

The Darkness Within

by Jackie Poenaru

Submission date: 25-Oct-2024 12:37PM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 2497180807

File name: The_Darkness_Within.txt (3.08K)

Word count: 592

Character count: 2538

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Title: The Darkness Within

My mother used to say that the dark was a place of wonder. Creativity. Imagination. A place where anything can happen, and where dreams can finally seep into reality. I never believed her. I should have.

To me, the dark was cold. It was evil. It was the place where all the nightmares lurked about. Hidden in a cloak of shadows. Waiting to claim the one who fears them most. It was the blood-curdling fear that they sought. Devoured. I was like a full course meal. When I was younger, the transition between light and dark was the most terrifying moment. My mother would come and give me a kiss on my head and smile down at me, as she always did, a smile filled with emotion. For me. Then she'd go to bed, dead silence following her absence. The ringing of quietness my only companion as I drift off to sleep. My dreams, my escape and bliss, would soon overtake me, only to quickly be wrenched from my grasp when I would be roughly awoken, feeling hands on my arms. Shoulders. Shaking me back to reality. I used to squeeze my eyes shut, trying to hide from her presence. Her touch was cold, her breath not stirring the air around her, like a ghost, an echo of reality. And as I lay there, petrified, she'd whisper in my ear to open my eyes. Her voice, raising the hairs on the back of my neck in warning, so unlike the

mother I knew in the light, the one I trusted and loved, and the one who trusted and loved me. Looking at the mother hovering over me was like looking at a vessel of a body without a soul, with all the kindness and light sucked out of her.

She would beckon me to follow her through the depths of the house, and I did, foolishly hoping each time that my mother would come back to me, and show me the warmth I craved, instead of the cold I received.

I would see horrors in the dark. Monsters lurked in every corner of the house, unseen, but their presence a known shadow to my footsteps, their eyes on the back of my neck, as though they could see into my soul, know my greatest fears, without even knowing me.

The monsters had become worse over time, a higher dose of fear in the cold with each passing night. The memories come back extremely vivid now, the horrors haunting me and growing stronger, gripping me in their claws, tighter, and tighter, stunning me in place. Fear claiming control of my body. But unlike what I previously thought, it wasn't the dark that had been scaring me, but my mother. And as I look at her now lifeless body, the light truly forever gone from her eyes, I start to realize that the person who had raised me in the house of shadows had never been my mother at all.

The laughter and voices that I had convinced myself were in my head, grow louder. The laughter becoming a deafening screech in my ears, as I drop the bloodied shovel from my hand. I turn around to face her. My monster. The person I fear most. The one who had haunted me from the beginning. My nightmare. And as I look into her pupil-less eyes, I let her claim me.

One last time.