

# The Darkness

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SMASHWORDS EDITION

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PUBLISHED BY:  
Tony Cusumano on Smashwords

The Darkness  
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I would like to give special thanks to everyone who supported the creation of this work and the development of my writing abilities, especially my parents. The support everyone has given me over these past few years to follow my passion has truly given me a sense of purpose—that I have something to fulfill in my small life.

Also, I would like to thank the bands A Perfect Circle and Tool for keeping me company during the time writing this. The inspiration you provided will leave me undoubtedly grateful.

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# The Darkness

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## Preface

Darkness, or blackness, is the state of being dark, or the absence of light. In our world, it is associated with the strange, the unusual—the horrific, the evil that coexists in our universe. In our existence, it manifests itself in many forms, in many ways, in many places. It is everywhere; in our countries, in our towns, in our neighborhoods, on our doorsteps. It lurks, hidden among us; it exists in plain sight. There is no avoiding it, for everyone encounters the darkness at least once, in at least one form. The darkness comes from anywhere, and comes at any time. It can twist reality, and it can twist our minds. It can distort our perception to a point of insanity, to a point of no return, to the point of death. This evil becomes incarnate in the most disturbing of forms, but none, not one, will ever be as horrendous as the blackness that comes from within ourselves: truly, evil in its most terrible form.

\* \* \* \* \*

## You are Beautiful

You are beautiful.

You always have been, and you always will be.

You were beautiful the night I first met you. You slouched low in your bar stool, drowning in round upon round, shot upon shot, of bourbon. You rested your head on your fist, as streams of alcohol poured into your mouth; the expression you showed was of desolation, a sightless void, lacking emotion. The bar around you teemed with life, while you sat there, dead and oblivious. It was clear that something was wrong. I picked up on it quickly—and I seized the moment.

My hand, heavy, rough, and callused, fell heavy on your shoulder. You turned to face me; I could see the torment in your eyes. In them, I saw moments of hate, disgust, fear, dismay, and disillusion, encased in circles of smudged make-up. The fallen tears, now dry, traced faint, caked trails down your pale cheeks. Your hair was just as frayed: it hung in several dismayed strands,

which swayed with the twitching of your head. Through the curtain of hanging locks, a gash, throbbing and red, slashed across the forehead, leaving in its wake trails of dried blood. A grip of assurance ran through my hand; I smiled, and so did you.

Your background was as colorful as I pictured it: a plethora of pain, abuse, and torment splashed your canvas with dazzling arrays of red, black, and blue. From your father's heavy hand as a kid; from the jumps you narrowly escaped during school; to the fists thrown in rage during your first marriage; and to the brutality of the rape, hidden behind a back-alley dumpster, your life was truly inspiring. For me, it was astounding that you stood through it all—the notion of me surviving that would be insane. So I understood, when your inner defense collapsed, and you unleashed rivers of water on my shoulder, nestling your soft cries against my chest. My hands rested on the back of your dress, a beautifully bejeweled piece of clothing; a shell that masked the grotesque reality of yourself: a woman, broken, beaten, and scarred.

We walked out the door of the pub, following the sidewalk back to your home. The tenants, just a few blocks away, is where you called "home". We went there, silently, side by side. The time was midnight: I knew so, for the roars of the regular commuters had died into a stillness that lingered the rest of the way back. The black of the night illuminated in short bursts by streetlights and the occasional pair of headlights. Your head hung in the darkness.

Neither you nor I spoke, till we reached the front of your house. Under the sole street lamp, your head raised to face mine. Our eyes connected, and I saw in that moment, not a battered woman, but a creature of absolute beauty; a goddess worthy of glorification. You said thank you, and I returned a nod. I watched you unlock the door. You took a step in. I followed. You didn't notice, until I was the one to shut the door. Your neck felt soft, vulnerable in my hands. The grip of assurance slowly became an agonizing grip of torture, which clamped down until the sound of cracking and scraping vertebra were audible. A lone stream of blood trickled out your mouth, like the bourbon that had trickled in hours before. A final crunch echoed through the house.

You are beautiful.

You always have been, and now, you always will be.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A Path to Ascension

The light:  
A luminescent presence, obscurity,  
It comes for me  
Takes over all that I can see,  
Blinds me with holy sanctity.

