

The darkness enveloped me as I sat under the drooping tendrils of the old willow tree. Rain had soaked the branches so they sagged lower than normal, concealing me even more. I preferred it that way. She'd never see me coming. I sat in silence, gripping my spear like my life depended on it. It didn't, not anymore, but I couldn't shake the chill that resided deep in my bones. She'd been haunting my dreams every night since she'd captured me and my brother. Thought it had been ten years we'd escaped her house of horrors, I could still hear the ragged sound of her laughter and still see the depravity in her eyes.

Part of me wondered why I'd come. I'd always considered myself a peaceful person not one to see revenge or gravitate to violence. But when my uncle told me he'd found the woman who'd kidnapped me and Jaime, I'd contemplated a darkness so deep and black it scared me. Maybe I'd always been this way, or maybe she'd brought it out in me.

Either way, I'd made my choice. I squinted into the damp inkiness. I heard her before I saw her. That same jagged breathing. That same shuffling gait.

It was now or never.

I had to do it. I had to destroy the one who had destroyed me and my brother. I was no longer the frightened little girl I once was, I could do it. I felt this strange need to go back, to face her. The night had already fallen when I watched her carefully walking along this new house, very similar to the first one; dirty, dark, much too big and the opaque windows. A perfect house of horror in which no one could have found their way. In the middle of nowhere, surrounded by vast forests and swamps. The perfect place for a monster like her.

I remembered with pain those sleepless nights, immobilized by fear and alone in the dark. The darkness, the constant blackness. For the first few days it had still been possible to estimate the time, but after the first week it had become impossible to tell day from night, without the light of the sun or the moon. I no longer had any notion of time, no orientation. Seconds seemed to be minutes, minutes seemed to be hours, hours seemed to be days, long days. I would never forget.

As I remembered the feelings of fear that had animated my hatred, I remembered that it would never happen again and that today was the day my nightmares and anxieties would end. I had to find a way to counter her senses and take revenge for what she had done to Jaime, and to me. After a few minutes of reflection, after she had entered the house, I decided to walk slowly, without the slightest noise so as not to be spotted. My discretion was essential. If she heard me, she would lock me up again, and I would never live through this year of captivity again. I knew her weaknesses and strengths. She had incredible hearing, unparalleled agility, but she didn't really have good eyes. In any case, the opacity of the windows would not have allowed her to see me move forward. The rain was also an advantage as it disturbed the dead calm of the place and masked the potential noise of the creaking branches under my feet.

The house had a porch in front of the entrance, with wooden steps that I had to climb up to enter the house which frightened me to death. I was alone, I felt alone in the world, and I hadn't told anyone that I would be going that night. Anything could happen. A new captivity or death. I didn't worry about potential injuries. I already had scars from this hell that I no longer counted... Some of them worried people a lot when they saw them. This often led to a multitude of questions that I didn't want to answer. But the worst of the scars she gave me was psychological. The kind of scars that nothing and no one can repair.

I was about to go up the stairs when I noticed stains on the porch floor. Blood. I took a deep breath and began to climb the steps as my limbs began to shake. What horrors was I going to fall upon? With a torch in my hand I opened the door, slowly. The light from my torch lit up the whole entrance corridor,

and was a necessary weapon for my survival. If I wasn't comfortable with the darkness, it couldn't stand the light. The day we escaped, I had struck a match that was miraculously in the rubble of one of the rooms in the house. The faint glow of the little wooden stick was ineffective. The light from the flames of the fire I had started was, however... I could have died that day, like Jaime whom I found praying in the corner of a room. But it had worked, and of all the means I could have imagined, it was the only one that worked.

This new house was even from the inside, identical in every way to the first one. The few pieces of furniture that remained were dirty and mouldy. The wallpaper was torn and damaged by humidity and the wooden slats were split and squeaky. As I advanced with as little noise as possible in this uninhabitable wreck, I got lost. This place was the ideal labyrinth for her to hunt her prey. It was probably the reason why she had chosen this debris, just as she had chosen the first house, and probably all the others. Moreover, how many had there been before? How many people had she reduced to nothing? How many people had she killed? A whole bunch of questions were running through my mind. It was the only way for me not to think about the horrors I had experienced myself. I entered what seemed to be the kitchen. I didn't really know which corner of the house to look in. Maybe it wasn't even in one of the rooms. Maybe she had hidden herself behind a wall or in the basement. I couldn't tell. This thought made me doubly vigilant. In spite of my mistrust and adrenaline, fear enveloped me. I was discreet, but she knew how to be even more discreet than I did. She lived to hunt.

