

Bogeyman: A Story of Kindness

by Abigail Verts

A dark silhouette stood hidden in the half-shadows of the moon. The figure stood on the sidewalk, eyes fixed at the decrepit house before him. The paint was peeling off in long gray strips, falling to the ground like the leaves in the fall. Parts of the roof were falling in and the door lay off its hinges, deep gouges torn into its front.

Without realizing it, the figure had made its way to the porch. An eerie silence befell the street. The owls ceased their hooting, the cats yowling quieted, and there was no breeze to blow the tree leaves. Slowly, cautiously, the figure made his way into the house and up a broken stairwell. As if knowing the way, the figure crept down a dilapidated hallway and into a child's bedroom. Compared to the rest of the house, the bedroom was in pristine condition. A child's bed sat in the corner, its occupant nowhere to be seen.

The dark figure sat down with the weight of a million years as if life itself had taken its toll. Near the foot of the bed, a teddy bear lay precariously, covered in dust from years of neglect. Sadness flashed through the figure's eyes as the bear fell to the floor. The dust rising into a cloud of forgotten hopes and lost dreams. The eyes of the bear were the same as the figures; dark as night and flecked with silver like the night sky. The figure stooped to pick the bear up. Tears fell softly onto the covers.

All at once, as if floodgates were being released, the single drops of tears became puddles, then rivers. A lifetime of sadness, loneliness, and regret pooled into the trenches and valleys of the covers. The figure stood and wiped its eyes with the corner of its pitch black cloak. It took the bear softly into a fold of the cloak and left the room without a sound, never looking back. The figure

emerged from the house, face pale and worn. As the door shut, a single thought floated into the midnight air; some homes are never meant to be lived in.

Flashback to 1969

“Mommy! Mommy!” A little boy screamed. But he knew the screams and pleas were useless. His mother never came. She never came when his nightmares dragged him from the endless pits of sleep or when monsters crept in the shadows under his bed and in his closet. Nobody was ever there. He stopped his crying and looked out the window. The moon was throwing half shadows of the trees on the sidewalk. He swore something was moving in the shadows, watching him. He quietly crept back to his bed and climbed under the sheets. The shadows crept in the window and to his bed wrapping him in familiar darkness and plaguing him with familiar nightmares.

Darkness could never last forever and morning finally came, pushing the shadows and unending darkness back for a few hours. Per usual, his mother was nowhere to be seen and his father lay on the couch in the living room, snoring a night of drinking away. The stench of alcohol permeated the room and bottles lay both whole and in pieces around the room. Unfortunately, the sight was nothing new. His father rolled over on the couch mumbling in his sleep. “Lewis get the hell out, go to school.” Lewis walked to the kitchen hoping to find something to eat. He knew the search was useless, they never had anything. After searching the cabinets for a good ten minutes he gave up and went back upstairs to finish readying himself for school.

As he walked out of the house to the bus stop, Lewis saw his mother. She was climbing out of a broken down car. She was drunk as always and reeked of garbage. A man sat in the drivers side.

“See you tomorrow night Krissi,” the man said. His mother turned around and blew the man a kiss.

Lewis made an attempt at conversation, “good morning mother,” even though he knew she would never be kind to him.

“Don’t you have somewhere better to be than bugging me,” she responded. With a sigh of sadness and hopelessness, Lewis walked down the sidewalk to the bus stop.

The ride was awful as ever, the names they called were as bad as always. Lewis was used to it though. He couldn’t remember the last time someone had said something nice. Even his teacher criticized his every move. When he didn’t know something she called him “dumb” or “stupid.”

The day went by like normal. Names were thrown in his face, spit balls were aimed in his direction, and his thoughts never left him alone. Lewis kept his head down and did his work, no matter how right or wrong it was. Finally, the day ended and Lewis rode the bus home. His father still lay on the couch and his mother sat in the chair, both asleep. Lewis just went to his bedroom like normal. He never ate supper, never slept softly, and the shadows crept in even closer. His life was a never ending circle of misery.

50 Years Later

Lewis learned something throughout the miserable decades; the shadows were his only friends. At first they were scary, and then they became a comfort. Even when nothing else liked him or showed him affection, they did. They listened to him complain about how unfair life was, his hatred for his parents, and his desire for it all to end. Slowly but surely, the shadows had consumed him.

The little lost boy he once was still existed, hidden by shadows. Hidden where nothing happy could ever reach. Lewis never went outside during the day. Years of hiding in the shadows had left him almost translucent. On days when he decided to look at himself, the mirror only revealed a ghost. A shell of a person who had never once seen an ounce of kindness. He had tried to end it all several times, but the shadows never let him.

So Lewis lived wherever the shadows drifted, eventually becoming the nightmare of shadows he used to fear so much. He became the monster that hid in the closet of children and the monster under the bed. Some nights he would find himself at a house with a perfect family inside. A family with a mother and father who loved each other and their child. The child was softly kissed and tucked into bed every night. It was these instances where shadows would normally never lurk. The light always kept the darkness away. Lewis changed this, and he showed the boy his own nightmares. The darkness twisting and turning, pulling the boy deeper and showing what hatred and neglect were. Lewis always showed these children what it was like to never have anyone love them. He showed them his life. All he wanted was to be loved.

Eventually the mornings would return and he would find himself back in the shadows, back in his familiar hell. The days faded into years and years into decades. By this time, Lewis had changed his outlook on life. One might say that time had softened him and occasionally, when a child wandered into the shadows, lost and longing for the same things as Lewis, he guided them back. He showed them what life was meant to be. He showed them that shadows did not belong in the life of a child. It was on these occasions that Lewis felt the shadows receding from his life.

Then one day, out of the blue, Lewis found himself at his childhood house. No matter the good deeds he had performed, the old memories of hatred and neglect flooded into his

consciousness. He left before another negative thought could take over his head and blended into the half-shadows of the moon.

Over time, he forgot who he was. He remembered his purpose, but forgot his name. Instead he adapted the name, "The Bogeyman." To this day, a black cloaked figure can be seen in the shadows. Parents use him as a threat to their children. "Behave or the bogeyman will get you," or "eat your vegetables or the bogeyman will haunt you in your sleep." Nobody knows that he was once a child, much like their own, looking for love and kindness in a world that never showed him any.