I follow this light  
From my dawn till my dusk,  
From beginning to end,  
From birth until dust.  
It is warm and foreboding;  
Ominous and comforting;  
An angel beside me;  
A blade held behind me.  
It isn't far off  
I can see it clear,  
An unblemished sphere,  
Perfection, here.  
That was then, and this is now:  
Shrouded in faces of people around,  
They block out the light,  
They create a dark night.  
They are ugly, demented,  
Twisted, horrific,  
The way they are presented  
Scares me incessant.  
I must reach the orb,  
It is my only salvation.  
These people,  
Things,  
Hinder my progression.  
They all must perish,  
Die by my hand,  
In order to reach a more comforting land.  
I rip through the skin and tear through the flesh,  
Behind I leave bodies, lifeless and fresh.  
Break through the bone and suck out the marrow,  
The energy it gives gets me through the next morrow.  
I kill for a purpose and I kill for a pleasure,  
The path that I carve is to what I desire:  
A land where the light shines forever.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Bowl

She is still following me. God knows how long she has been or will be.  
Around every corner; every turn; every crack and crevice she can fit herself in.  
She can't be from hell. Her bowl says otherwise.

*It was two weeks ago.* The wind was dead: killed by the storm of the night before. The sun hid among clouds of gray. It was still bright; the sparkle of icicles and luminosity of the snow told me so. The cemetery gates stood upright in sharp contrast of the world around it; rigid, dark, lumbering above the white around it. Once a fine black, now splattered in rust, they were truly the entrance to the final resting place of many a soul. The stones, thousands of them, lay like ruins in the aftermath of a winter apocalypse; a grayscale shade on a silent afternoon.

I walked onward, head down, watching the snow be crushed underfoot. It all seemed surreal: a place, a time, a thing I had already done. I made my way past the gate and turned right, crossing the road at the three-way intersection—ahead, a small tunnel; above, a small road. My mind kept flashing to me remnants of a previous period. The sensation of nostalgia grew ever stronger as I continued deeper into the depths of the dimming pathway: the next part was at the tip of tongue, but it wouldn't fall off in time.

*There was a car:* a red, four-door Pontiac. It faced my direction. The blank stare it gave me reminded me of the silence, the deathly hush that blanketed the moment. The feeling of remembrance resonated even more powerful than before: I kept walking, pretending to know the script that I hardly knew; that I was aware of the next act in this ominous play. The event which was to come haunted and taunted, keeping just out of memory's reach but foreboding enough to warrant a growing caution. The car stood mute as I strolled by; I gave it nothing more than a passing glance. I would have kept up my brisk pace, had I not heard a faintly audible click behind me.

Why did I turn around?

She stood there, half in, half out, of the front car door. A sharp, black heel raised her one leg up from the ground. The dull green of the flowing dress she wore draped limp on her, veiling voluptuous lower and upper-body curves. The skin was the color of the world around her, an ashen overlay tainted with the pearl white of new-fallen snow. Her brown hair hung in spirals, never-ending, to the middle of her back. It glistened in the dim light cast through the tunnel entrances. Her lips, blood red, were enviable; she was a devil in Prada, an object of lust sought by many an insatiable pig. Her eyes were wrong, all wrong. They crossed; a grotesque intersection is what they formed. Pupils replaced color. Red, spindly fingers stretched from the black to the edges of the white. She looked at nothing; she stared right at me.

The woman pulled the rest of herself out of the car. She brought with her a bowl: white, a green band wrapping the length of the mouth. I didn't move—she provoked curiosity, and that kept me where I was. With her crooked gaze still entrancing me, she reached a thin hand into the bottom

of the dish. I could make out the sound of scraping fingernails upon the basin of the porcelain. She groped for something at the bottom of a pit. What she pulled out was nothing more than a flat flake of bread; something you would see in church, yeast-less host. She dangled it in front of her. If she was taunting me, it was more queer than intimidating. The impressed cross was hard to see, nothing more than a poor-quality attempt at creativity. She grinned till her mouth gaped open, and she swallowed the bread into her black hole mouth. The consumption was fluent. She pulled another one from the well of hosts, and again dangled the piece in front of herself. This time, she beckoned me forward with the curling and unraveling of a spider-like finger. I denied her polite gesture with a brief *no thank you*, and turned, walking out of the tunnel. That feeling of reminiscence fled the further I got from her; that feeling of curiosity came back stronger than ever.

*It was two days later* that I saw her again. The freezing rain pelted the side of the coffee shop I was sitting in. I sipped on the black liquid, which lashed back with a bitter and heated tongue. It singed the mouth and charred the throat, but I was too engrossed in another matter. My meeting with this woman inspired writing, so I wrote: I wrote about our meeting, and here I was revising the whole thing, examining every aspect for the slightest error in an account of something very un-ordinary. I hammered away at my keyboard, adding new and erasing old, keeping a steady pace of clicks and clacks. Then one click threw me off.