I moved forward again and changed rooms. There was something in this new room that I hadn't noticed since I had arrived. A stinking smell. I covered my nose with my scarf to reduce the smell, but even with the scarf the smell was unbearable. As I walked a little further into the room I noticed something that I couldn't identify. My body tightened again. I was afraid to find her, languishing, staring at me with her dreadful, clear, atrocious eyes. My breathing quickened. In any case, if this unidentified form was indeed my executioner, she already knew that I was there, between her claws. In a burst of courage, I suddenly raised my lamp towards the thing in question. I then stopped screaming when I discovered what seemed to be a shredded, ball-shaped, decomposing body. Tears began to run down my cheeks and my breathing quickened. This corpse brought back to me atrocious memories and images of horror that haunted my nights. On the rare occasions when a bit of sunlight shone into a room because of a broken window or a crack in a wall, which she had inadvertently not covered with paint or plaster, a feeling of hope was intermingled with fear. A crack wide enough for one to crawl through was an opportunity to escape. But each time, the visual of bones or human remains would freeze me. It was impossible to move. Impossible to move without imagining that if it was me she was catching, I would end up like that too.

I tried to calm myself by thinking of reassuring images, or moments of joy. The first image that came to me was Jaime, my beloved brother. But this moment of joy was soon replaced by the memory of the feeling of fear I had during my captivity. The fear of losing my brother. Even though Jaime and I were in the same hell, we were not together, or very rarely. When we had to hide from her, we would separate so that at least one of us would be safe. Anyway, the hiding places were always very small, and never very safe. The safest thing to do was not to talk and to stop breathing as much as possible, because we were in total darkness anyway.

But I was no longer in the dark. I was still alive and safe, with my torch, my matches, gasoline, and the various knives I had found at home. If she attacked me, she would experience pain too. No matter what, none of the scars I could inflict on her would be worse than her bites and scratches.

I decided to go up the stairs at the end of the large room where the shapeless corpse was. Not surprisingly, as I walked up, I discovered chicken bones, the food she usually gave her prisoners to eat raw. Since then I have had a real horror of meat, just like Jaime.

Continuing towards the stairs, I told myself that this house, although it was the possession of a foul creature, would have been rather pretty if it had not been in that state. What was it like before? I realised that my mind was starting to wander again and asking unnecessary questions. If this was a way for me to reduce my fear, it was also an element that disturbed my mistrust. I shouldn't have to. One mistake could have been fatal. Too much noise, too much breathing, a squeak. I didn't want to die. I had already almost lost my life in this hell.

I came to my senses and finally climbed those stairs that seemed endless. I made sure I put my foot down slowly, my foot on each step. Even with the light I couldn't see the end of the stairs. Where was it going to lead me? I finally arrived in a wide corridor, with several doors, strangely closed. Five in total. So I assumed that some of the doors must surely hide horrors. Bodies? Bones? A much worse hypothesis suddenly came to me when I smelled something. I perfectly remembered the iron smell of blood. Unfortunately, I also remembered very well the texture, the warmth when it was fresh. And if she had bled one of her preys in one of those rooms, as she liked to do so much. There was nothing more exquisite for her than to open or shred a corpse, or even a living prey.

I didn't understand the mixture of emotions that suddenly came over me. A very strange mixture... I decided not to deal with it and to move forward in the corridor, in order to get away from the smell of blood. Further down the corridor I found a doll. What a comforting and deliciously childish object. At the end of this corridor, a small recess hid a new staircase, much narrower and cracked than the first one. I was afraid of what I might find at the top. But more than a feeling of duty, I wanted to go up. As my body, without the slightest explanation, advanced towards the staircase, its depraved and wild laughter disturbed the almost perfect calm of the house. She knew I was there. I am sure she was watching me from the beginning. But why didn't she attack me? What was I supposed to do? Run away? Face her? Where exactly was she? Questions, always questions. It was no longer time for questions. I had to act. I pulled out my secret weapon. A small spotlight. The light then lit up the whole corridor and would blind her if she arrived. Nothing. I looked carefully in every corner of this strange corridor. No cracks, no openings, nothing on the ceiling. She wasn't here. "Show yourself!" I shouted. I was more ready than I had ever been. The fear had gone, or at least I didn't feel it. Suddenly a squeaking door came and broke the new silence. The smell of blood that I had noticed earlier spread all over the corridor. I wasn't supposed to and yet I moved forward. This inexplicable feeling, this desire, she came back. What was going on? I looked at the door. I shouldn't go, I shouldn't give in... I walked towards the door that seemed to open automatically. In front of the room I raised my lamp. I found this spectacle absolutely horrible, yet I realised that I was subconsciously smiling. I reprimanded that smile and moved forward a little more. What a terrible wonder. The room was a bathroom, in which there were two washbasins and a bathtub. The walls were immaculate red. In fact, the whole room was red. What an atrocious beauty. I admired my hand which magically moved towards the bathtub. My feet followed. Then my index finger came to plunge into the liquid of the lion's foot bathtub and came to my lips.

