

## It Was Me

by LeTrae Wilborn

“Shut up! You’re not my real mother!” I said.

“What is wrong with you Rose? You’ve been acting out lately for reasons that I can’t fathom,” my foster mother asked with pure concern.

“Just leave me alone already! Why did you adopt me anyway? I hate you! I hate you so much,” I shouted more aggressively.

“Rose, please tell me what’s been bothering you. I promise that I can and want to help.”

“No, you can’t! You’re worthless to me! I want you dead!”

After that, my foster mo... Alma, scurried off to her room in tears, and I couldn’t have been happier. Although, there had been one thing that I wish I would’ve told her or at least I think I wanted to tell her. What good is a wish if you don’t know if you truly want it to come true? “Half mind, half heart,” is what Alma has always said; these were the keys to making a wish, to making it come true, and to no regrets.

I usually wake up to this: “Wake up!” Alma would shout, “You can’t sleep all day Rose!” I would finally rise after Alma’s fifth attempt, but it always seemed to me that I hadn’t fully awoken. Half of me gazed at her, while the other half chose what I would wear on that day. Sometimes, I would stare at her, unknowingly of course, but I would stare and stare, just thinking, and for some reason, thinking about her. Soon, all of my attention I would give to her and I would analyze her; Alma was gorgeous, she had long blonde curly hair parted at all the right places, her facial features seemed to flow with each other; her slender eyes flowed with her sharp, defined nose, and then to her large lips as plump as a newly sprung peach in the spring. I would think of her nurturing ways, how great of a job God did making her, and then stop myself, no, she’s nothing!

But, tonight, I awaken with my heart pounding, no, banging on the inside of my chest like a hammer to a nail. The dream, the most insidious of dreams, or was it a nightmare, perhaps both. Why... how could I dream of such a thing? Do I really think of these things? I debate my thoughts, but no answer, no solution, nor cure is evident to me.

My dream started just as how it ended when I awoke, in my bed. I had heard a scream, no, it wasn't a scream, it was more like a screech. I couldn't identify the voice, but it was of a female, the voice yelled, "Help, help, help!" I was concerned, I sprinted down stairs to where the voice seemed to come, but when I went, no one was there, nothing stirring about, and not a single word or sound was spoken or heard. Flustered and discombobulated, I slowly walked back upstairs, step by step, inch by inch, then at the exact moment my foot touched the top step, the screech came again, this time it was louder, seemingly closer, and almost banshee like. Immediately, I ran back down, I didn't have to travel far considering it was only about 15 steps from the bottom, but when I reached the end, I was baffled. There was a figure, it had no face, instead of hands, it had claws, and it was dressed in black from head to toe – black hat, black shirt, black pants, and if it were to wear shoes, I'm sure that they would be black too. It had hair, long, seemingly wet hair that covered its face. It was tall, the figure was, its head could scrape the ceiling, but the one thing that concerned me most about this thing, was its current actions. It held Alma hostage.

I screamed for her, "Mom!" She couldn't speak, she was silent, and for some reason, her eyes were closed. I yelled again, desperately, "Mom?" It was at that moment that I asked myself if I really just called this woman my Mom. Although, something urged me to move forward, something yearned inside my stomach for her, but I... I... stopped because when I moved forward, the black monster, it killed her. It snapped her neck. It left me motherless.

Suddenly, I'm awake. Did I just see what I think I did? I have another urge now, this one greater than the one in my dream. This one wasn't like a force, this was all me. I have the urge to go in and apologize to Alm..., no, my foster Moth..., no, my Mother. I need to say sorry for everything that I've ever done to make her feel like she wasn't important to me, to show her that I care or at least now I do, and to show her that I now realize that even though she didn't bear me in her womb, she bore me in her heart, which is all that matters.

I leap out my bed, and apparently I have been sweating; my hair is drenched and wavy, much like I had been pulled under the tide and swallowed by the sea. I throw on my black robe and slippers. I open my door, and the creak haunts me as I walk down to Mother's room, inch by inch, getting closer. Finally, I make it to her room and yank open the door, only to here that teeth-grinding creak once again. I drop to my knees. "Mom!" I shout. "Mom!" I shout again.

“Mom!” I whisper. She is lying on the ground, a belt wrapped around her neck, and her breathing is gone, her chest as still as a statue. I run to her body. I untangle the belt from her neck. I shake her as hard as a massive earthquake. I smack her. I yell again and again. But she won’t wake up. I settle behind her body, her head to my stomach, as I feel the imprint made by the belt on her neck. I realize that I am touching her neck like... like... like that black creature, that black monster, and the sea finally engulfs me. Now I’m drowning. And now I realize—

It was me.