It came from behind, and I swiveled around in the stool. She stood there, next to her car, smiling and barring her perfect teeth my way. She seemed different this time: the aura I felt wasn't the warm nostalgia it was earlier, but a colder feeling, like the rain that whipped around outside. Her hair, matted, wet, black, stuck to her face and neck. Her eyes were still the same; the heels, still black and tall. Her dress was tattered now, littered with tears and fades. The green was darker than before, but that was probably due to the torrent raging outside. She still hugged her bowl close to her breast, and she still held out for me an offering—the dampened host from days earlier. I shook my head at her sight, and glanced around the shop to see if anyone else was observing her as I had been; they ignored her, content with whatever they were already preoccupied with.

I went back to looking at where she was two blocks down the road. She was now in her car, facing forward. I faced forward too, ignoring this second encounter to finish retelling the first.

*It was three days back* when she found my apartment and the small complex on the corner of Park and Borden. The time was 3:17 A.M.; I lay in my bed, watching Andy-Griffith re-runs. I guess some things never get old, like the useless posters and nick-knacks that populated my minute home. Trinkets from Indian Paw-Wows, pictures, statuettes, and pocket change spread itself the length of the bedroom. I sighed, and stared up at the white ceiling, watching the patterns dancing in arcing swirls. The TV, scarcely audible, was being out shadowed by the ever loudening thudding on my main room window. The beat being produced grew brasher in pace and intensity. I blinked at each repeating noise, till the sound drove me out of the warmth of the

blanketed bed. Stumbling over to the source, a rush of terror melded with a sense of clairvoyance: I knew what was next was bad, but I had no idea to what extent.

Until I opened my curtains, that is. Hundreds of them, if not more. Hosts. All held to my window with the blood that they were bleeding. They dripped simultaneously, trailing down the glass and onto the grass below. Through the film of flowing blood, I could see her twisted self: now a mangled, beaten woman, she hurled the pieces at me with distorted limbs. Another splattered against the glass. Her bowl now opened upward; I peered into its abyss, and regret it ever since.

A man, small and fragile, was nestled upon the bottom. The woman used her now chipped nails to scrape the flesh off of his already exposed ribcage. He writhed in agony, his mouth rapidly shutting and gaping open as he cried out. The bit of flesh she had pulled she brought to her face, now tormented with thousands of gashes and broken teeth. Her lips, dried and caked with blood, were not moistened when her sluggish tongue slid along them. She examined the skin once more, then tossed it at my window, where it stuck again. The hosts had now become meat, and thousands of pieces of the man dangled from my window. Her eyes, as black as the night around her showed no mercy for him; for me.

*I've been holed up in this apartment* for a few days now. From outside my door, she now stands, sliding the chunks through my mailbox slot. Resources here have run low: grocery shopping was supposed to be two days ago, and I dare not call anyone to bring food. The chance of her getting in is a far greater worry than that of my own hunger. My stomach is disagreeing with me here; it rumbles, begging to be fed after its three-day fast. The pile of flesh in front of my door is now a few inches high.

I can't last here much longer, but what she has given me will get me through just a few more days.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Do You Remember

“Excuse me, young man.”

I turned towards an elder.

“Sorry ma'am.” I replied. I slid a small ways to the left to make extra room for the bag of bones. She sat down, folding her hands between her stick-like legs. Her sparse, wiry grey hair followed the whisper of the wind blowing past the bench. Except for the two of us, the bus stop was

desolate. Cars whizzed by, illuminating the darkening night with beams of white light. I returned my eyes to my folded hands.

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but have we met before?”

The croak brought me out of meditation. Out of more irritation than curiosity, I twisted my head to look face to face. I couldn’t recognize anything: not the toothless mouth or the pale cheeks. If I had seen this woman before, believe me, I would have known.

“Not that I can recall, ma’am.” I said without thought. I went back to my normal position.

“Hmm. Well, isn’t your name Derrick? Derrick Renold?”

This got my attention.

“Yeah, it is. How would you know?”

“Sweety, let’s just say I get around.” The air chilled cold. I breathed in—exhaled out. A puff of white escaped my mouth, and I watched the mass swirl into nothingness.

The woman continued, “I remember the first time I saw you. You were so young then. You had small freckles, and the most adorable cheeks. If I’m right, it was the night of April 20, 1978, back in the old apartment in New York. Do you remember?”

I searched every recess of my mind for that date. I scanned harder, faster—I hit it dead center.

