

‘Inside Closed Eyes’

By Kailleaugh Andersson

He had power. Not the kind of power that you can get from fame or money, but the savage type; the type of power that some are born with, that swirls up inside of their head and penetrates into your weak soul from the cold stare of their eyes. That type of power that just says “Obey me.” It didn’t matter that from a distance he looked like a frail and graying old man, or that his black suit was tattered, moth eaten and soiled with blood. Just one glance from those dead-like gray eyes and you knew the meaning of fear. Savage. Nothing but power staring at you and your reflection caught in the abyss of otherwise empty black pupils. Never mind that he was standing in my doorway.

“You got a phone? My car broke down.”

His voice was like his body, old, fading and nearly broken, his gray hair plastered to his skull from his sweat.

“Yeah. Come on in.” I said.

What the fuck was I thinking, letting this complete stranger into the house in times like this?! Especially someone like him on a night like this? At any moment they’d break down the doors and burn him to a cinder in the dustbowl that I consider my front yard. That’s it, they’d bust in the fucking doors armed with clubs and an occasional shotgun, a whole street corner congregation worth and beat him into submission. Then they’d drag him by the hair and arms, kicking and screaming into the front yard where they’d burn lit cigarettes into his eyes and skin until they’d slosh gasoline all over him and finally ignited him with a single match. I’d seen it a half dozen times, seven to be exact. Hard to lose count of how many times you’ve seen something like that. It happens so often that you almost feel sorry for them. Almost ...

I’d showed him the phone and left the room, but I could hear the clicking and spinning of the rotor as he dialed, and finally his fading voice, but too low and inaudible to make out the conversation. Destined for a Friday night pyre or not, I figure everyone deserves a bit of privacy. Even his kind... Even if it was one of his kind who’d killed my sister when we were kids, and I remember it intimately enough, even tho I was only eight.

If I close my eyes, I can still hear her screams from the backyard, and still feel my heart in that explosive rhythm as I ran across the plush grass to the back yard. It had come over the fence for her and even tho the scream inside my head seems to last forever, it had killed her quickly. It seems like I run forever, but it was only in a mere moment that her scream had ended and I saw it sitting there next to her, its arms looking as if they had been elbow deep inside of her for all of the blood.

I open my eyes, the screams cease and he is standing there in front of me and for who knows how long, staring quizzically at me, nearly like a cat.

“Bad memories?” he asks, his voice nearly as if concerned.

“Something like that.” I answered.

“I see...” he remarked. “Your sister?”

He’d read my mind of course. I know that now. I’d heard they could do that, but I had never believed it and had written it off as simple superstition, as stupid as that may sound when you

consider the fact that things like them were thought of as nothing but the insane superstitions of ignorant backwoods, East European peasants when my parents were kids.

“Yeah. My sister.” I replied. “She was killed when we were children by ...”

I stopped, realizing that if I made a mistake, I was dead. I mean D-E-A-D, fucking dead, if I made the mistake of blatantly informing him that I knew.

“By one of my kind.” he added.

Oh, he knew! I’d fucked up. If they didn’t get here fast, I was dead. I knew that much. He’d kill me, suck my blood out and wallow in it. He’d be unstoppable then for a time.

“If it’s any consolation ...” he paused, as if searching for the right words. “Well, I’m sorry; even tho I know it doesn’t change things or stave off the loss.”

He looked at the floor and didn’t say a word.

I was shocked, but of course it was too late. I’d never expected that one of the things could be capable of sympathy or other emotions and it made me realize that I’d made a mistake, for at that very moment, the front door was flung open and a sea of red faces, flushed with anger and sweat had rushed in like a flood and overwhelmed him.

Of course, I’d been the one to make the call as I’d seen him toiling over the broken down car. I’d been the one who called for this death squad.

And I could hear his screaming outside as I closed the door and the bright hue of a conflagration shone on the dusty window panes.

That penetrating scream, like the sound of a breaking spirit.

I close my eyes, and for the first time, in the darkness there is a silence.

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