

The Intervention

When Rose got home from school her mother was sitting at the kitchen table with Pastor Macbeth and a group of other people she knew. Rose stopped in the middle of the doorway trying to comprehend the meaning of this group gathered in her kitchen. Her goodie-goodie older brother, Samuel--Sammy sat beside her mother, an expression of brazen triumph on his face. On Sammy's right was Mr. Finger, a Deacon of her mother's church and her best friend and comforter since Rose's father had died several years ago. Effusively friendly with startled eyes and florid face Finger always struck Rose as a Pastor wannabe, his strident tenor ringing out in the Church choir as if the decibel level of his voice would catch God's attention. He gazed at Rose from smarmy eyes.

Across from Finger sat another deacon, Jim Umber, counselor and part time English teacher at the high school where Rose was a sophomore, her brother a National Honor Society senior. Like a giant dog turd Rose's "bad box," as she called it, sat on the table in front of her mother. The contents of her box, Rose noted with horror, including her dream inspired drawing of precisely this Pastor Macbeth bursting from a high school locker as Freddy from the *Nightmare on Elm Street* movies to possess the York kid who later killed his parents were spread out on the table like entrails.

After the murders and York's arrest the whole town exploded with rumors of Satanism and drug involvement with Macbeth leading it. Soon rumor had it there was a coven and York a member. Experts, grief counselors, psychologists and a fundamentalist lecturer on Satanism were called in to tend the community's wounds, real and imagined. Attendance rose at all the local churches, particularly Macbeth's which just happened to be on Elm Street. Macbeth gave a series

of sermons on how to recognize the signs of incipient Satanism in your children Rose's mother forced Rose to attend.

"Nip it in the bud!" Rose quipped bitterly as she was dragged off to one of these sermons.

Your child drawing the heads of animals on human bodies was one of the signs. If a parent discovered such signs in his or her child an "intervention" was warranted. On the table in front of Macbeth was one of Rose's drawings in which she had depicted herself as the Madonna holding a wished-for puppy with big pointy ears. The contents of the her box lay scattered across the table—some of the drawings were torn, some disfigured with red marker. This did not look good.

"What's going on?" Rose demanded from the doorway. "What are you people doing here?"

"We're here because we're concerned about you, Rose." Finger offered smiling inappropriately. He ran the local waste management company and seemed to make tons of money considering his house on Hawley Lake.

"Concerned about what?" Rose asked pseudo-nonchalantly.

"What is this!" her mother exploded holding up a sheet of paper from Rose's box.

Rose stood silently thinking, "Oh god, it is happening!"

"What is this, Rose? What have you been doing?"

"That is my box, mother, what have you done to it?"

"What are these...things?" her mother gestured wildly at the drawings, the stories she, and the others had obviously sampled, pored over with their filthy fingers.

“Those are my things mother, how dare you look at them, read them, hurt them!” Rose did not understand. Her mother was not a mean woman; she was well educated, well read. She was not a conservative but after her husband's death she had fallen under the influence of Macbeth, his church and become hysterically devout.

“Did you write this!” her mother howled at Rose holding up a sheaf of pages from a spiral notebook where Rose wrote down the first drafts of her stories and poems then adjusted her glasses and began reading.

“He sees himself on the crashed plane with the little girl's dead body, then in Russia meeting the Chairman of the Soviet Union. Wild with hunger he drives the tip of his tongue deep into the wound in her brain. It tastes like seawater and parts like the organs of a mussel. He reaches his hand into the wound, deep into her body cavity, slides his fingers toward her heart, grasps the heart and begins to fondle it. He doesn't know what he is doing; his desire determines it. He doesn't know what his penis is doing so deep inside her. **There are no parents here!**”

Her mother all but screamed this line and looked up at Rose over the top her glasses.

“For the first time in his life there were no parents!”

She emphasized this part with vicious irony.

