we heard the sound of the couple in the other bedroom, in the heat of passion. And because of it, we found ourselves laughing about it. For who knows how many times they had heard us in the moment of intimacy. But there was a sudden cold chill that came into the room. Not just the chill in the air, but the dampness in the rain too. The scent of the forest and death that filled the room. I had no idea why I was feeling that way, out was wondering if Jennifer was feeling the same way? I really didn’t know these people in that room and really didn’t want to.

“Do you feel a chill?” I asked.

“Oh, it’s probably just Debbie and her boyfriend, who opened the bedroom window. She loved to feel the air on her, so she probably kept the bedroom window open.” she said.

I knew of the window in that room, for it used to be mine. The only window in there was the one that faced the entrance to the forest and because of it; I always kept it closed so this thing wouldn’t get in. Even though it never happened, I never took a chance with it. It was then that a sense of fear ran through my body as we sat there. There was something about that opened window that brought about such a moment of terror flowing through my veins. So strong that there was no way that I could really ignore it, even if I wanted to. I decided to try and forget about it, because the only thing that I wanted to concentrate on was Jennifer. She leaned closer to me and then our lips met in a tender kiss. My arms wrapped around her, holding her close to me. The only thing that mattered to me right at that moment was to feel the warmth of the passion that she had for me. And to let her feel the passion, which I held in my heart for her, that burned so intense within my soul. I could feel her fingers running through my hair, as our kisses grew deeper, more intense. Oh how I wanted her so much and was not going to let anything stop me from giving myself to her. At least that was what I thought.

It was right at that moment, when we heard the sound of Debbie scream, but it wasn’t a scream of passion that she did. No, this was a scream of sheer terror, one that I had never thought I would ever hear again. We just sat there as our attention was drawn to the closed bedroom door, wondering what it could be that had happened. I wanted to get up and see what was going on, yet there was a part of me that was trying to keep me from doing just that. I could feel my heart racing faster, as I started to know what it could be that was making her scream like that. It was the beast; it had come in through the window to claim another victim. This time though it was not going wait for one of us to walk aimlessly into the forest and into its domain.

“What in the world is going on in there?” Jennifer asked in a scared tone.

“It’s here, it came for us. I know it has to be that thing.” I said in a terrified tone.

“You mean that beast in the forest that you told me about? You mean that you were telling the truth? There really is something out there coming after you?” she said as she looked at him with such a scared expressing on her face.

I wanted to tell her that it was something else, but I knew too well what it was that Debbie was screaming about. Jennifer got off my lap and then I stood up and started to make my way over to the door. I could feel Jennifer was close behind me, which in a way was reassuring. The only thing I was not sure about was what I would do once I opened that door? Of course, no one truly knew what they would do in a drastic situation, until that moment came to them. The only thing that I could hope for was that I would be able to get

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us out of this situation safely. Jennifer's hand gently rested on my shoulder, which made me jump slightly but ignored it. When we reached the door, we could hear the sound of Debbie's voice crying out from the other side of the door. Also I could hear the sound of slithering and crunching, which was a lot louder than any other time before. I really didn't want to open that door, but knew that someone's life was at risk and I couldn't let that thing take another life. Not if there was some way that I could stop it.

"For God sakes, someone help me!" Debbie screamed.

It was then that there was the sound of something growling and a crunching sound that came from the other side of the door. Drowning out Debbie's cries, or maybe it was the fact that she was now frozen in terror.

"Mark, we have to do something. Debbie is in there, we can't leave her in there with whatever is in there." Jennifer said.

I knew that was the truth, even though I was near the edge of terror, which would make it impossible for me to even move. Still, I had to do something, to end this nightmare once and for all. My hand reached out for the doorknob, stopped for a second as I took a deep breath and then turned it to open it. Strangely, it opened without any resistance, thinking that it would have been locked from the inside. I could feel my body summoning all the strength that it could, just so I could make the next move that I had to. I knew I had to open the door, but something inside of me didn't want to. That was the part of me, the scared child in me that just wanted to run away and hide. But the time of hiding was over with now. I had to face this and end it once and for all. With one shove, the door flew open. I wasn't sure if I really was ready to see what it was that I saw in that room that night, but it was something that I knew I would never forget. Debbie, a woman with medium length fiery red hair, stood against the wall by the doorway, where I stood now. Her hands holding the bed sheet against the front of her naked body, strands of her hair fell in front of her as she stared in terror at what was in front of her. I didn't look in front of me, at what had made her frozen in terror yet. All that I concentrated on was getting her out of the room, before whatever it was would get to her. The slithering and crunching sound was so loud that I couldn't even hear myself think as the rank odor of death filled the room.

