

1)

He couldn't feel anything.

He was freezing, he knew he was, but he couldn't *feel* anything.

He remembered something.

His spacecraft hurtling down into the endless void, the stars seeming to wilt and die as he looked for some sign or saviour. How he scrambled for the controls just in time for the engine to blow. And the cold. The rush of frozen impact as the walls failed to hold back the ever expanding dark and then...

Nothing. Nothing but dark and the slow but steady loss of feeling. The stars start to appear, arranged across the galaxies just for him. They seemed to shine the brightest they ever have and the brightest they ever will do.

He reached out, but was unable to stop his eyes from closing.

"Daddy, are you home already?"

The sun shone high in the sky over the picket fenced porch and a sweet girl looked up to meet his confused stare.

Home? Was he home?

The windows were still uncleaned and the walls needed painting, but that is just how he remembered it. Perfectly imperfect.

He looked down at the little girl, his daughter, who smiled adoringly at him. Or did she? The smile didn't quite reach her eyes. Her eyes. The endless void. The glisten in her eye, arranged like the stars, seeming to wilt and die. He looked so far into the ever expanding darkness of her gaze, that was shining the brightest it ever has and the brightest it ever will do. He looked too far.

Because despite the sun that was shining down, beaming on his face and lighting up the warm and familiar scene around him, he was weightless.

And he still couldn't feel anything.

2)

Everything was perfect on Evangeline's wedding day. The guests were all seated and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. Her face was practically glowing with beauty. The golden locks of her silky hair were pulled back into a braided bun; the artificial blush on her cheeks made her ocean blue eyes stand out even more. It was truly going to be the best day of her life. The piano began to play and Evangeline strolled down the aisle, however something seemed off. Looking at her fiancé, his hands seemed more like hooves, his nose more pink and upturned. The piano was out of tune. A horrible feeling baked in her stomach, this was not the man she loved.

3)

Bored on his way back from school, Alex decided to go to the shop down the road. He'd seen the perfect vampire costume in there: long cape, full face mask - perfect for not being recognised. Alex had always been bullied, because he had different hobbies to everyone else. When everyone else was playing football, he was inspecting insects on the playground. When they were on the swings, he was digging for treasure.

Approaching the shop, he looked at the sign on the door: Closed. Great. But he would still come back tomorrow. It was Halloween: his favourite celebration, when, in costume, he could have fun without bullies hassling him.

Turning away Alex heard sniggers from across the road. That wasn't good. There was only one thing he could do now. Run. Sprinting as fast as he could, he risked a glance back and saw four boys from his class chasing him, close enough for him to see their unpleasant grins. As he turned the corner he tripped and fell hard to the ground - he was in trouble now. Scrambling to get up, he felt his legs sink into the ground - what was happening?

Alex tried his hardest to drag himself up but his body couldn't resist whatever force was pulling him down. As he sank further he sensed solid ground beneath his feet. Alex dared to open his eyes and looked around. He found himself in a dark room lit only by candlelight. On the wall hung a heavy black cloth. Unhooking it, he found the exact halloween costume he had seen in the shop's window. Without thinking, he tried it on.

The cloak fitted perfectly, as if it was moulded for his body. Slipping the mask on he felt a strange sensation, as if his soul had left his body. Starting to panic, he went to take it off - and found he couldn't. He tried again. The same thing happened. What was going on? Alex's body started moving on its own. He couldn't bear it any longer. Alex gave in to the spirit inside him and it immediately took control. Alex could feel the power surging inside him.

Three centuries had passed since it had last walked the earth. Banished from his own Kingdom, the spirit wouldn't rest until it had taken its revenge. The Prince of Darkness would rise again. And this time he would not be stopped.

The new neighbour.

The old maple street house had been empty for years, its windows dark as sockets in a skull. So when Elena Marsh moved in – Bright eyed, polite, waving to everyone - people noticed. They brought casseroles, curiosity and whispered warnings about the place's history.

When the invitation came - a black envelope sealed with crimson wax - Elena laughed. Halloween party? How perfect. She's been hoping to meet some of her new neighbours properly.

The night air smelled of rain and woodsmoke as she crossed the street, costume wings fluttering. The house opposite pulsed with candlelight. Inside, the party was lavish – elegant drapes, crystal goblets, music low and ancient. Everyone was pale, impossibly elegant.

A tall man named Victor greeted her. Opening “welcome, Miss Marsh. We've been dying to meet you.” he smiled too long on her throat.

Elena sipped her drink – dark, metallic wine – and tried to ignore the way conversations pause when she passed. The guests didn't seem to blink much. Or breathe.

At midnight, Victor raised his glass. “To our newest resident! May she stay with us... Forever.” Laughter rippled through the room like a shiver.

Elena smiled uncertainly – until she saw her reflection in the tall mirror behind them. Hers was the only one there.

The laughter stopped. Every face turned towards her, eyes glowing faintly red.

“Run,” whispered a voice she couldn't place.

She dropped her glass and bolted. Velvet curtains tangled around her legs as she stumbled toward the door. The music swelled again – no, it was heartbeats, hundreds of them, none her own.

“There's no need to hide,” Victor Crooned. “you'll join us soon.”

Elena crawled out the other side, sprinted for the door, and flung it open. The night outside seemed black and endless. She didn't stop running until she saw her own porch light – flickering, dying.

Behind her, the street was silent. The old House's windows had gone dark again.

Only a single black envelope lay on Elena's doorstep, sealed with crimson wax.