“Something was happening so sucked more of her dreams into his mouth and swallowed them.

He saw the faces of the Soviet People. He saw her astride the 75-year-old bulk of the Chairman. They were on the beautiful oriental rug on the floor of his offices in the Kremlin. The old man groaned.

He saw the Volga flowing, great sturgeon spawning in the Caspian Sea. He saw her take the tip of a nuclear missile in a silo in the Urals into her mouth, suck the warhead to make it come. She had her finger deep down the anus of the dragon.

He heard the Magic Fire music coming from her chest. His penis was somewhere inside her doing something he never imagined it could do. He moved his mouth down and suckled from the breast of spring.

The nuclear weapon went critical. Plasma fish poured down her throat as the prairies around the silos in South Dakota exploded with shock waves of spring and the hands nuclear clock of the physicists moved back ten years.”

“I cannot read any more of this,” her mother exclaimed all but panting with the effort of having read so many distasteful words, sentences, paragraphs, ideas, images. “Did you write

this?" she raved holding the pages up and literally shaking them at Rose like some kind of shaman's rattle.

"Yes, mother, I did." Rose confessed quietly.

"Jeez, Rose!" her brother piled on, "What's the matter with you?"

Rose was too shamed to answer, draw a biting quip that might hurt him as much as he had hurt her.

"Why?" her mother almost begged.

"Why?" Rose had never imagined anyone would ever want to ask her to explain why she wrote what she did. Now she had the chance but it was in response to an Inquisitor's demand, not genuine interest.

"Why mother? Because I think it is beautiful." Actually she had written the fantasy about the raising of a 13 year old girl from the dead after reading about such a girl killed in an airplane crash while on tour of the Soviet Union. She had met the Chairman. Rose had been so moved by her death she created the fantasy in which a lover raised the poor mangled girl like Orpheus raising Eurydice, his murdered bride. That night after finishing the fantasy Rose saw the hands of the nuclear clock move back from midnight until it seemed there might be a future for the doomed planet long trapped in the thrall of MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction.

Her mother snorted at the idea what she had read was beautiful. "Rose, that is the most disgusting piece of...of filth, pornography I have ever...touched!" Rose imagined her mother holding the pages in asbestos mitts suitable for molten glass or metal or something virulently radioactive or disease riddled.

"It is not pornography, mother," Rose defended her work in a weakly because she was so deeply hurt, "it's beautiful and spiritual, much more spiritual than the Bible he reads in church—

in the church you force me to attend!" Rose nodded toward Macbeth, a handsome, dark skinned fellow of Indian descent who gazed up at her like the crucified Christ.

"Well, she doesn't force me to go!" her brother bragged, "I love going!"

"Yes, and some slaves probably really did love their massahs!" Rose shot back, her cheeks burning with hatred and humiliation. "It is beautiful and spiritual and it is bringing..." now she was going to place herself out on that limb of true craziness, "world peace!"

"What? Do you see what I mean, Bob!" She appealed to Macbeth for corroboration her daughter was a witch or worse, insane. Macbeth stared grimly at Rose, his fingers laced in front of him on the table. "Eben," she implored Finger, "do you see what I face? My daughter believes in, is practicing some kind of sexual witchcraft! Oh, my God, Rose, what has happened to you that you believe this sort of sick perversion has anything to do with Christ or world peace?"

"No, mother, you're right, it doesn't have anything to do with Christ and as far as I am concerned Christ, this phantasm, has utterly nothing to do with peace, he brings the sword. He takes away any peace but his! It says so in the Bible! What is he **doing here?**" Rose pointed to the grim-faced Macbeth. "What are all of you doing here?"

"I invited him," her mother answered proudly, "Bob, er, Pastor Macbeth is here to help me confront you, convince you, Rose, you are a troubled girl, your soul is in danger and you need help. Don't you agree, Jim?" Her mother turned to Umber who was looking on from the sidelines.

