

Bitter

My grandmother was always a bitter woman. Nothing ever was enough and if I didn't like her rules, I could leave. At least that was what she always used to say. It was the summer of 2008 and after mowing every last inch of our backyard, front yard and the rest of our 2 acres, I finally got a break. Until I was told to stop being lazy and get back to work. My grandmother was always a bitter woman after all.

However this time I tried to block it all out. Closing my eyes as the sun beat on my face, turning my already olive skin darker. A quick whack of a rolled up newspaper on my head was enough to set me off.

"I'M TIRED, CAN YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?" I screamed.

The look of shock, fear and disbelief all rolled up into one ball was the expression on her face. Slowly turning into a bitter and disgusted look, as if she had just tried to eat something far too sour and at the same time a skunk had sprayed her in the face. Before she had the chance to raise her hand to my face, I hurried to my room, almost tripping over my dog, Fluffy.

Locking the door quickly behind me, a sigh of relief escaped me.

"Finally, some peace and quiet," I thought.

Before I realized it, I had drifted off to sleep, not realizing how exhausted I was.

My eyes slowly blinking themselves awake, staring at the clock on the wall across from me.

"11:00pm" it read.

My window was wide open, though I hadn't opened it. The wind was howling something fierce, but despite the weather, the night sky was still beautiful. It was as if I was staring into a world of endless possibilities, each star representing one.

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“I wonder if mom and dad can see this too” I thought.

A loud rumble followed by a sharp pain in my stomach reminded me that I fell asleep before dinner.

“Of course she wouldn’t wake me,” I thought to myself.

“Though I suppose I yelled at her,”

Despite as much as I hated her, she was all I really had. My mother and father having died when I was 10, it felt like I had been shipped here by the post office to live with some woman I had never met. For a grandmother, she never called or came to visit. There weren’t any Christmas gifts or phone calls or letters. Until I finally arrived at her doorstep. Greeted by the same old wrinkly face that only seemed half as bitter as the one from earlier.

I made my way to the kitchen, scavenging for any food that I could get my hands on. Which ended up being a jar of peanut butter and a loaf of bread. After eating my peanut butter jelly sandwich, minus the jelly, I grabbed my coat and decided to go for a walk, staring at the sky as I went.

“I wish I could just escape and be transported somewhere else, like they did in all those sci-fi movies.” I thought aloud.

Looking down every few minutes to make sure I wasn’t about to trip on something or walk into dog poop. After about 15 minutes, when I went to look down again, my eyes fell upon a girl who stared at the sky the same way I did. Her scarlet hair flew in the wind, whipping around her face every few seconds. She had on only a shirt and jeans, despite how cold it was. It only just hit me then, it was summer and I was freezing outside.

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“It’s still July, why would it be so cold,” I thought. “Why doesn’t she have a coat?”

As that realization hit me, her eyes shot at me so fast that I would be dead if they were bullets. Her blue and grey eyes, cold and dead-like. A shot of wind came blasting from the side of me, as if creating a wall between us, forcing me to turn away from the mysterious girl. When I finally turned back to face her, she was gone. Only a shadow of what I thought was her, which faded away as well as the wind stirred faster. I decided to turn back and go back to sleep, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t move and it felt as though a shadow made of ice was grasping my ankles. I struggled wildly, turning my head in every direction to see if someone was there who could help me. The icy hands seemed to be making their way up my legs, to waist until stopping at my chest. Its fingers like knives slowly clutching my heart until I felt another whack on my head. This time however, it wasn’t my grandmother. Just me falling out of bed, covered in cold sweat. Scrambling to my feet, I wrapped my sheet around my body to get warm. The window was closed and the sky was starting to brighten, it was almost morning.

“Was it just a dream?” I thought.

Washing my face and brushing my teeth, I tried to forget what I thought happened last night. I made my way downstairs, but my grandmother wasn’t there. She usually would be awake before me, already watching the 6am news. I thought of waking her, but decided to cherish the little peace and quiet I had instead. Eating some scrambled eggs and bread, it was now 8am, and she still hadn’t gotten up. There was no creaking of the floorboards as she made her way to the bathroom. The sink in the bathroom never turned on as she brushed her teeth. No flush of the toilet after her morning pee.

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Finishing the last of my eggs and putting my dish in the sink, I made my way upstairs to her room. Knocking a few times, waiting for a reply. Knocking again and still no reply. I slowly opened the door, and she was there alright. Her eyes and jaw wide open, staring at the ceiling. As if she'd been petrified. Stumbling and falling back to the wall, my hands clasped to my mouth.

“GRANDMA!” I called out.

Her mouth suddenly shutting and her head turning towards me. The smallest hint of a smile on her face. The shadow was there again, this time behind her as if controlling her like a puppet. I jumped to my feet, trying to escape as fast as I could.

“Where ya goin' dear?” she called from her room.

Grabbing the peanut butter, bread, Fluffy and my coat, I ran out, going as fast as I could.

I thought, “Perhaps this is god's cruel way of granting me my wish.”

It was still cold out, and no one seemed to be outside as they usually would be. I know I wasn't the only one who had to mow their yard or fix the garden every day. After 10 minutes of running for my life, and then realizing I had forgotten my wallet, my enthusiasm of escaping and the shock of the supernatural things that seemed to be going on started to wear off. I was now in the middle of nowhere, no money and all I had was a dog, bread and peanut butter. Going from a run to a leisurely walk seemed to give the shadow all the time it needed to wrap its icy body around me again. Here I was again, shadow grasping my heart and the cold air around whipping faster and faster around me. However this time I couldn't fight back as well, having tired myself out from all the running. I used my last bit of strength to give Fluffy a final command.

“Run.”

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And as though he sensed my desperation, he ran as far and as fast as he could. My vision darkened and my eyes started to close.

Whack.

I was back in my room again, this time my cold sweat seemed as though water had been dumped on me. Panting and my eyes darting around my room, everything felt off. The walls that used to be dark brown were now a shade of purple and-

Whack.

My eyes opened, this time a girl was sitting on my chest and staring deep into my eyes, as if trying to inspect my soul. It was the same one from before and we were surrounded by a blizzard, all around us white. My realizations of the situation I was in was late as per usual, and my body shot up. The girl didn't fall, but instead floated off my chest onto the snow, sitting in front of me.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"I don't know," She said, her expression dull as if bored from my question.

"Who are you?"

"I don't know that either. You wished for this, shouldn't you know?"

"What? I didn't wish for any of this."

"You said you wanted to be transported, to escape. Did you not?"

"I-I didn't mean it like that, I didn't mean for my grandma to be killed and to wake up 10 times as if everything is a dre-"

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Whack.

“Stop being lazy and get back to work,” my grandmother commanded.

It was finally warm again and the sun was beating down on me once more.

“I’m just really tired grandma”

She let out a sigh and said,

“Well at least your little dream taught you not to yell at me again.”

My eyes widened, hearing her cackle and walk away.

The look of shock, fear and disbelief all rolled up into one ball was the expression on my face.

Slowly turning into a bitter and disgusted look, as if I had just tried to eat something far too sour and at the same time a skunk had sprayed me in the face.