

# BLEEDING SHADOWS

A Tale of Terror, Insanity, Luck, and Redemption

To the historically current, futuristic collective insanity of the human world.

For without you, only peace could be known.

And this story, inconceivable.



## WHERE THE SUN SCREAMS A SHADOW BLEEDS.

As the insidious sorcerer of nightmares snaps his fingers releasing Ron from his spell, he awakens out of a living blackness next to his sweet wife Rosie, screaming. AAAAHHHHHHHHHHH! Finally, he is wide awake and free of that darkness. This time he can move. He's truly here. This time he can scream. Despite the prickling chill of the trailer air, he's soaked in sweat. It's the pain all over again dripping from his skin. Well, not only the pain, add to that, the utter fear and helplessness that

envelope the essence of Ron's soul. It hasn't happened for a while now.... or has it? *Fuck I don't know anymore.* Those dreams, when they happen, come in streaks. One right after the other, floating on endlessly in the current of a moving river, circulating all the horror into swirling eddy pockets, churning them up into new clusters of debris, new manifestations, new refreshed nightmares that spin back into the flowing current of his reality. All the nightmares of a lifetime bonded into one mighty fucking horrific cold steel trap, Ron's struggling leg pinched in its rusty jagged teeth, skin ripped to the bone, torn to shreds revealing what lies beneath. Every time he sleeps, he awakens to that world. And it's real, for a little while. Or is it? Perhaps.....just suppose..... it's an eternity.

## RON'S TRAILER

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Beth cracks the shabby wooden door to her parent's bedroom. The bed stand light illuminates her caramel brown face in a copper hue. Her baby blue eyes sparkle with fearful curiosity in the dim lighting. An oversized red Budweiser shirt-- an old school one, remember the frogs?-- hangs to her knees. She speaks through the space of the partially open door, "Mommy I heard Daddy squweaming an' I'm sk-eared." She balls her fists, crosses them together under her chin. Her shoulders are hunched and trembling. She shivers. Goose bumps prickle her dark skin, "Why's it so cold?"

"Its ok Honey, Daddy was just havin' a nightmare is all n' I know it's cold. The heater stopped workin' again, baby."

Rosie caresses his back as she consoles their daughter. The light blends with Rosie's soft African skin making it a smooth mocha; a sharp contrast to her loose white night gown. Ron's face is in the pillow, hands clenched to its sides. Holding onto reality, so not to lose its grip and fall back into the ceaseless void of terrors.

Massaging the back of Ron's neck, Rosie says, "You were screaming Ronnie, and stiff as a board. Like the weight of the world was holding you down so hard even God couldn'a moved ya."

Now, he lies there in silence with his eyes sealed shut. A moment ago, he woke up paralyzed. He tried to move but the attempt was futile. It was like he was cemented in time, frozen rock solid in a dividing wall; light on one side, darkness on the other.

Couldn't breathe. Couldn't move. Couldn't scream. Frozen.

The numbers were there in dripping blood suspended in the blackness of the void. The same numbers that have been there for years, fixed to the walls of his reality like an eternal glowing road sign.

Frozen in time. Stuck in the cement. Darkness covers light.

He escapes horror's grasp. Muttering into the pillow with his nasally voice, "I'm okay Rosie. I'm fine." His sinuses are fucked.

*Will he be there when I open my eyes again?*

Takes a deep breath, opens his eyes. He faces the fear and rolls over leaning against the headboard.

He reaches for his dentures soaking in their cup on the bed stand. Out of his brain and into his mind, the memory welcomes him like a smiling stranger walking out of a dark alley with a loaded pistol in his belt: Drunken uncle Chucky knocking him senseless when he was fifteen.

Teeth flying, fists crashing, hairy, bony forty year old knuckles crunching against the thin skin of Ron's adolescent mouth; teeth cracking, popping, breaking, nose smashing, blood gagging and dripping and flying, uncle breathing fast, dim light and booze breath in garage, tears from his eyes, anger in the air, anger in his fists, disappointment, guilt, confusion, and self hatred. Uncle Chucky screaming *How could you let her do it, how, How, HOW.*

Just the usual Uncle Chucky drunk as fuck on Canadian whiskey and Ron, fucking terrified, fucking depressed, fucking regretful, fucking wishing, wishing wishing..... *only if I could go back in time and change the past.*

He pats the bed between him and Rosie and says, "Hey Bethy, Daddy's okay, come over here with me."

Beth runs over smiling. Her knees press out against the Budweiser shirt like two cute little gopher heads popping out of holes in the whack a mole game. She jumps up into the bed. Ron takes her in his arms. Beth nestles into her Daddy's shoulder and touches his pale white face with her chocolate colored hand.

"Daddy don't be sk-eared, dey aint real, it's your magination like you always tell'd me."