"Well, yes," replied Umber. "While I am not professionally involved in Rose's affairs, the materials you have shown me are troubling." Umber turned toward Rose, his full face serious beneath balding pate. "Rose," he began, "I think your mother was correct to show me this material. A teacher would do the same, even an editor. It is school policy for teachers to alert

both the administration and counseling services if student writing, artwork or behavior is out of bounds content wise. And as a member of your mother's church I have a responsibility when made aware of a member involved with Satanic...er, blasphemous material..."

"I'm not a member of your church!" Rose yelled. "My mother makes me go but I am not a member. I hate it; I hate all of you. Blasphemous! What is blasphemous is what you have done to my box! You have no right to go through my private things and hurt them!"

"Right? I have no right?" Her mother turned toward her, face red beneath short gray-blond hair. Rose could smell the sweet-sour scent of wine of her breath. "I have a right to know if my daughter is disturbed. I have a right to be upset if she is under the influence of some kind of darkness. If I hurt these things," she gestured at the table, "it was because I was so frightened and worried for you. Who is influencing you, Rose? Are you smoking pot, taking drugs? Are you into some kind of witchcraft thing? A coven? These drawings and stories are terribly disturbing; I cannot imagine they come from my beautiful little girl's imagination!" She took a swig from the glass of white wine in front of her.

"No, mother, I am not taking drugs. I hardly have any real friends at school except Kelly so who could be influencing me? I think these 'things' as you call them are beautiful. Dad is the one who influenced me! Your husband, the artist and 'failure at living' according to you, whose paintings used to hang on our walls until you took them down. Who died of a broken heart because no one would bother to understand! He is my example. If he is Satan then, yes, I am a Satanist!"

"Leave your father out of this! Yes, if he was here I am sure he would drunkenly defend you, slurring his words, swearing about the church and censorship, about how hard it is to be an artist in our modern society while I work everyday to support our family! Well, he is not here. I

am here! You have no privacy in this house! You are my responsibility and you have no privacy until you are grown up and on your own. Then you can have all the privacy you want. I was cleaning your closet where you hide that thing and I couldn't help but find it. I didn't want to find it. I wish to God I hadn't found it. I opened it and saw what was inside it. What I found inside frightened me so badly I talked it over with Pastor Macbeth and he suggested we have this meeting." Suddenly her mother's voice took on a tone of menace that truly chilled Rose. "People saw what you did last weekend!"

"They saw what, mother!" Rose asked, terribly alarmed.

"They saw what you did! Our neighbors, the Stubenvilles, saw what you did! They were going to call the police but then thought better of it and called me. You are a very lucky young woman they were so thoughtful and came to me first!"

"Thoughtful!" Rose exploded, "The hills have eyes you mean! What did the Stubenvilles see that that was so terrible?"

"You know what you did, Rose! They saw you, Oh, my God, I am so ashamed!"

"God, saw what you did, young lady," Eben Finger added his trump to the overwhelming evidence against her piled on the table.

Rose stood stricken, her right hand on the back of an empty chair, her face bright as an apple. She had been caught red handed. God had seen her! God with his all seeing eye had seen her last Saturday evening when the beauty of the sunset, the soft wind over the small lake behind the house, the molten gold of the sunset in the water had inspired, carried her away.

Yes, she had stolen some of her mother's white wine. It wasn't as if her mother had ever told her no. It wasn't as if there was someone to take her to the movie or dance at school. There had never been anyone to take her to the movie except her best friend, Kelly, and Rose had never

been asked to a school function yet. Her mother was out and she had drunk half a glass of the white wine while sitting on the back deck watching the glorious evening as it settled in toward night like a giant golden firebird nesting its being in everything.

Was it the wine? She didn't know but something inspired her to shed her shorts and walk, glass in hand down across the lawn over along the edge of it to appreciate, smell the golden rod, Indian paintbrush, the wild daisies and other wild flowers; to caress the leaves of the milkweeds then hunch down and inspect every glistening strand of the garden spider's web. When she did her hand just naturally strayed down and inside her panties.