*“Hurry up Mom! I wanna show Dad the picture I drew today at school. He’ll love it!”*

*Mother laughed, “Ok, I’m coming!”*

*I had already been waiting by the door, anxious to get inside. It was grayer than usual, and I think it was raining. Mom, coated in her flannel over-shirt, walked from the car to the door, swaying bags of groceries on each arm. A stretched out arm turned a key in its keyhole, and the door swung open. The lights were off, the house black.*

*I flew through the apartment, gliding my fingers along each light switch. And with each passing switch, an eruption of white lit up the room, but revealed no sign of my Dad. All that shone in the light was nothing more than books, clothes, toys, and the normal disarray of the apartment. The bedrooms were empty; the bathrooms vacated. I checked the best hiding spots twice, only to find nothing in disappointment. Then it hit me—the closet! I dashed back into my parent’s room and flung open a small wooden door to the right of the entrance. A small hallway stretched its way to a window, clothes lining the sides and the floors. My knees crashed to the floor, and I walked on all fours, overturning suits and throwing aside dresses. I thumped across the floor with my head down, and then was smacked in the face. I fell back, gripping my nose in agony. My eyes clenched shut, until the sting of tears burned them back open. I saw a shoe swinging in*



*the air, its untied lace dangling to the floor, making a raspy scratching sound. The left pant leg covered the shoe heel, but the right pant leg had no shoe to cover. Instead, a sock hung in its place—it had a foot in it.*

*I cocked my head back, and looked Dad in the eyes—his white, bloodshot eyes. A rope, wreathed around his neck, lead its way up to a rafter in the ceiling. It swayed in the wind that whistled through a crack in the roof window.*

*The window revealed nothing but blackness, rain, and her. This woman.*

I stood up. “Who the hell are you?”

She kept watching the cars speed by, and just smiled. “Or how about the fourteenth of February, 1989?”

Anger caved into thought as the date echoed through my mind.

*It was Sunday. The sun was out, but the cold of February was still about. I was sixteen; fatherless, motherless, and fortunate enough to have a loving grandfather. At that time, he wasn't the only thing that loved me. There was someone else. Crystal. Today, her name rings in my ear with melody, chimes in the wind. Back then, she was my goddess, and I didn't know a person more attractive—more beautiful. That day, we strolled on a bridge above the metro, and picked a sturdy guard rail to lean up against. A small train whipped past, beneath us, and a blast of air buffeted us. We laughed.*

*As we sat there in the chill air, words became fewer, and we got closer to each other. We got up on the rail and rested, hip connected to hip, hand to hand. I shut my eyes, as a grin spread across my face, and I released a breath of joy. Another harsh blast of wind hit us, but I didn't let go, and I didn't open my eyes. I didn't open them until her hand let go of mine, and her hip latched off of mine. I looked to the left—to the right, she had vanished.*

*Her scream split the air; split my soul.*

*The figure of a young woman plummeted down onto the rails below. She smashed into the steel, back first, and her spine snapped like a stick. Her eyes bulged, her mouth gaped open, and her body convulsed in erratic jerks. Blood seeped out in creeks along her chin, staining her golden-blond hair. Her chest crested and dipped down into a trough by her hips. Her toes curled in agony; her fingers twisted in pain. There were no screams, only the faint sound of grinding bone and gurgling hyperventilation.*

A nightmare, I thought. It's all a dream; I'm not awake, and she isn't dying. She isn't dead.

*I stumbled back in horror, tripping and slamming back-first into the concrete. My head rolled to the right. The pathway was empty, except for one woman: an elderly woman, who looked on at the gore below, grinning.*

I stepped back. Her eyes drifted from the black street to me. She grinned. I walked away, against the stream of headlights.

She called out to me. “And what of your grandpa? October 12, 1999?”

The sky turned dark...

*And it started to rain.*

*It pelted the side of the building, watery pebbles on concrete. It dribbled down the thin windows that lined the back: always constant, never diverting from its beat. People walked aimlessly, phantom-like amongst each other. The shells of people rarely spoke, only moved and swayed to the rain outside, its hypnotic rhythm guiding the ghosts of this place. When they passed, they gazed upon me with solemn stares; out of sorrow or pity of me, I won't know. They were all the same to me: automatons in a factory.*

*My subconscious guided me through the crowd of clones. I walked without thought—everything was nothing but mist, everything except for him. A clearing in my mind's fog opened up, and there he was; there, he lay. All about him was coated in black: his pants, his shirt, his coffin. A single rose placed on his chest radiated against the black of his clothes, but wasn't enough to still be drowned by the darkness all around it. In the end, he was swallowed by death, like the darkness suffocated the rose.*

*Something else broke the fog—it walked up to him. It looked upon him, then bent down towards his forehead, and kissed it. It straightened up, took a few steps back, and then turned. It—she—stared right into my eyes. Grey flowed behind her, and her eyes were gone. Gone. In their place, black abysses threatened me with eternal darkness, threatened me to join him. They swirled like black tornadoes, attempting to swallow my soul. They sucked the life from me: I felt the world being dipped deeper into haze. I couldn't pull away—she wouldn't let me. She only dragged me deeper into the blackness of her eyes; her hellish pits.*

*Eyelids sealed those gates to hell, and reality was restored. She walked on, becoming part of the fog again, and leaving me to myself; leaving me with him.*

*I know her.*

I couldn't turn around—I wouldn't turn around. I didn't want to see her pools of black: once was hell enough.