"Awe Beth I love you so much, you know that. Daddy's fine." Parental lies and Feigned parental strength.

Everything is not fine. Everything is shit. Everything has been shit ever since it happened.

He takes a deep breath.

He grabs her sides and tickles her, “It was just THE Booooo-gey-man, Boogitty, Boogitty, Boogitty Boo”

“HAHA, Daddy, stop.”

He lifts her into his lap and puts his hand to her forehead. White hand, black skin. “Munchkin, your head is warm. We can’t have ya getting sick now. Summer’s on the rise.”

*A week from summer, why in the bells it so out of the ordinary cold tonight? A thought occurs to him, one that could leave him alone for the night. Maybe tonight’s the night to make it right.*

“Hey you know what Rosie pedals?”

“What’s that Ronnie bug?”

“It’s too cold in this damn trailer tonight fer you guys to stay here. Why don’t-cha call Margie. Sure as shit, she’s still up, the damn night owl. It’s early yet specially fer her. Probably back there on the porch havin’ a hooter as we speak. You two head over there fer the night.”

She rolls her eyes and grumbles, “HMMMSSShh.”

She doesn’t need to call Margie, she’s always up. Always tokin’ on what she calls Margie’s Mary. It’s her own homegrown creation mix and matched through countless generations of various strains of indica and sativa; too many to know where she began.

“Bethy, go to your room and grab your clothes for tomorrow k? The ones mommy has folded fer school.

She sure as hell doesn’t want to leave her daddy. Bethy looks at her Father, sad and pouty.

“And don’t ferget your teddy, ok? You don’t want the boogey man takin’ you away. Teddy will keep you safe and fight that mean green machine off n’ away from ya.”

“Oh Daddy.” She lays against his chest, cheek to heart.

He lifts her up under the arm pits and lowers her feet to the floor. Beth walks to her bed room. Her mighty pops on her knees.

He can’t believe she’s already five years old. Where does the time go, he thinks. In his mind’s eye he sees her life flash from the time she was a brown skinned nappy haired, screaming newborn wrapped in a pink blanky to her current form, a talking, walking curly black haired five year old girl as beautiful as her mother and as strong as a storm. Exactly like her mother: sweeter than candy,

headstrong, and empathetic enough to sense his emotions, empathetic to the point he thinks it's scary she can feel so much.

Rosie looks to her husband.

Although she knows it's a lost cause, she asks anyway, "Why don't you come with us tonight?"

"Rosie, once I wake up, that's it. You know it. I'll never fall back to sleep. It's better if I'm alone."

"Well at least come with us to Margey's. You can be alone in the basement if that's what ya want."

He shakes his head. "Work is so much closer to the trailer, baby. Besides that, I don't want to catch a contact high. I'll be headin' inta work red eyed and floatin' liable to lose my dern job." He winks, trying to be sweet, trying to be coy. He's got to get them out of here.

*Tonight is the night to make it all right.*

Rosie looks into Ron's eyes, "Are you sure Ron, I know you aint ok! Was it him again, was it your..."

He looks her in the eye but as he begins to speak his gaze drifts away and behind her like he's talking to a ghost on the wall, "Nah baby, it was nothin', just a dream that's all."

*I can't talk about it now. It's too fresh, it's too real.*

Sometimes he tells her it was just a nightmare about his uncle, so she can be at ease. Of course she knows better.

*She can't see the fear in my eyes. She can't read what's on my mind. She'll never leave me here alone. I can't let her see it in my eyes.*

"Oh Ron, come on, talk to me please. You never told me what happened. I only know rumors, and you know aroun' here, rumors are 'bout as good a drink as warm piss in a pan."

Looking down, "Maybe tomorrow, Rose, ok? I....I.. can't do it right now. I need some time, no I need a cigarette." *And a few shots of that fiery cinamonny hard shit.*

"You're going to talk about it sometime. We've been together for five years. It will help, you know? Might even chase them nightmares away once and for all," she says as she runs her fingers through his sweaty hair. "Locking traumatic experiences away, never talking about them, keeps them alive. They keep on growin' as we grow, lingerin' on as ghosts in our sleep, fully alive, consumin' our fear, feedin' on it like coyotes on a carcass gettin' fatter and meaner with every bite. . . I love you. I want to help, but damn it baby, I can't help until you spill your blood." She touches his chin, kisses the tip of his nose. "Ronny bear, ya can't lock a shadow in the closet and expect the

sun to shine through the door. Ya gotta open the door n' shine some light on it honey, before it blows off the door and swallows the sun. Because then it's too damn late n' there aint nothin' but shadows left."

He knows it. He knows it all too *fuckin'* well.

He rolls out of bed and puts his blue jeans on. Same ones Rosie tore off of him earlier. All wild, all spontaneous after she got home from having a few cocktails and a couple rips of Margie's Mary. Bethy was still at school.

