

## **2020 Horror Story Contest**

Third Place: "Mosquito Bites"

Hazel Rose Hubbard

Along the edges of the shrouded bathroom slithered the unearthly creature. The wretched thing, hexed with the sinister desire for blood, hunted for survival. Dark, glimmering, and slick; its eyes, which were large and unblinking, rolled over every inch of the room. Its spiked ears lingered on every flutter of the wing. It was searching. The creature slinked across the cold tile, staining the white walls with its shadow. Then, it heard it; the sounds of a dying centipede, writhing in the drain of the tub. An ugly thing, the centipede begged for a merciless death, but it found none in the glowing eyes of the creature. The beast was unusually sadistic; it relentlessly battered the centipede until it no longer moved. An Imperial moth pressed itself against the cold glass of the window above. The sole witness of this crime; not even the moon peeked inside that window, perhaps out of fear of the beast.

The creature slipped away, back into the arms of the darkness. It resurfaced under a cast of moonlight. It had found its next target. Two masses, sleeping soundly under the false pretense of safety. The next victim laid peacefully, her arm hanging over the bed, gently caressing the dark. The creature ascended the bed, and loomed over the head of the sleeper, listening intently to the rise and fall of the sleeper's breath. The victim laid limp and unaware as the monster advanced upon her. Slowly, it peeled back the sheets of the bed, revealing the sleeper's bare ankle. Porcelain against the wash of light from the window. Without hesitation, the monster latched onto her ankle and began to drain blood from their victim.

Outside the window of the sleeper's den, the wind whistled on the gutters of the house. Morning dew was starting to gather on the mums and pansies. The familiar sounds of crickets filled the air. The sleeper roused herself from sleep, rubbed her eyes, and saw the devilish silhouette of the monster burning in the dark. Its sinister eyes gleamed. The sleeper felt no fear, however. She reached her hand out to the beast.

"Coco," said the victim. "Come here, baby." She beckoned the scaly-tongued creature.

Coco emerged and sat upon her victim's chest. The sleeper gently stroked between the creature's ears, and she purred, a low soft roar beneath her chest. Peace fell over the bedroom. The girl went back to sleep.

The next morning, as the dew upon the flowers dried under the morning sun, the two sleepers rose. The girl stood to stretch. She felt suddenly weak, and steadied herself on the heavy dresser. She looked down to see her bloodstained nightgown.

"Ack—" the girl winced at the stain. "I scratched my mosquito bites in my sleep again." Dried blood was smeared across her leg. Two coagulated bumps formed just above her ankle. "We need to buy some bug spray, Coco; this happens way too often." Coco purred in agreement.