I ran—my feet hit the concrete, harder and faster with each step. Eruptions of pooled water blasted my legs, chilling them to the bone. Patches of sidewalk warped into yellow-lined asphalt as I veered off to the left and towards the street, struggling to get away, struggling to be free from her.

I slipped in the rain; I fell to my knees. I twisted around, and came to gaze into springs of white light, shining with the luminescence of the sun itself. It was pure, white, light—free from the black taint that stained that woman's eyes. Its radiance overwhelmed me with ecstasy. No other feeling was greater. I tilted my head back, and smiled—smiled when I felt my legs crushed, my spine snapped, my skull smashed, my soul shattered. I could taste my teeth; smell my blood. Best of all, I could feel her watching. I could see her black eyes relishing the carnage that I had become.

Through grey hair, she grinned.

\* \* \* \* \*

### My Dog

I heard my dog talk last night,  
It was kind of subtle.  
I listened to a faint whisper of my name,  
Hissed at me from afar, like snakes,  
Writhing snakes,  
He called me from afar.

At first, I never raised my head,  
Never turned,  
Never cared.  
And thinking the voice a dream,  
I drifted into sleep.  
But louder this voice continued,  
Becoming a whispered screech,  
Becoming more than faint.  
My eyes did crack open,  
And across from me, he lay.

Beads of black lay blank in his head—emotionless, mindless.  
His face made no movement, he sat like a rock,  
Just staring at me, breathing.  
Or so I thought.

Its breaths grew deeper, closer, wetter,  
I saw nothing with my eyes,  
But felt on my neck,  
the dampness of the breath.

I never watched it graze my hair,  
Never squirmed beneath chill air  
Never let out a breath; too scared.  
Never knew its purpose there.

My dog watched,  
Saw it move  
Heard it breath  
Knew it was there.

Which,  
Was just fine with me.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Darkness

Haze, emitted from spikes of orange blazes, fogged the eyes, throwing the world into a shade of grey. Candles barred off all contact outside their ring—jail bars in an isolated cell. Although company was present, they were irrelevant. The few gathered there with me gazed through smoke without reason; their faces blank, frozen within time. They revealed no emotion, but rather, hid it beneath the surface of the skin. Happy, sad, enraged, it didn't matter; we were all here. Amongst the flame and fog, the flesh on their bodies gleamed in a faint pale color, the flesh of a dead man.

Within darkness and silence we were submerged; no one dared to let even a shallow whisper slither from the depths of their throats. A dark act like this shouldn't spawn much *conversation* anyway. Stories had been dealt between us about the consequences; unreal folklore of what has occurred before our attempt. We could be wasting time—something short of epic could transpire. *Unpredictable*. It took a calm serenity, stable mind, and unwavering conscience to even commence the ritual. I happened to be the predestined leader.

I brought my head up from observing an interior of a sand-sketched star and out of wandering thought to make contact with several glazed eyes. Inane, without intention, my hand flinched in rabid desire to smack them into reality, to stop them from watching me, myself, and I. The eyes pleaded for attention; they pleaded for initiation. Not one wanted to light the fuse, strike the match, or even provide the fuel. So I did.

All 3.

The fuel was already prepared: next was striking the match. My hand reached out, groping for a fragment of glass set upon a flat pine board. I gazed into the clear of the cup and studied the

dancing licks of fire shift back and forth, their playful gestures laced with ironic pain. They, like the rose, were both beautiful and harmful. My middle and forefinger came to rest on the slightest edge of the glass base. The chilled surface eased its way through the fingers and up the arm, tingling the spine, loosening nerves across quivering flesh. *Too cold for September*. As others preceded me and connected with the cup, thoughts loomed: *What am I doing? WHY am I doing it?* The unnatural spear of ice that penetrated my skin made my mind waver; it doubted this ceremony's sanity.

We talked amongst ourselves, deciding how we should begin. I spoke. "Is there anyone here tonight?"

We all held breath, hoping and fearing a reply. The autumn winds drifted by, rustling branches and making candle-lit fires dance with ferocity. It whispered unseen voices, causing eyes to dart towards creeping shadows, whose dark intentions lacked an animate channel. The fuse had been lit—*let it burn*.

All eyes were on the moving glass.

"What the hell,"

I was mute; only my eyes moved to follow the minute shot glass traverse the wooden board.