As I slowly savoured the substance on my finger, I came to my senses and had a strong urge to vomit. I started screaming. The beauty I perceived turned into a real horror scene. It was a slaughter, a massacre. Tears began to fall on my cheeks at the sight of the seven bodies I counted. The whole room was covered in blood. I turned around and tried to run away. Which way had I come? I didn't recognise anything. There was no way out. Or maybe I just couldn't see it? The only option I had was the staircase that had attracted me so much before my madness. In any case, it was the only thing I recognised. I ran up and down the stairs at breakneck speed, forgetting all my things, except for my lamp, which remained in my left hand.

I found myself in a rather small and very dark room, despite the small window, without a curtain. I found it strange that there was a window in this labyrinth. It was probably the first time she hadn't covered a window. The moonbeams were beautiful and came to offer me a little respite after those horrors. After long seconds spent contemplating the Moon, I decided to look around me. In the middle

of the small room, against a wall, there was a large bed with curtains and a few cobwebs. And below the window, which was very high on the wall, there was a sort of desk that looked just like the bed, very old. The small room was mysteriously well arranged and in fairly good condition. The bed sheets were made of red velvet and incredibly soft. Why did I suddenly feel the strange urge to dive into it? My body magically moved forward on the bed again. I lay there and dropped my lamp. I was tired. I was hungry. I was hungry... As my body began to relax, the feeling of hunger in me took over. I had to eat. Anything, but I had to eat. There didn't seem to be anything in the room at first sight. So I searched every corner of the room to find even a crumb.

When I got discouraged, I decided to look under the bed. I slowly bent down because I was tired and finally looked under the bed. With fright, I discovered it. She was there, under the bed, looking at me with her big, blue, protruding eyes. Her atrocious smile, her big sharp teeth and long claws made me stand still. She was inordinately thin with long black hair and pale, wrinkled skin. We looked at each other for a long time. The doubt I had had all these years about her nature resurfaced. Was she human ?

She walked slowly towards me. I wanted to run away but it was as if each of my limbs was atrophied. She was getting dangerously close, too close. She slowly came out from under the bed. When she straightened up I noticed for the first time bites on her legs. Slowly, I understood. She had been hurt too.

A scream broke the silence of death. An emaciated and dreadfully thin man came into the room and threw himself on her. My body, out of some mystery, was able to move again. So I stepped aside and looked at the man, who was showing great courage even though he surely had nothing more to lose. I had to help him. I grabbed my lamp and put it towards the eyes of our executioner. She screamed. The light was blinding her and it was easier for the man to attack her. He stabbed her several times with an old penknife that he had probably found in the rubble. My fear was intertwined with the unhealthy joy of seeing her suffer. I couldn't help but laugh outloud at each of her cries of pain. She wounded the man with her long claws. He wouldn't live much longer, he was losing a lot of blood. I did something that I myself did not understand. I got as close as I could to the monster and bit her in the carotid artery. Her screams intensified. The man got scared and walked away. It didn't matter, I didn't need him anymore. I was no longer afraid and even if I had to die, I would have had the satisfaction of inflicting a pain that seemed immeasurable and seeing her suffer. Her breathing decreased as her blood flowed down my throat. I continued for a very long time.

When I stopped, I noticed that she was motionless and not breathing. Even with the huge hole I left in her neck, not a single drop of her blood flowed. Had I really drained her of her blood? A sigh of relief came out of my mouth. It was all over. I had wiped out the worst of the monsters. To make sure that this story was over I hurried down the stairs to the corridor. The man who had saved me from death had paid for it with his life. His body lay at the bottom of the stairs. The desire to taste his blood, which flowed abundantly on the floor, came to me. But I shouldn't. It would never happen again.

I grabbed my bag, stayed in the corridor and took out the petrol canister it contained. With the petrol can in my hand, I walked back the other way to the entrance and struck a match. The whole filthy house caught fire. I didn't care about possible surviving preys that might have been inside. They were all potential bloodthirsty monsters, just like me.

It's been a few years since I have avenged my brother and me. Questions still linger in my head. What happened that night? Why was I attracted to blood? How did my body stay frozen? Was there a chance that I too would one day turn into a monster? These unanswered questions trouble my mind again and again, and will remain so for the rest of my life.