

# Monster

By Athavi Nishaanthan

I always hated the night. For many reasons, really. I hated the darkness; the shadows lurking in every corner and crevice of my room; the oppressive silence being the loudest thing around for miles, nothing but my heartbeat pounding in my ears; the ominous feeling brewing in the pit of my stomach as I think of what the monster could do to me. What the monster always does to me.

The moon peeks through the cracks of my blinds and highlights the stripes of my bed covers. I lay as still as a statue, tucked away in my bed, my blanket pulled all the way to the very tip of my button nose. Until the sound of a porcelain plate smashing onto the tiled kitchen floor, resonates all the way to my room. Shivers like little spiders crawl down my spine with every cry and screech. I should be used to this by now. You'd think after all these years I would be. I turn my head slightly to see the time. 1:27 AM. I have school in the morning.

Adrenaline pumps through my veins. I sit up a little and run my hand on the back of my neck. My thick curls are drenched in sweat, just like the rest of my body. Sweat drips down my temples, a slideshow of memories play in my head. The other nights I've spent with the monster flip through my mind. As a kid I found it easier to focus on something instead of the monster. My favourite was the raging thunderstorms during the hot, summer nights. The rain striking against the window. My throat feels tight to the point where I think I'm choking. Like the air got stuck on its way to my lungs. Blood rushing up makes my head burn up. I desperately want to get water, but I choose the sanctuary of my bed. I'd rather choke on my sandpaper tongue than have to face the monster. I force the memories out of my head. I don't like remembering.

Tears spill out the corners of my eyes as the monster continues to destroy the house. He stomps around the corridor, breaking everything in his path. He must be holding my mom captive like he usually does. My mom's screams ring through the house. Hearing her cry always breaks my heart. Part of me desperately wants to save her. But a bigger part of me is too scared.

The monster's growls boom all the way to my room. I can't hear my mom anymore. I try to make out the monster's snarls. But it's pointless. It's like I'm trapped underwater. His demands are just faint, white noise: completely inaudible. All the possibilities run through my head like a race. My thoughts screech to a sudden stop when all the noise fades.

*Thump.*

*Thump.*

*Thump.*

His claws pound up the stairs. No... No. No. No! I bury myself deeper under the covers. It's funny how as kids we thought hiding under our blankets and covers

would protect us. That the monsters under beds and hiding in closets couldn't get us. If only that were true. I hold my breath as the footsteps come closer.

*Thump.*

*Thump.*

*Thump.*

*Creak...*

I try to relax my breathing and look like I'm asleep as my door creaks open. I hear it click shut. The monster creeps closer and stops at the edge of my bed. The only sound is his breathing and my heart banging against the caves of my ribcage. Can he hear it? Does he know I'm scared? Does he even care? Or does he like the power he holds over me? His talons caress me before he clutches the covers. Slowly peeling them away like a bandaid on an open wound. Painful. Exposed. Vulnerable. I'm not safe anymore. The monster can get me now.

The bed sinks as he crawls in. He spoons me into him with his sweaty arm. His breath is heavy against the back of my neck. The stench of liquor burns my nose. My body trembles with fear as I try to mentally prepare myself for what will happen next. For what always happens next. I dig my teeth into my bottom lip to silence a cry. The metallic taste of blood and the warmth of saliva pools into my mouth.

"Come on, Ally," his words slur, "I know you're awake." My face scrunches up and my body shakes like a frail tree in the wind. I clench my eyes and pray for the morning to come quickly. To see the warm sun smile through the cracks of my blinds.

"Ally?" he tries again as he squeezes me tighter.

I suck in a sharp breath. And then, as always, I cave and say,

*"Hi, daddy."*