Glass grinding stopped.

We peered down into the glass to see a word. A single, confirming word. Yes.

All hands tore away from the board. Some wanted out right then; others wanted more. I kept hold of my silence, patient enough to wait out the slew of ridicule and persuading against those with uncertainty of continuing. When calm blanketed the group, we continued on with renewed awe, with renewed fear.

*Maybe I should start with a simple question.* "Do you have a name?"

The glass gave no response; that wasn't good enough. A demand now, "What is your name?"

The glass made no sudden leap. Instead, crawling its way across the wood, it left in its wake a faint sound of grinding. It ebbed its way across the crescent-bent alphabet, slowing, pausing on a letter of its choosing. Only resting for a second, then it was skittering onward. Nothing I had encountered in sixteen years of life could even compare to the wonder beheld beneath mine eyes. Fantastical, mystical—unnatural, horrific.

Fingers held fast to the planchette as it veered wherever it pleased it most, till still it sat again. We all had followed it, and all knew what it spelled.

M—A—N.

We scoffed at such a suggestion. Some of us laughed at the “spirit’s” stupidity; others scolded the laughers, fearing unknown forces and their possible retaliations. As they argued over the mysterious Man, goosebumps pushed out from under my flesh, texturizing the skin. My heart pumped liquid ice through my veins. Mouth became desert; hands became sea. The spine tingled as unseen pins pierced the back, and muscles became rocks under the tension. Preemptive eyes darted in their sockets, scanning the black beyond me in anxiety. The instincts of the body succeeded the thought of the mind, but not by much.

*Psssst.*

The world was dipped in black; swallowed by darkness. Not even whirling wisps of smoke from extinct fire were quick enough to warn. I was cut short by sharp howling. The beast never ceased, and it only got more intense within the canals of the ear. It ricocheted against the interior of my head, and if it weren’t for a whip-like mop of hair flailing without control on my scalp, I would have imagined whatever evil incarnate it must have been was nothing short of Lucifer himself. The wind raged on, making its presence known to all; knocking candles backwards and erasing the star and circle. Sand whipped up into faces, my own nostrils gathering small grains against its walls as they thrashed about. Agonizing wails from across the board gave evidence to both dread and pain. They too, had seen and heard what I experienced: a vortex, incarnated from nothing—coming from something. I peeled open my eyes, fighting the wind and grain, to see the smoke screaming at me: the wind was escaping its horrid, gaping mouth, while the eyes retained the black of the night.

It was there and gone: the wind tunnel, the howls, the wails, the smoke; they were no more. Us five erected to our feet. No words, just empty stares. Like a recap was needed.

\* \* \*

The shovel split the earth beneath it, expanding an already gaping ditch. The small pot hole bled with water. I wasn’t bothered. I really didn’t care what happened to it after putting it into there. It could rot. I gripped the board with the pads of my fingers. I waved it around. Examined the back; screened the front. The outside revealed nothing—just a wooden board streaked with an alphabet, a smiling sun in the left corner, and a sleepy moon in the right. It was innocent; a newborn babe in moonlight. I knew better.

I flung it down, and it plummeted into brown water. It soaked up the liquid, and began warping. That was my last look at it.

I put the homeless dirt pile back where it was needed. I worked without thought, mind an empty factory. The shovel patted the ground level. Lying within a field of grass, the black of earth was prominent against the sun-reflecting green. Uneven, rugged, the texture was different to the surroundings. As it should have been.

I lingered away from the burial ground. Remnants of the night hung at my ankles, impeding movement. The whole evening, I had done everything: brought all of us together, guided us, started it, and finished. I was amazed, horrified, and struck silent. I had gathered fuel, struck a match, and lit a fuse, but never saw what I was igniting.

Hell.

*Let it burn.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Reality

He swayed,  
Silent,  
Moving,  
Back and forth.  
In his mind, there was nothing.  
Nothing, but hatred, rage,  
For the audacity  
Of that atrocity.  
Reality will slap you, she said.  
You won't survive, she said.  
And laugh she did.  
He stared down at the note,  
A hand scribbled, crumpled piece,  
As beaten as he had been.  
Ink strung words the way,  
Wasn't much to say.  
His skin was cold,  
Chilled by the tongue of a witch,  
That damn bitch,  
He thought  
He ought  
To show the truth:  
This is reality.

She realized this, when she saw him,  
Swaying,  
Silently,  
Moving,  
Back and forth.

Death has a way of empowering,  
A point to be made,  
Especially when it hangs from a rope.  
“This is reality; how does it feel?”

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Bullet

Behold, the bullet.