5)

The sky swarmed with an ominous-looking grey as the matte vehicle crunched the stones up the drive. The bricks whispered in harmony as they approached, and the windows shone off the lifeless reflection of the moon. That house on sycamore lane stood like a forgotten grave frozen in time. The paint peeling off like old skin and the rust blooming on the handrail didn't help but make you feel uneasy. The porch sagged slightly; its dusty wooden floorboards groaning underfoot. The car almost scratched the leaning mailbox at the bottom of the drive, squeaking even when the faintest of breezes swooped past. The Roberts Family couldn't miss this underrated bargain, so they purchased house 13 as soon as it stumbled onto the market. It was practically a steal: 4 bedrooms, a wraparound porch, and a sprawling backyard, all for what felt like nothing.

The unfortunate children (Summer and Harriet) were hesitant when they finally got out of the car and onto the porch; as if they thought it were to bite them. Dad (Kai) forced a wide grin on his patchy face, his blue eyes darting around the exterior of the house like a police search on a criminal. Mum (Violet), stood at the threshold of the rotting manor towering above her tall silhouette. The silence was cold - colder than the wind that whispered through the bones of the house. Their dog Stella whimpered in despair as if the house wailed a warning through the cracks in its walls. The porch light flickered once then died, leaving the family in a soft grey gloom. Kai muttered something under his breath and nudged the front door open with his pointed foot. The hinges creaked and the air was thick, a threatening chill sent up their spine.

The garden stretched out behind the house, wild and overgrown as it rested. A crooked oak tree watched the children race around in the jungle from the shadows, its twisting branches peering over the back fence like a curious neighbour. The leaves fluttered in the wind: it cast a volley of rustles to be heard for miles. Summer wandered over to check it out - only to trip up on a hidden slab of stone. Harriet joined her and it read, "Agnes Emmerson - 1872." The garden wasn't just overgrown - it was hiding something beneath the soil. One after the other.

It was hiding the dead.

6)

The clock struck midnight and pulled her from her daydream. Or her nightmare. She had just returned home earlier that day from another mind numbing, petty shoplifting case that didn't even take Brighton's best detective -Margot Doubois- three hours. She spent the rest of the day wandering around her tiny flat, working on some documents, and all in all doing nothing. She blew the bangs from her face, and rolled her eyes at the stupid things. Margot looked around at her underwhelming little flat, it had a pathetic plant on the windowsill and a combined living room and bedroom that had a sunny yellow aesthetic. Oh to be the sweet, naive girl that she was when she first joined the police force. Just a girl with a love for justice and sunflowers.

A few minutes passed of Margot wandering around, debating what to do next, when, unexpectedly, her landline started to vibrate, boasting its dulcet tones.

'Strange,' she thought. 'That landline hasn't been in use for years.' She picked it up and greeted the person on the other side a witty good morning. She lazily slumped on her bed, and stared at the painted ceiling.

"Margot. I'm only going to say this once," the voice said. A chill ran down her spine and the back of her neck prickled. "I am you in twenty years. We suffer a life threatening injury that leaves us in a horrific state for the rest of our life. My research shows me that this is the exact night it happens, be careful, a killer is near," the line disconnected. Margot sat up, her hands were shaking as she tried to call the person back, when something red caught her eye,

She's right. I'm coming. Float away or I will have the next gloat.

Her lungs seized. The lettering dripped, and was a dark shade of red. Through the window, the clouds enclosed the moon with its ominous arms, the stars along with them. Her dim lamp flickered and faded away, leaving the room in pitch black. A haughty laugh wove its way through the darkness. It came from every direction.

"Funny isn't it? You were warned, but there's nothing you can do. Hello Margot. I'm here for revenge," A searing pain flashed through her abdomen.

7)

The storm roared its ugly delight overhead. Lightning split the sky waging war on the ground. The plane soared through the sky, unaware of the forthcoming sense of trepidation. Hobble watched outside the window, an anxious look framing his face; he had long been aware of this mission- the mission that could turn the war around if all went well- but had never really thought about it. 'Just another mission' he had told himself every time the thoughts came to his mind.

'Ready for the jump.' The pilot said sternly.

'Yes, Sir!' Replied Hobble, nervously - though he certainly didn't feel ready, nobody could he thought.

'Approaching the base.' The pilot declared. Hobble stood up; his eyes training on the parachutes across the cabin. He carefully grabbed one, making sure he didn't fall over in the constant wobbles of turbulence, and slotted it on his back. He tied up all the loose ends, his hands dancing with the strings and pulling them tight. 'Ready when you are,' he finally responded.

'Ready.' answered the pilot.

'Opening the service door' he stated. Carefully pulling at the tight lever holding the door closed. He nervously pulled the door inwards. 'Making the jump.' he said before leaping out of the door. He was instantly soaked. The rain tore at him pelting like little bullets at his back painfully. Lightning shot through the air unnerving him; suddenly he saw the black landscape below him he knew it wasn't time to but there was a dark consciousness in the back of his head, warning him, pleading for him to pull the cord. He knew better than that though and shut the thought away; if he pulled now he might miss the meeting entirely and fail to find all the scandalous information begging to be discovered

30 seconds later, he pulled the cord; the parachute bloomed atop him and he sluggishly drifted down. However, to his horror there was nothing there, not a tree, not even a hill. Simply a cold flat wasteland soaked by the rain. He sat down. A sudden wave of fright overcame him, there simply couldn't be nothing. He had studied in detail every single meter, every last inch of where was supposed to land. They must have dropped me off at the wrong place, he concluded. Suddenly he felt a cold hand slip round his throat.

'Gotcha...'