

KELVIN BUECKERT

Memories of Darkness

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Welcome to My Nightmare

Well, if it is a good enough title for Alice Cooper, it is good enough for me.

In any case, you are here and so am I. Tonight you will experience a journey downstream through a series of fragmented memories of the past...that solidify and turn into a battle for the future.

These are some of the darkest stories I have written. Why did I write them? I don't know. Master said I couldn't leave the dungeon unless I did? I'll go with that.

The poems were originally written for various magazines... but here they are, back from the dust bin of the archives and ready to haunt.

Thanks for dropping in,

Kelvin

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1

August 1, 1980-3:30 a.m.

How did I get here?

That is the only thought in my mind as my eyes flicker open.

I can smell water.

The scent is that of wet leaves after a long cold day of rain.

Thankfully, the foul odor is only a slight distraction from the sight of the body I see draped over me.

Overhead, the stars blur in perfect sync with the rocking of the canoe.

A craving for a cigarette overwhelms me...

I reach for the pack in my pocket but I can't seem to move.

I can't do a blasted thing.

My arms have been tied too well.

The ropes ensure that I remain still, staring up at the sky.

How amazing it is...the stars are unreal tonight. Every one of them shines like an unattainable diamond of tranquility.

If only my mind could experience that type of peace.

Overhead, tendrils of mist begin to writhe around the pale moon.

Somewhere in the distance a pack of coyotes howl and yip like

mischievous dogs. Despite their ungodly racket, I can still hear what can only be the dull roar of a rapidly approaching waterfall.

My thoughts wander back to that fun-filled occasion when I first began to suspect the truth about Dwayne.

Why does he do such horrible things?

Becoming the Snake

Some say
the snake
formed slowly
others say
the jaded reptile eyes
were forced open
by a rabid desire
born in the back of the mind

regardless
of how the sin began
the curse
twisted his body
turning him
from a healthy obsession
with Heaven
toward a fascination
with the ground
below

sucking him
down to his belly
to slither in the garbage
with the guilty

3

Devil

“You Devil!” The victim had whispered to Dwayne as he died.

The memory of that bloody scene would be seared into her mind forever. Now all she knew is that she had to run if she wanted to stay alive.

“Run. Yes, run!” The hateful wind seemed to whisper.

Marsha Pruen obeyed.

Stumbling.

Galloping violently forward, driven by fear, following the narrow path down a steep incline...

Down...Down...Down...into the wooded valley...

“Devil. Devil. Devil!” The whisper rasped like the death rattle of Dwayne’s victim as he died, spewing life from the ragged hole in his windpipe.

That’s when Dwayne had turned from his foul work and seen her standing there. A strange bloodthirsty smile had slowly crept over his face as he started walking toward her...that’s when she had started to run.

Marsha couldn’t shake the feeling that perhaps this was all part of his plan.

That her running this way was exactly what he had wanted.

*Fingering the dread
stumbling within
metaphorical cobwebs
while your rest is ahead*

There it was again.

The disembodied voice chanting in her head.

Marsha forced the words from her mind. It was only her sleep-deprived brain imagining things. That's what she wanted to believe anyway.

Up ahead, trees grew thick and tangled near the path. As Marsha pushed her way through the clawing fingers of wood, she came to see it. It was standing in a small clearing, the brooding black silhouette of a weather-beaten two-story house. Every window had long since vanished, leaving only gaping holes like the empty eye sockets of a human skull. The pale crimson glow of the moon only added to the sinister outline of the building. The clearing was overgrown with tangled weeds that could hide a multitude of evils.

Yet, where else could she run?

It was here that the path came to an end.

Still, Marsha knew that she couldn't go back.

Dwayne was back up the path, waiting with his knife.

Perhaps this house could be a safe hiding spot until morning. So easily and without logic came the wicked and lazy thought, a persistent whisper that soon overcame any misgivings.

*Release your reason
as bells toll*

*run like a
rat into the hole*

The voice continued to whisper in her mind as she walked toward the entrance.