Next thing she had no panties on. Down the lake to the left she could hear Dr. Stubenville speeding back and forth on his riding mower. Could he see her? Could he see she was wearing nothing below her waist and on her second, maybe third glass of wine? Could he see the fire burning up her belly, tightening her nipples? Her nipples needed the caress of the evening breeze so she took off her sleeveless sweatshirt--she wasn't wearing a bra, didn't need one -- and was free, completely naked.

She ran down the lawn to the lake, the evening air like a breath of pure inspiration, love she had entered. She stepped into the lake, the very edge of the shimmering golden skin of it. She saw a frog on the shore, moved toward it, it hopped and she leapt after it and caught it. It was a big, beautiful leopard frog. She kissed it on its smooth green snout.

"Are you my Prince?" She touched it to her breast, then let it go in the grass.

Finally she lay back on the small beach with her legs spread toward the sunset and let the light touch her. She ached for a lover but there wasn't one, it seemed there would never be one. In her mind she called out for one. Then she helped until her body thrashed and shivered. When

she was done she crept back up the lawn, terribly aware of her nakedness but at least, it seemed no one had seen her!

Apparently they had. Even God, the great voyeur had.

“And what did God advise that you should do to me?” Rose sneered defensively.

“He...I suggested,” Macbeth offered in an utterly serious voice, “a church intervention, a kind of lock in, in which a select group from the congregation with some training in this kind of thing attempts to rid you of the...darkness, the evil spirit which is possessing you.”

“DO YOU MEAN AN EXORCISM?” Rose all but screamed.

“No, Rose, not really. Our church does not practice the ritual of exorcism, but we do, upon occasion, participate in interventions where it seems warranted. We do them at home in familiar surroundings so the process is less frightening. We have done it before and it is largely successful. I suggested it to your mother because I think that she agrees with me on the nature of the darkness within you.”

“On the nature of the darkness within me?” Rose yelled, her face burning. Macbeth’s words hurt her in a way she had never imagined she could be hurt -- she completely lost her temper, any illusion that trying to maintain her cool might help her get out of this nightmarish situation. “You bastard! You are the one I saw come out of a locker at school, turn into Freddy from *Nightmare on Elm Street* and possess that poor York kid before he murdered his parents! I saw you! I saw you and some of the others from the church reading something from the Bible about raising a beast and then you came out of the locker! You’re the one who is dark, Macbeth, not me!”

Macbeth flushed but then he regained his composure and the words that came out of his mouth were completely disconnected from what Rose new he was feeling.

“Rose, my child, that is precisely how the darkness works within us! It tries to convince us that the light is the dark and the dark is the light! It tries to convince you that I, a God fearing Christian pastor could somehow be involved in some sort of magic ritual to create evil! I can assure you Rose that is not the...”

Rose could no longer listen -- a blaze of rage threatened to bust some dam in her. She spun on her heels as tears spurted down her cheeks, strode from the room and headed for the front door. She had no idea where she intended to go once she got outside -- just away -- as far away as possible. Half blinded by tears, shaking her head in disbelief she almost ran into Kelly, her big hipped, rather homely but very best friend from school, daughter of another pastor, this one of the Congregational Church, standing in front of the door. Rose stopped and looked into her friend's crestfallen but determined expression and knew in a heart breaking flash the extent of the betrayal being visited upon her. Kelly, who told hilarious stories about her father's sermons, "Well, what part did you like?" he would ask. Kelly who had paid scant attention, who sat in the back pew drawing caricatures of the bored members of the congregation would reply, "Oh, the part about God!" or, "I loved the part where you talked about Jesus!" Apparently she too had been convinced Rose was some sort of Princess of Darkness.

"Kelly! What are you doing here?" Rose exclaimed.

