

## Twirling

By: Nicole F. King

The basement is a deep-dark-wet place under my house. Even with the lights on I knew the monster was lurking in its depths and hidden in its corners. Day or night the monster never slept, always there listening when I came near. I could hear it growling to itself biding its time and planning its attack. I've attempted going down the stairs to turn on the light and face the monster, but I always run away from its demon-like grown fearing the worse. I've tried to stop my parents from going down alone afraid they wouldn't return from the darkness. But they always come back unscathed and amused. Always laughing at my questions, "How did you survive?," "Is the evil monster still there?," and "Did you hear it roar?".

I decide since everyone else always came back fine it would be safe if I venture into the basement. I convince my little brother to be my back up. Since any good nine-year-old detective is smart enough to have back up. I walk towards the light blue door, little brother trailing behind, and turn its cold metal knob. The knob squeaks and we pause. Afraid the monster might have heard us, but there was no movement on the creaky stairs. So I continue to open the door. Once the door is open I look down the stairs searching for the light switch so I know which way to go. I spot it quickly, white and innocent on the moldy dark brick wall. I make my way slowly down the rough wooden stairs. As I come closer to the bottom I can hear the monster growing again, warning me, but I won't turn back this time. When I reach the bottom I hop towards the light switch; eager for bright yellow in this cold dark place.

I took a deep breath preparing for the worst when I turned on the light. Yet this room wasn't where the growing was coming from. It was farther down behind another door; this one a

deep dark brown. I look back to see if little brother is still with me; but he's already run crying to our parents. Big baby. So I carry on, alone. I walk slowly and quietly on the freezing cold concrete floor. Carefully watching the door listening as the growling became louder and my heartbeat along with it. I turn the knob and pull the door open quickly to surprise the monster that I know is hiding behind it.

I jump into the room shouting "AHA, I'VE CAUGHT YOU!" I am met with a washer and dryer growling in unison as they work together to dry and wash clothing.

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I breathe deeply and roll onto my side. Blinking slowly and adjusting to my surroundings. The light streaming through my bedroom window highlighting the light blue of my walls and it's torn and dusty posters. The tan of my floor and my matching bed covers. My head registering the dry softness of my pillow. Thankful for the lack of sweat and tears. My throat moist and not dry and hoarse from a sharp yell. I slip out of bed and stumble my way to the bathroom; still drunk on sleep. I turn on the light switch and stare at my reflection. Dull lifeless brown hair falling from a ponytail. Check. Dark circles under brown eyes. Check. Pale face, check, but no blood shot eyes this time. I've awoken peacefully this morning for once. From a different memory, this one not so tragic.

Some weird shit has been happening lately. I've been seeing things. Or remembering things rather. Things that I don't want to remember. I rub my hands over my face roughly. I've been remembering the accident. Every night. My memory of the "monster" in the basement has been a reprieve from the nightly torture. The source of my dark circles and blood shot eyes. It started with the rain we've been having lately. Not surprising I guess since the accident took

place in the rain. It's just never been this bad before. I'd have a flash back of the accident and then maybe have one murky dream about it. That hasn't been the case this time.

The day it started I had been scrubbing the mess out of a pan that I had forgotten to soak, when I noticed the sound of the rain. I thought it was strange because I had just watched the forecast and they said nothing about rain. "Sunny skies" and "warm weather" they said. So I sat the belligerent pan aside and turned off the water. I heard the rain and BAM had a rush of memory burst its way through.

I remembered Tony, my little brother, having liked the rain. The rain; it's a funny thing sometimes. It brings about a cooling of the air and a growth of plants. It signals the possible end of drought and brings about the joy of children, for they love to splash in its puddles. Though it also brings about death. Death by cars specifically, or outside of them. I remembered playing outside in the rain with Tony. Which we loved to do since rain had still been a toy to us. It had been a light sprinkle falling outside that we weren't able to play in during school. Then by the time we got home it had already stopped; but it had started again when the sun had already set. Heavily. Of course as a 8 year old and 11 year old we weren't allowed to go outside at night; especially pouring the way it was at the time. So we snuck out.

We twirled with our mouths open wide catch the rain. Heads tilted back so it could rinse our faces and drip drop through our hair. I remembered Tony thinking it'd be okay to twirl down into the street.

"Why would anyone be out in the rain?" he said when I called him back. "It's mostly grown ups who drive. They don't like the rain. They don't play in it so the road is safe." he said.

I remembered a flash of brightness falling onto Tony's twirling form. The widening of his eyes as he completed his twirl and the sound the metal made when it hit his body. I remembered the sound of his body being propelled over the car and the thud it made when landing on the street he'd just been twirling on. I also remembered the blood curdling scream I hadn't realized was coming from me, until my mother joined in. The pit pat of rain usually never registers to me, I only hear the metal impact on a little body and the sound of its thud on a street.

Lately it's been worse. I don't know if it's guilt that I wasn't in the street with him or what. Instead of reliving the accident how it happened, it's been his place I'm in when I dream. I twirl into the street head tilted back as I let the rain droplets flow onto my face and through my hair. I see the head lights and I feel the impact of the car on my body. I feel the pain as I tumble over the car and behind it. I cry out and gasp for air when my back slams down onto the street. Instead of hearing screaming, being held as I die, or the voice of a remorseful driver. I hear the car speed off. I'm alone. I can hear an ambulance in the distance; but I'm alone and I'm dying, drowning in rain water. I used to wake up right before I drowned but lately I've woken up past that point. I've drowned, the ambulance has shown up, and they're getting my body ready for transport. There is no rush because the death film has already made its way across my eyes.

I gasp and feel wetness on my face. My throat aches and my sweat soaked body itches. I blink hard; once, twice, and a third time. Breathing heavily as I try to dislodge the liquid blurring my eye sight, frantically taking in my surroundings. This time there is no light shining through my bedroom window. The dark highlights the black corners of my light blue walls and lengthens the shadows of my torn and dusty posters. I can't see the floor but I can hear the rain. I shudder

curling into a ball under my matching bedcovers and notice that my pillow is damp. I close my wet eyes and wish for a peaceful sleep.