The door hung lopsided on its hinges.

Obviously, it hadn't been used for many years.

Marsha navigated the crumbling steps with surprising ease. The boards appeared to be old, yet they felt and held like new. They didn't even bend as Marsha placed her foot down on the steps. No creaking, no squeaking, just smooth walking.

What if someone was waiting inside?

Perhaps Dwayne had friends, shadowy friends. Yes, this would be where they would wait. Silent and deadly they would fall upon her...

Still, Dwayne was sure to be close behind her.

She needed to hide somewhere.

Marsha gently pushed the ruined door aside. Small dust particles billowed up for a moment then settled to the ground.

She stepped forward.

The silhouette of a kitchen greeted her. The brooding stove, the distinctive shape of the table with three chairs haphazardly strewn around it. To her right, there was the vague silhouette of an old metal pump, doubtless beside a kitchen sink. To the left, a passage of stairs led upward. Doors were open to other rooms all around but they didn't attract her.

Every step forward was taken with exaggerated caution. Her hands were spread before her...feeling her way in the darkness.

Marsha stopped before the dim outline of a stairway. She had felt a raised ring with her foot. She knelt down and felt along the floorboards, sure enough, it was a ring to pull up the

trapdoor leading into the basement. Curious and a little defiant, she pulled it.

It stuck.

*Yes, boldly grab
the ring
and begin pulling
on the door
of your beautiful sorrow*

She tried again, heaving with all her might. Finally, the trapdoor squealed open. The putrid stench of stale water wafted upward like a wave of pent-up emotion released into the ether. Obviously, that was unsuitable for a hidden resting spot. Water had always frightened her, even small amounts of it.

Marsha pictured herself drowning, her face pressed beneath the rotten waves of sewage. Her mouth gasping, pleading, just like Dwayne's latest victim.

"Devil." The victim had whispered softly. "You Devil."

Marsha shivered.

She would hide upstairs, as far as she could go from the foul water.

Spider webs twisted around her face with every step upward. Dust assaulted her nose, tickling it savagely. Sneezes were banished with increasingly weak willpower. After twenty steps, the top of the stairway arrived.

*Our time
is slowly fading
my lovely
quickly now*

come into the room

I have chosen

A short hallway appeared before her.

There were three doorways to be seen. Everyone was closed. Three doors, just like the three years Marsha had been married to Dwayne.

At the end of the hall, a small, broken, window let in the light of the blood-red moon. Like an evil eye, it watched her every move through the jagged glass.

She stepped toward the first closed door. She reached out and twisted the knob. With a jerk, she swung it open and peered inside.

It was completely empty.

Strangely, the moon cast enough vague, red light through an open window to spotlight one spot on the wall. In lettering that appeared black against the red glow, the letter x could be seen. It was scrawled sloppily on the wall as if the paint had still been wet when it had been applied.

She stepped back and turned to face the remaining two doors. What a fool she had been!

Dwayne had known that the murder would send her running down the trail to this house.

He loved traps and the thrill of the hunt.

When she felt safe he would strike.

She needed to find a weapon.

Quickly.

Door number two was before her, on her left, it appeared quite similar to the others around it. Marsha twisted the knob and stepped inside, instinctively glancing toward the wall.

“Y,” was the letter here. There was nothing else in the room

other than a floor covered with undisturbed dust.

That's all, one window, one blood-red letter.

Rub. Rustle. Rub. Rustle. The constant sound of sawing penetrated Marsha's subconscious. Back and forth, in time with the breeze that had grown into a strong wind battering the house.

She twisted, preparing for a fight.

Yet, only the bleakness of an abandoned hallway yawned behind her.

Sweat dribbled uncertainly down her neck.

Someone was inside the house, standing behind her only a moment before. Marsha had felt their presence.

Was it only the wind as it blew through the empty house? Of course, that's what it was. Just her imagination...

Just like her mind had imagined the poems, the red letters, and the light of the moon. It was all just nerves; she would feel better after a good sleep.

