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Believe in Me // Brennen Lutz

Danny-boy was lying in bed, listening to the pipes calling his name, the floorboards creaking accusations and the wind howling a chorus to the cat's melody. He listened. And he waited, for the inevitable arrival of the monsters that had tapped on his window each night for the past week.

They crawled along the grassy knoll and over the hills. They crossed the yard like shadows expanding from the hills and rocked his tire-swing as they crept closer. Danny hadn't thought about it much, but it was only on moon-bright nights that he would see them coming for him. He stared out his window and feared that tonight the monsters would catch up to him before sleep did.

His bed was nestled in the corner of his room, as far from the window as possible, but close to the door where his father would enter if he screamed. Danny had screamed once before, but his father, Michael, had been exasperated by the lack of monsters upon his arrival. Michael had slept in Danny's tiny twin bed the whole night to make the 7-year-old boy feel safe.

The next day, Danny had watched his father crack his spine and wince in pain while he put on his suit jacket. The suit jacket was really the defining characteristic of Michael in Danny's mind. While Michael was suited up, he was a figure of parental authority, albeit mostly absent during the hours between 8 and 6.

On this sinking night, Danny debated screaming for help once more. The monsters were at his window, he could here them tapping. But he wouldn't look at the window, and couldn't because he was hiding beneath his covers. The tapping became a scraping and he thought he heard the window opening. He drew the covers tighter around his body and tried to look as small and unappetizing as possible.

A small hiss from under the bed was what finally broke Danny's resolve not to call for help.

"Daaaaaaaad!" He shouted.

The creature hissed once more. Louder this time, almost in Danny's ear. Fortunately, he heard the soft footsteps of Michael on the hardwood stairs. His fear, pulsing loudly in his throat, subsided when he heard his father turn the handle of his door. Danny waited until the lights were on before he poked his head out from under the covers.

“What’s wrong Danny-boy?” Michael asked, his eyes red from lack of sleep.

“There’s something under the bed.” Danny whispered.

Arching an eyebrow, Michael glanced at the terror on his boy’s face before bending to look under the bed. “Nothing this time neither, pal. Come down here and take a look for yourself.”

Although Danny protested with an “I don’t wanna!” Michael lifted him from the bed and placed him on the ground to take a look with him. “See? Nothing there, pal.” Danny looked, and although he couldn’t see anything, he was not entirely convinced that there were no monsters in his room. He had heard the hissing loud and clear.

“Maybe they went in the closet?” Danny asked.

Michael sighed and said, “I doubt it bud, but I’ll check for you.” Michael walked the few steps from bed to closet and opened the door. There was nothing but cheap clothes and shoes that would soon be too small for his rapidly growing son.

“Only monster in here is the mess you’ve left me.” Michael said as he turned with a smile. He did need to buy some new shades for this room, he thought. The moonlight was bright and probably cast the shadows that had scared Danny in the first place. “I’m going to go back to bed now Danny. There’s no monsters here okay?”

“I don’t think so dad, they’re here. I heard them.” Danny pleaded. “What if they get me?” It was difficult for Danny to imagine anything beyond the monsters pulling back the covers, but he knew that if the monsters got him, he would never come back.

“Shhhh Danny-boy, there are no monsters here. Go back to sleep and say your prayers.”

Danny looked confused but didn’t seem as afraid as before, so Michael decided it would be safe to leave the boy without worrying about him calling again. He glanced around the room one more time in an attempt to see where the shadows would be that scared Danny. Unsuccessful, he turned off the lights and quietly shut the door.

As soon as the door closed, Danny curled into a tiny ball and ensconced himself in his covers. He hoped that his dad had scared away the monsters, but he wasn’t entirely sure.

Two pinpricks of light glittered golden reflections of the moon in the closet Danny had thought they would be in. The eyes were attached to a horror that had yet to reveal its form. A long slow hiss announced its presence to the child lying in bed like a steak on a plate.

Danny was S-C-R-E-W-ed and he knew it. The monster had indeed crept in, and somehow his father had missed it. The hissing he heard from his closet made him stifle a scream, but instead a whimper crawled out of his throat. He was going to die; he was going to be eaten. Or taken to some far away land of death and pain.

And then, he had an idea. If he could just turn on the lights before the monster reached him and crunched him in its teeth, then maybe it couldn't get him. This thought gave him hope, and he stirred a tenth of an inch in an attempt to line up with the light switch.

He caught a glimpse of the glowing eyes in his closet as he frantically scrambled up and out of his covers. Two huge steps later, and he was turning on the lights as an angry hiss breathed down his neck, causing the hairs on the nape of his neck to stand on end. Whatever had breathed on him vanished with the light. Only the pounding of his heart served to remind him of the peril he had just braved.

Danny stood in thought for a moment. He was now sure that there were monsters in his bedroom. The window was certainly no longer a barrier to the hissing shadows. He needed some way to keep himself safe, but he couldn't leave the lights on all night or his father would be angry with him in the morning.

He had heard his teachers refer to him as a "little terror" when they thought that he was sleeping in class, so maybe, he could be scarier than the monsters. He went to his closet, filled with trepidation at the thought of looking through it, but it had to be done. Rifling through the amorphous blob of discarded clothes and shoes, Danny looked for what he hoped would keep him safe.

"Crap!" Danny whispered, hoping his father wouldn't hear him saying the c-word. He couldn't find what he was looking for, but then he remembered that he had placed it in his plastic bucket filled with his toys. The red bucket held a number of items that

Danny thought could help him out, but chief among those items was a mask. He had worn the mask on Halloween, a skeleton mask that had caused shock and terror for the adults whom had opened their doors and showered his pillowcase in candy.

When he found the mask, he pulled it over his head and instantly felt like he would be scarier than any monster that had snuck into the deep dark corners of his room. Just in case though, he hefted his wooden sword that his father had bought him at the Medieval fair last year. He had whacked his dad in the shins with the sword once, and he had been grounded for a week, but his dad had only limped for two or three days.

Danny felt much more secure with both the mask and his sword, but he still worried that the monsters would get him when he turned out the lights. Fortunately, this time, he wouldn't have to stand on the floor to turn off the lights. He could stand on the foot of his bed and knock the light switch with his sword.

So that was what he did. The skeleton-boy with the wooden sword turned out the lights and lied down in bed. This time he didn't hide away under the covers, but rather, he left his upper body uncovered so that if he needed to swing the sword, he would have some range of motion.

As soon as the lights were out, the shadows once more leapt into motion. They came sliding out from under the bed with thoughts of blood on their minds. The monster previously hidden in the closet came out and rose from the floor menacing to behold. It was tall and dark, its features largely obfuscated by the shadows that gave it shape. It mumbled its disappointment when it saw that another monster had already taken the morsel it had wanted to eat from the sheets.