"I'm here to help, Rose," Kelly replied with a traitor's note of false concern. "They put me here to guard the door to prevent you from running. Rose, everyone here wants to help you! Particularly me! We all want the best for you! Please let Pastor Macbeth and the others help you turn away from the dark side..."

As Kelly stepped forward Rose noticed she was holding her right hand behind her back.

"And what, snatch my body? How about my soul? You gonna eat it for dinner? Get out of my way, Kelly!" Rose prepared to physically force herself past her ex-friend.

"No, Rose, I'm not going to get out of the way. Your mother and the pastor wanted you to see that even your best friend is concerned!"

Rose groaned as words of betrayal sundered her best friendship. Never again would she feel Kelly's arm around her waist as they walked through town laughing at all the silly things that happened in school that day.

"The only thing you can do for me is get out of my way you... TRAITOR!" Rose shouted at the top of her voice. "Get out of my way or I'll have to hurt you." She started to step past Kelly. Kelly moved back against the front door.

"What do you have behind your back, Kelly?" Rose demanded knowing it was not something she wanted to see.

Slowly Kelly pulled her right arm from behind her back. There was a sharp kitchen knife in her hand.

"Kelly, what are you doing with that knife?"

"They made me..." Kelly pleaded then called over Rose's shoulder in a loud, frantic voice, "Mrs. Seewell, Pastor Macbeth, help!"

As Rose turned to see the adults emerge from the kitchen she felt a searing pain in her right side. Kelly had stepped forward and stabbed her. Rose stumbled sideways while Kelly stepped back looking down at the knife in her hand, the wet blade glinting.

Rose moaned, grabbed her side and stumbled for the back door of the house. When she reached it she found her brother and Umber blocked the way. There was no way she could fight her way past them, nevertheless she ran at her brother swinging her fists as hard as she could.

Her aim was not good but some of her blows landed, one of them to the side of his head. He howled in outrage just as Eben Finger grabbed her from behind and pulled her back.

"Let me go you pig!" Rose howled, her bloody hand smearing the light red hairs on his forearm. She strained but could not break his grasp but then bent over and bit his hand hard. Finger yelped in pain releasing Rose.

"Look out, she's loose!" he yelled. She ran back across the living room toward Macbeth who stood with his hands out like a linebacker intent upon tackling her. Rose slammed her shoulder into Macbeth who let out an "oomph!" and sat down hard across the coffee table in front of the couch knocking many of her mother's precious nick-knacks to the floor, including an oblong of heavy ornamental glass with strands of blue and green imbedded within it. Picking up the object Macbeth scrambled to his feet. Rose struggled past the couch holding her throbbing side toward the sliding glass doors behind the beige floor-to-ceiling curtains and the deck outside. When she reached the curtains she yanked them aside and saw, to her horror the doors were chained and padlocked on the outside.

Like a wolf trapped in a box canyon she turned to face the hounds who approached across the living room. Saliva dripping down her chin, she stood panting, crouched over. The pack of them stretched across the living room like a game of Red Rover. She couldn't let them get her. "You bastards!" she swore then dashed like a mad thing at the gap between her mother and Macbeth.

"Rose..." her mother cried as Rose rammed into her arm. As she did Macbeth swung the glass object slamming Rose in the side of the head. Rose went down like a head shot doe.

Blackness, then Kandinsky colors, blinding light. Her eyes were open, her arms stretched above her head. She tried to move but couldn't.

“She’s awake.”

“Let her up!”

She knew these voices but did not recognize them. Her head felt like someone had hit her with a baseball bat. She smelled booze. She sat up, almost vomited. A famous man walked in front of her, erection jutting up. Rose could smell him, she had to throw up. She rolled to her knees and wretched. Nothing came out. Her head hurt even worse after she was finished. Two pairs of naked feet stood directly in front of her.