Held in the midst of forefinger and thumb, the cold fragment of gleam-less steel sleeps dormant in my grasp. Like a cobra, it lies in wait, preparing to lash out at its next hopeless victim. The rounded tip—eager to strike its prey—pushes my finger in, begging to be used. The pinnacle of the minute murderer expands downward to create a broad level base, leaving in its trail metal, smooth as ice. The flat steel rests upon the plane of my thumb, the slight ridge in the bottom situating itself in perfect balance. I bring it up to my face, peering into its heart, hoping to see a reflection. None appear. The blackness of its soul radiates from within, blocking out all light that shines upon it, and revealing its dark intentions.

But, the bullet was not created to be examined and admired. And possibly every man, woman, and child knows this. Its purpose does not deceive us, yet its intentions are not fully realized until we stand opposite the barrel of its channel.

The gun.

Like the bullet, the gun is also a weapon of human conjuring—and human annihilation. Their sizes and types range from concealable, silent killers, to unwieldy beasts of destruction. Of course, these armaments are not just “point and click” devices, causing spontaneous eruptions and punctures to splatter and speckle the battlefield. The vast assortments of bullets that fuel the engines of war are the undisputed cause of wrecked landscapes across the globe. It is not the gun that causes demolition, for they are mere mediums of something much more powerful. Without the bullet, the gun is inane—without the gun, the bullet is senseless.

The small fragment clinks into the chamber, echoing the sound of metal upon iron. The fate of the bullet is sealed, like a coffin shut upon a man. A dexterous hand maneuvers the fluent motions of preparation in fragments of seconds. The fingers slide down and curl themselves against stock and trigger, pulling the gun into perfect aim. Thin, sweaty fingers rap on the weapon once—the forefinger jerks.

*Click.*



A luminous burst of yellow flashes to red, melting away into wisps of gray smoke. The roar of the explosion trails, shredding silence and rupturing peace. The bullet emerges whizzing from the muzzle. It spirals like a savage tornado. A combination of aerodynamics and pyrotechnics, it slices apart the air encompassing it. The bullet draws ever near, yet all that can be done is nothing. The human soul exposes its greatest weakness: fear, binding muscles and freezing joints.

And contact is made.

The body is like wet paper; the bullet, a rock. The flesh bends into a trough with tremendous stress. Skin stands no chance. Its puncture is thorough, and a clean entryway is created. Arteries and veins entangle the foreign object, with no prevail. It snaps them like worms that writhe and die, gushing blood. The muscle, brute and undeniable, is the body's last remaining resistance. But, the millions of muscle fibers don't even contain enough strength to withstand the steel fragment that blasts through at twice the speed of sound.

The body's defenses crushed, the bullet veers in the direction of the human's most vital and spiritual organ—the heart. Never speeding, never slowing, it hones in on its target. With relentless force, the bullet smashes into the chamber wall of the heart. A gargantuan explosion of liquid passion erupts in its wake, discoloring the vitals around it. It spikes its way out the interior of the heart, and tears and exit the same way it made an entrance: blasting through fibers, snapping arteries, and puncturing flesh.

A perfect shot.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A Visit

A rapping on the door resonated through the house, smacking into each wall and rebounding with equal force. The sound reached every crack and crevice. A woman jerked her eyes open. The world around her was dark. The blackness of the room began to collapse on her when the sound never repeated. She began to fall back into the trance of sleep.

The knocking continued; this time she sat up. The eyes adjusted to the obscurity till faint objects could be made out: the television on her cabinet, the floral print border encompassing the perimeter of the room. She shook the man lying next to her. A grumbled retort was the answer. She tried dismissing the thumping as nothing more than wind or a branch on a tree, but the growing ball of ice settling at the pit of her stomach would not drop the notion. She whispered in the dark.

“Rick, go check the doors,” The man raised his forearm, reading the time as 1:18 AM. He threw his arm back on the bed. Shifting covers, the man rose from his slumber, lumbering around the bed in the black. His heavy breath fell deep in the house, and she listened intently to her husband, who walked to each and every possible entrance into the home, checked the lock, then moved on. He stumbled back into the room and fell onto the bed like a corpse dropped into a coffin. She too fell against the comfort of the bed, and almost drifted back into slumber.

But this time, both had heard it.

Rick peeled his eyelids back open at the hard knocking. He threw the sheets off him. He slid his hand between the mattresses, fumbling around for a weapon. He grabbed the hilt and dragged out the knife. Rick pressed a button on the side, and watched the blade eject from its sheath with blinding speed. He poked the tip and pushed the blade back in. He shuffled out of the room, knife in hand. A door to his left creaked; his eyes darted the same way. His son had heard as well, and wielded a wooden bat. They looked upon each other with assurance, and forged on. As they snaked through the house, the woman followed close behind, clutching a phone close to her breast. She had already punched in 911, and had her thumb hanging over the talk button. They scuffled across the tile in the living room, inching their way closer to the front door. The mom tried looking out their front window, but could see nothing: no car, no headlights, no body.

