

2020 Horror Story Contest

First Place: "Sleep Paralysis"

Karissa Stevey

Your eyes sink into the back of your head and your body is pressing deeper and deeper into the mattress. Your body is falling asleep, but your mind remains awake. Everything around you is like still waters, but your thoughts race from the day before. Your eyelids flick open and you feel a presence there. No one else is in the room, at least none that you can see. The trees are whistling and the wind howls, but the air is still outside. A shadow takes an appearance of a claw in the corner of the room and it looks like it just might grab you. Just as quickly as it appeared, it disappears, and you want to feel relief, but your heart continues to pound in your chest. You're afraid to look across your room because you know someone is there. Your head turns to see a lady sitting on the opposite side from you on your bed. Her back is turned and the only thing you can see are her dark, wet curls that fall alongside her back. The curls are mostly matted and water drips from her ringlets. Her chest is shuddering, and you feel her laugh weighing heavily in the space around you, but you hear nothing. The air sits on your chest in a way you've never experienced before. It's a struggle just to breathe and you want to claw at your chest, but your arms don't move. She turns her head slowly and you begin to see her decomposing skin with cracks that split her face into sections. You could easily peel her skin off like it was softened butter, her whole body and face is bloated, and you can smell the malodor of putrefaction wafting towards you. Her eyes are sunken in and they are dark and merciless. She sees right through you and she smiles with teeth that are rotten and caked with dirt. Panic sets in because you can't move or turn the light on. She knows how vulnerable you are, and she continues to cackle with fluid filled lungs, and somehow, you know she wants you to meet her same demise. You try to scream, and nothing comes out, your voice is nothing but a hoarse whisper and no one will hear you. There's a glow of light that suddenly appears, a light that could save you from the darkness, but you can't reach it. You turn on your side against your will and her arms begin to wrap around you. She squeezes tightly, compressing your lungs and it feels like ages until she lets go and until she's gone. You begin to breathe, and you feel like you're awake now, but your reality and your dreams have morphed together somehow. You don't know what to believe at this point. But it was all a dream?