“Kelly?” Rose moaned hoping it was her friend’s thigh she reached for with bloodstained hand. The woman stepped backwards and Rose’s hand slid down her leg to land on the floor again.

“Stand up!” someone ordered.

Rose struggled to her feet. She was in a living room and they were all naked. A man in a Ronald Reagan mask with angel wings on his back stepped toward her. He held the knife in his hand. Rose did not understand when he punched the knife into her belly causing her to fall backward onto the couch. She lay there, her head at an impossible angle as the man in the mask came toward her. The thing risen from his loins was red and looked like a seismogram, the jagged inception of an earthquake.

“So, that’s where it’s supposed to be!” Rose thought as knelt between her legs.

“Hold her!” he called and Rose felt, almost welcomed the hands that took her wrists as he entered her. She looked up to her right and someone in a hooded cape wearing a golden mask held her right wrist down and then to her left where Marie Antoinette stinking of whiskey held her left wrist down. She hoped to black out, to slip out of body like a sparrow. She could not

believe it, it was just like *The last House on the Left*, which, in fact, their house was, the last house on the left up Hart Road.

For a moment things seemed OK when she opened her eyes in the morning. Then she remembered everything and curled up in a little ball under the covers and bit the sheet to keep from screaming. Horror flooded in like chill dark water while fear ate at her stomach like acid. She was locked in a myth in a book in the basement of a great Eastern University. Then she felt the pain between her legs, up her ass into her head and remembered the "angel" and what it had done and then the nightmare about Godzilla stomping the city just like in one of her brother's silly Godzilla movies. As if you couldn't tell it was some guy dressed up in a monster suit! She squeezed her eyes shut so tight trying to become unreal words in a book about the abduction of Eurydice, Wide justice on the night before her wedding with Orpheus they hurt -- it could not be real like this! She was crazy! There wasn't a person in the entire world who would believe what she had just experienced was real, meant something. No wonder Eurydice could never escape hell, the Underworld. No one would believe her!

Somewhere far up above her, so far the two did not seem connected, did not seem to be the same person, Orpheus sat at the kitchen table writing in his notebook.

“Last night January 17, 1995, I ‘watched’ the rape-murder of Eurydice in a conscious, out of body vision state from a perch near the ceiling. Watched naked teachers, professors, pastors, politicians, all of whom I knew bind her spread eagle on the floor over the Rising Sun symbol of the Japanese flag then rape her, smear blood, feces and semen all over, then rip her body to shreds. I watched, **watched** as they chanted some hymn, rolled in the gore, screamed obscenities, invited the Muses over, had the drunken dorm party to end all drunken dorm parties because it was too painful to go down there, be myself, be real in the Underworld, admit this could possibly be happening in the modern world, because it was only a dream.”

As he wrote this vision in his notebook a story come on the radio that made his hair stand on end and tears stream from his eyes. At 5:46 AM, January 17, 1995, a great earthquake struck Kobe, Japan, the announcer reported. The quake measured 7.2 on the Richter scale and killed at least 5000 people. This was what happened when the Strong Force of poetry was murdered and dismembered. This was what happened if he was “nice,” floated out of body and did not go down there and become real.

That’s when he decided to quit being nice and go down.

"It's time to get up, Rose," a pleasant voice chirped.

"Fuck you!" Rose growled rolling over trying to become words once more. Mere words in a myth didn't hurt so much.

"It's time to get up, become real."

"Screw you!"

"Come on, get up, time to go upstairs and be real."

"What for?" Rose moaned, “They hate me up there.”

“Come on, get up, time to intervene in their Walt Disney fantasy. Time to deliver some shadow, some Wide Justice to their world.”

“OK, OK! I'll get up -- but I promise it will be the same old story. **You** will forget me before we reach the surface.”

“I promise I won't this time.” He held out his hand for her.

She took it and together they climbed the thirteen or so thousand steps out of the library basement to sew this shadow onto the souls a billion Christians.