Rick turned the knob, his blade held in hand; the son’s bat gripped in two; the mom’s phone seized by white knuckles. Rick opened the door: the faces of anticipation morphed into faces of surprise. The grasps on the weapons were eased up and set aside, for the guest. Behind a darkened screen was a familiar face. His eyes hovered higher than the rest of the family. Their suspicious gaze peered out from behind glasses, observing those on the inside in silence. He curled the right corner of his lips up into a snarling grin, barring the brown-yellow teeth that served as prison for the abused tongue. The skin and unshaven hairs on his face followed the movement of his mouth.

“Hey there Jeffrey,” Rick said monotonous.

“How ya doin?!” The man hollered back. His speech carried the loud greeting and the stench of alcohol through the screen. Rick picked up the scent of vodka, Grizzly, and sweat. A sad mix, but it really made sense.

The mom was the only one to respond. “We’re doing good, Jeffrey. Why don’t you come on in?”

“That’d be swell, sissy.” He pulled open the door with a casual swing and walked a path through the doorway. Jeff donned a pair of faded camo-parachute pants. His feet were encased in a new pair of black boots, richer than the man that bore them. They glistened in the faint moonlight beaming through the petite holes in the screen. A dirt-colored jacket hung from his shoulders, and within that was a tan beater. He looked homeless, and probably was. That, Rick didn’t mind.

It was the pockets that made him cautious. There were ten of them alone on his pants. He had pockets on the inside of his jacket, and he had pockets on his boots. Rick wasn’t fond of Jeff, nor did he know if he was a hostile person. All he knew is that a man who knocked on his door at one in the morning with the smell of booze and tobacco on him was now standing in his doorway, unwelcome yet given hospitality.

“So Jeff,” she started, “what are you up to this late at night?” The man hesitated for a moment, conjuring up an answer. He scanned the room for it, but the room told him nothing. From the pit of his heart he welled up an excuse.

“Well, I just stopped by to tell you all goodbye.” The son and dad squinted at Jeff. Their uneasiness was quickly replaced with interest in where he was going, and why it was of such urgency that it had to be this late (early) at night (in the morning).

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“That really ain’t important. I already talked to mom, dad, and our sis. They’re all comin’ with me.” The same question of destination repeated through their heads.

“Well that’s great!” she exclaimed, unsure. “When do you leave?”

Jeff scratched his beard, waiting for the answer to fall out. “The others have already gone, you guys’re the last ones I had to grab.” They all were intrigued; wherever they were taking them was with the rest of the family, so something must have happened, they assumed.

“Jeff, what happened?”

His face darkened. “Nothing, we’re all going home.”

Jeff’s hand lashed to the inside of his coat, and in a silver blur came the bullet. The shot rang in the minds of the parents, but the bullet rang in the skull of the boy. The fragment of steel was lodged in the depths of his mind. The bullet that entered through the space between the eyes left a black tunnel through which blood poured out in a stream. His eyes went cross and he fell to the floor, the thud of his skull against tile resonating through the stillness of the house. Rick froze; the wife wailed in agony over the bleeding corpse. Jeff took no mercy; he used the new boots to send Rick crashing to the floor. He choked on air as Jeff stood atop him, applying pressure to his ribcage—enough to fracture. He aimed the revolver down at the face of the beaten man, and fired off two rounds into the eyes, each puncturing and squirting blood all across the carpet of the living room and the leg of the assailant. The sound of sobs and the slow beep of a dialing number whipped Jeff back around to face his sister, a horrid mess almost more grotesque than the bodies before her. The other side of the line answered, asking what the emergency was. Jeff fired off another round, this one pushing its way through the soft neck of the woman in front of him. The brute force threw her against the wall, where she slid to the ground, choking on her own gushing liquids. It poured out her neck and mouth in waterfalls, drenching the white of the walls and the brown of the tile.

As she drowned in her own blood, Jeff walked over to the phone.

“Hello? What is the emergency?”

“There is none. We’re just going home.”

The operator listened to a gunshot on the other end.

\* \* \* \* \*

This concluded the end to the short collaboration, *The Darkness*. The author thanks you for taking the time to read this work, and requests that you please leave a review on the site of which you have downloaded this free book. You can check out more horror/suspense on the author's blog, [www.horrorzealot.com](http://www.horrorzealot.com). You can also contact him at his email, [victimer3@gmail.com](mailto:victimer3@gmail.com).