Rose took Ron like a wild African tribal woman possessed with that primal need, the need of what he can barely give her; a wild fucking jungle dance for a wild, wild woman. Ron remembers it was damn hot. When she came, Ron came too. Came right inside like a hot shot of white moonlight shining into the cave lighting up what was once too dark to touch. Her body quaked and Ron's shivered. "Oh my Ronnie, that was perfect. See baby, you're just fine. You know that right? You know I love you no matter what."

Fuck, first time he could keep it up for as long as he can remember. Maybe it's the anticipation of his plan, the urge, the thoughts that keep showing up, the mental pictures, *will I act? Will I go through with it?*

Maybe that's what turned his dick into a rock.

*Awe....Lingering memories.*

He walks to the kitchen barefoot and shirtless. His sweat pricked white skin goose bumps in the cool trailer air. He flips the wall switch. The bulb above the table flickers. The light catches its balance and glows full. Ron plops into a chair and grabs a soft pack of Marlboro Red 100's off the circular oak table. He taps a cigarette out of the pack's open corner and bites down on the filter. Lighter sparks, he inhales, cig torches.

Still sweating, still shaken, cold as ice, but he doesn't care. He's lost in thoughts. *This isn't a dream. I can't wake up again. I'm awake.*

He puts a pot of coffee on.

Rosie walks out into the kitchen, trailer floor squeaking, her hand on Beth's back. Beth has her teddy wrapped around the neck and pinched to her side. A back pack carries their overnight stuff for Margie's.

"Say good night to your Daddy, Bethy"

"Goodnight Daddy, Will you come wiff us tonight?"

“Not tonight honey, Daddy’s work is closer to our place than Margie’s, plus I’m gonna stay up and see if I can’t fix the furnace,” he lies, “Sure don’t want you catchin’ a cold. I’ll see you tomorrow when I get home. You get your learnin’ at school and be-inhayve, ok?”

“OK”

She smiles and runs over to him, and wraps her little arms around his neck. “Daddy you’re fweezing.” He kisses her cheek, warm with fever. Grey cigarette smoke wreathes around her face.

She says, “Give teddy a kiss too”

“Well I sure will, muah muah muah.” He smiles.

“Haha Dadddy, you’re so silwy.”

He puts his hand on her head and messes with her hair. “I love ya Bethy boo.”

Rose looks into his eyes, “If you need anything tonight, no matter the hour, you call me.” She says it knowing that he won’t, but hoping and praying that he will, that he would if he needed too.

He wouldn’t wake her though. *Why interrupt my lover’s sleep just because I can’t?*

“I’ll walk you two angels out.”

He leads them to the trailer door and props it open with his arm. Beth walks out first and when Rose gets near she cups the back of his neck and reels his face towards hers. She kisses him with deep swirling tongue and thick wet lips. He looks into her eyes and whispers I love you. If Bethy wasn’t here he might try to take Rosie on the floor right here, see if he can do it again.

*One last time.*

She winks at him and mouths *I love you* without a sound. Ron grabs her curvaceous ass on her way down the steps. The trailer trembles as she walks down the stairs. It’s not that Rose is a huge woman. You ever walk around in a trailer on blocks before? They always vibrate and sway and shake and quake even with the slightest disturbance.

“I love you two.” He calls out.

“Love you too, Daddy.”

“Stay awake gently my love. Good luck with that furnace.” She winks.

He pretend laughs as her hips sway towards the vehicle. “Good bye.”

Rose turns to her hubby and looks at him with mystery on her face. She walks back to the door to meet him as Bethy climbs in the back seat of the car. “I felt something there, when you said Goodbye”....*Why no, see you soon can’t wait for you to get home from work tomorrow like usual, she thinks.*

He rubs the back of his neck. “Oh Rose, get on goin on now. I love yas both.”

He lets the bent, trailer screen-door swing to a metal slapping whap. Rusty hinges squeak on its way. The screen rattles, wavering softly into stillness.

Tears fill his eyes. He holds them in turning his eyes to a glistening sparkle.

The car doors shut. The start of the engine whispers through the walls. The crunch of gravel crackles as the car leaves the driveway. The engine whirrs louder with increased acceleration. The pavement and tires hum a song until blending with the black of the night. Rose and Beth are gone.

He sits down at the table and flips out another cig, sparks it, and stages it in the ash tray. He grabs a cup of coffee, sits down and pulls on the smoke, tipping his head back to exhale, following it up with a sigh of relief and a sip of Folgers.

*No more bloody dreams tonight. No more bloody dreams ever again.*

Out comes liquor. Down goes a few shots of cinnamon pain-ovacaine, 110 proof cinnamon schnapps. Mouth burnin’, throat searin’, heart warmin’, stomach heatin’, buzz feelin’ therapy.

Fire Water. Holy fire water. Ron’s savior.