Emotion washed over her, washing away her defenses and releasing pitiful sobs from somewhere within.

There was no more comfort to be found in lies...there was only her duty to take the small chances for deliverance that she could find.

She took a breath and opened the door.

Nothing.

She leaned forward to peer inside.

Painted on the wall was the letter "Z."

Lying on the floor beneath the letter was a white piece of paper and the black shadow of a gun.

She stepped forward.

Why had Dwayne left her a gun?

How had he known which order she would choose the lettered

rooms?

What a question...Dwayne always knew things ahead of time. She never had been able to explain his abilities.

The floor creaked as Marsha knelt to grasp the weapon. She stuck the gun into the waistband of her sweatpants and then carried the paper into the hallway.

Thankfully, the moon was bright enough so that she could see.

She wiped tears away with a dusty hand. The dirt crept into the folds of her eyes, blurring vision as Marsha examined the note. On the paper was a crudely drawn figure, a stick man with tiny horns.

Across the left corner was faint, childish writing. She squinted as she struggled to read it. "Devil," spelled the crooked black letters.

Dizzy waves overwhelmed Marsha's mind, spinning her world like a top and hurling it to the floor to join the paper she had dropped.

This too was all part of Dwayne's plan.

What could she do to escape?

Words surfaced like bloated corpses on the unsettled waters of her mind. Memories of the poem Dwayne had written for her when he had first met her. "While breath still lingers..."

*While breath still lingers
within the memories of our kisses
while our summer
still wanders
toward twenty-three
when we will be together
forever*

only you and me

What a blessing it was to think upon those beautiful stanzas he had written for her...what a thing to remember on her twenty-third birthday.

Sleep, blessed sleep was what she really needed.

Marsha knelt and then leaned back against the wall.

All remnants of hope had vanished. Even the fear had fled, leaving only a dull resignation to her fate.

Marsha pulled the gun from her waistband.

Outside was where they were. Dwayne had allowed her to enter the house, but when she tried to leave, the hunt would begin.

That is why he had given her a gun.

He wanted the chase to be exciting.

Marsha checked the clip.

Yes, he had given her a full clip of ammunition.

Dwayne obviously didn't fear her skills as a sharpshooter.

Perhaps he would yet be surprised.

Clank, clank, clank...

The sound of metal scraping metal became was audible. There was a brief pause and then the clanking continued in a steady cadence.

It was only the frenzied wind.

This attempt at self-delusion failed.

The metallic clanking was followed by a deep wooden creaking sound. Then, with cracking, tearing, and deep groans, the ancient house began to crumble as if in the grip of a giant fist.

The old house should have been destroyed years ago. It was in no condition to support human occupation. Who knew why that disturbed young woman had run into it? What an unfortunate husband Dwayne was to have such a wife...Yes, those would be

the words roaming around town.

Marsha struggled to make her way toward the window as the floor beneath her shivered into motion.

The power of Dwayne was far beyond what she could ever know or hope to understand. All she wanted to do was to survive...

Dust was rising like ghosts from the floorboards. Pieces fell from the ceiling as the house swayed in the grip of the wind.

She was almost there, clawing desperately for the only exit within reach.

Then the wood disappeared from beneath Marsha's feet.

A scream like a wild animal rose as she fell.

Her body bounced as it hit the kitchen floor below. Rockets of pain exploded throughout her nervous system.

It was then that the entire kitchen gave way and her already battered body plunged down into the basement...down into the filthy water.

Thankfully, her fall was stopped by a concrete floor.

Dying and broken, Marsha Pruen's body floated to the surface of the garbage-filled sewer that the basement had become.

The disembodied voice in her head continued to chant its cursed poetry.

Rubble and stones rained down from the ceiling, splashing as they attacked the surface of the water.

Then, what still remained of the house collapsed upon her.

*Love was lovely
for the moment
my love
yet, on the day
of twenty-three
only X, Y, Z*

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