"Debbie! Debbie! you have to get out of here now!" I said as I grabbed her arms.

She shrieked in terror when I did, looking at me with a blank expression on her face. As if she did not know what to do or even think. Forcefully I pulled out through the doorway, to where Jennifer stood. Then turned back to finally face the thing that had haunted my mind for so long, the thing that terrified me so much. And the beast was just like I had remembered it when I was seven, except this time I was able to see it in much more detail. The flesh of its arms seemed rough like old leather, its color was as black as that of a bottomless pit, as the ends of its cloak were torn and floating inches above the ground. In fact the things whole body seemed to levitate above the floor, making it seem more like some sort of entity than a beast. Its razor sharp claws dug into the flesh of Debbie's now dead lover, as the thing's head refused to turn to me. As if it didn't even want to acknowledge that I was there. But I needed to see its face, to know what it truly was that had been stalking me for the longest time. Its claws ripping his flesh, like a knife gutting a fish. His blood stained on the mattress of the bed, his eyes opened wide in terror and yet his mouth was not open. Not trying to scream, yet to dead glare in his lifeless eyes screamed for him.

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“Look at me you son of a bitch! Look at me! You know it is me that you want! Here I am, take me. Kill me already!” I screamed at the beast.

I know to Debbie and Jennifer I must have looked like I had lost my mind, and looking back at it, I probably did for that brief moment. But that didn't matter to me, the only thing that did was that I wanted this nightmare to end. For this thing to go back to whatever hell it came from and never bother me again. The only thing was, it didn't turn around to face me. And because of that, I felt a rage build within me, stronger than I had ever felt before. Flowing through my veins like molten lava, burning me from inside.

“Alright, if you are not going to, I will make sure you never harm another person again!” I yelled.

I turned and made my way over to the fireplace, picking up a half burning log and then a bottle of Jack Daniels that I had been drinking from earlier. Jennifer said something, trying to stop me, but in a rush of rage, which I was in, I didn't hear her. When I made my way back to the doorway, I saw the thing turn toward me. Not able to see its face, that was if it had one to begin with. It just hung there in the air; its almost decomposed looking arms reaching out to me. As if it were preparing to charge at me for its final attack.

“Go back to the hell you came from you bastard!” I yelled, throwing the bottle at it.

The bottle smashed against its cloak soaking it with the alcohol it held, then I hurtled the log at the thing. Watching as it instantly was engulfed in flames, hearing its high-pitched screams echoing around me. It moved wildly from one side of the room to the next, as if unsure of what it was supposed to do. The room caught on fire as well, smelling the rank odor of burning rotted flesh, which started to make me sick. It was then I felt Jennifer grab at my arm, pulling me out of the doorway. Somehow the door slammed shut behind me even though I had no recollection of closing it. The three of us raced out of the cabin, into the night. The storm had mysteriously ended, just as it had began. We made our way to the car, and I started to drive away from the cabin, which was now being devoured by the flames. Over the racing engine of the car, we could still hear the sound of the beast screaming. My eyes looked into the rearview mirror, but all I could see was the burning cabin. The beast itself was nowhere to be seen. For we would have been able to see it, as it raced back into the forest, covered in flames. After that night, we never went back to that forest or even talked about it to anyone. It was something that we knew that no one would understand. I never found out what that thing was, or if I had truly killed it. But the nightmares, which had haunted me for so long had ended and that was all that mattered to me. The flames that had engulfed the beast, had also freed me of its terror. Like I had said, I had never talked or even thought about it for four years now. Not until now, as I write these words down. Not knowing if anyone would truly believe it to be true. In a way though, that really doesn't matter any more. All that does is that Jennifer and I know what truly happened. As for Debbie, after a year of being in a psychiatric hospital, she came to the realization that it was just a figment of her imagination. Nothing more than an overactive mind, trying to find some sort of release. In some ways I feel as if that thing did survive and is still in those woods, waiting for someone else to stumble upon it. Someone else for it to taunt with its hellish visions of death. So that they would truly know what really lurkedâ€¦. IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

THE END!



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