

The Unthinkable

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His hand held me down; his cold, pale hand grasped my neck. I couldn't move; couldn't breathe. His face came ever-closer, his skull white as marble. I could see his teeth, along with holes now occupied by maggots and worms. His eyes no longer lived in their sockets. A black robe, torn along the seam, fluttered in the non-existent wind. I opened my mouth to scream, but no sound escaped my lips; no air, through my compressed windpipe. I stared into the face of Death. It must have been Death. I had seen its picture in so many stories, yet this thing, it did not kill me. If it was Death, shouldn't it take me to heaven or hell, if there is one? Why did it keep me here, in such pain?

I did not have much time to wonder, for the next moment, the creature vanished. I fell backwards in the shock of having nothing to hold me up, rolling over my desk, the only piece of furniture I owned, sending papers and lit candles flying. Darkness fell into the room. I strained my eyes and flailed my arms wildly, searching for the creature to return. Would it? Why did it vanish? Was it not yet my time to die?

When a sudden chill swept over me, I froze. A high-pitched hiss sounded from the darkness, along with a snake-like slither that slowly grew closer. My eyes darted wildly, searching the darkness for the cause of the noise. Something slimy and slippery slid around my legs slowly, quite at ease. I could not move. My body refused to cooperate, my limbs locked in shock. The thing kept wrapping itself around me, now at my knees.

I could think. Lying on my back, I knew I had to react or this freakish thing would eat me alive. I tried to separate my legs, bound tightly together, yet the strength of this creature was greater than any I'd ever experienced. As much as I fought it, I could not move. At my stomach, it continued up. I tried to scream, but, although physically nothing stopped me, I could not gather the air or the strength to do so.

I bid goodbye to my life, knowing the end was near. I would not survive this. How could I? This thing was hungry, and I was free food. With the creature at my chest, nearly at my neck, I thought, Just let it be quick; just get it over with.

Still, as much as I hoped for my suffering to end, I wanted to continue to live. Suddenly the thing disappeared, just as the creature before it had. It vanished and left me panting and panicking on the gray cement floor.

Then, the room blazed in color, light, and warmth. A chandelier, which I had never before noticed, dangled above me. I stood up on what was now a polished, hardwood floor, almost shiny enough to show my reflection. I moved slowly, testing my legs to ensure they were really there.

Then, once again, something appeared practically out of nowhere. Not dangerous, as the others were, this creature was a beautiful young woman, only about a year below my thirty, by the looks of it. She smiled at me, her red lips parted to reveal straight, white teeth. Her brown hair was tied behind her head, and her skin was pale as snow. I recognized her as my lovely wife, Clarice. She carried a glass of wine, red as blood, vibrating with each step she took towards me. I walked forward, closer to her. I longed to touch her face, to see if she would disappear along with everything else. She handed me the glass when we met, which I took with trembling hands. I couldn't speak. She was here; she was really here, the love of my life.

"Drink," she commanded, her voice echoing in the room. I did, swallowing it all with one gulp. She smiled again. I reached up to touch her, but she backed away before I got the chance.

"Please," I moaned, feeling my head begin to ache, and my body begin to tremble. I collapsed, unable to stand. "Please."

She laughed but did not reply. I could no longer see her as a new light erupted in my eyes, a blinding light that hurt too much to bear. I screamed, covering my face. New voices came, unfamiliar ones, anxious ones.

"Look, I think I found something!"

"My God, is he alive?"

"I think he is. I don't know how to get him out. How he survived, I can't imagine."

"If he is alive, he cannot be sane. The radiation leak would have turned his brain to mush..."

The voices grew fainter until they no longer existed. My wife, Clarice, was gone. I couldn't move. A cloaked figure approached, a skeleton beneath the black. Death.