

Reflected Dream by Andrea Pulita

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The scene was always the same. Darkness. That unreal darkness that reigns everywhere. There wasn't any trace of light, only blackness.

Michelle was afraid, she felt the beating of her heart ringing in her ears while she blinked her eyes in the vain attempt to see something.

She stepped forward looking for something, anything, that could guide her in that endless darkness, but she found nothing more than intense blackness.

She saw them constantly: two eyes, red eyes, that shined in the shadows, eyes that fixed her.

Michelle started to run; it didn't matter to her where she was going, she only knew she had to run or else she would die.

Every time she turned around, the eyes were always there, behind her, almost grasping her.

Pain. Acute pain in her shoulder! She had been caught, she felt a gelid, strong, steely grasp. A smooth, pale hand was holding her.

She attempted to scream, but no sound came out of her mouth, and everything was swallowed by that silence and that obscurity.

The dream used to end at this point, but not this time; it went on.

The girl felt a jerk from behind and, turning her head, she was able to distinguish the outline of a face around those frightening eyes.

"Now you're mine" a thick, black and tar-like voice echoed in the silence. Another pain. Now in her neck. "Michelle!"

Marianne, her mother, had just come into the room, attracted by the girl's scream.

Michelle was tucked in the corner of the room, her eyes were open wide to observe the emptiness.

"Oh my God, are you ok, Honey?"

"Nightmare" Michelle stuttered "The nightmare, again, the eyes...it's terrible" and while she said it, she instinctively began massaging her neck feverishly.

"What does it mean? Why do I continue to have this nightmare?"

Marianne looked down repenting "Your father died almost a month ago, Doctor Blanchard says it's normal for children to be shocked by these kinds of events," then suddenly asked "have you taken your pills?"

Michelle stood up quickly "of course! The pills! You keep telling me to fill up on drugs, don't you? You and that incompetent psychiatrist! I'm not crazy! I don't need to constantly be under the influence of narcotics! I'm not crazy!" and shutting the door, the girl ran down the stairs into the living room, leaving her mother alone.

The air in the crypt was cold and humid, smelled like rotten moss and who knows what else. But François had to work. During the night, because of the incessant rain, a part of the land in the old cemetery in Paris collapsed and some of the oldest crypts were at risk of caving-in. They had already been propped up, except for one. His colleagues had already left, but François wanted to stay to look over a new room, which nobody knew existed until after the landslide occurred.

"I'm spending my whole life cleaning basements and old, stinking cesspools for only 800 euros a month. I swear, as soon as I finish here, I'm resigning."

The boy spoke loudly while walking attentively, following the light of his torch. A sudden thud stopped him in his tracks.

"What the hell was that?"

He slowly walked back through the narrow hallway, turning left, he decided to take another route.

"I'm sure I heard something coming from over there" his voice rose again, much more this time despite its terrible trembling. "Come on, it was probably just a rock".

After changing direction for the umpteenth time, François reached the central room of the crypt.

It was a room carved into the rock and granite, very hard. The place was medium-sized and the only light came from two small spotlights in opposite corners of the room.

At the center, there was a large sarcophagus almost in the form of a trapezoid, probably also created from a larger piece of rock. There was a heavy cover made of the same earthly material, located a few meters away from where it should have been.

François started to feel his mouth go dry and his heart beat faster and faster, when his torch suddenly dropped from his hands.

"Is this a joke?" the workman screamed. "What kind of a joke is this? Where are you? Come on boys, come out from wherever you are, you got me. I fell for it."

A rush of cold air made him shiver, while the hair on his neck stood on end. Immediately, he felt someone grab the base of his neck and lift him from the ground.

"Please don't kill me, I want to live" he cried. Hot tears ran down the poor workman's face.

Nobody answered, he only felt extreme pain in his neck.

It was almost 4 a.m. when the telephone started ringing, waking up its owner from his sweet dreams.

He had been in Paris for two weeks and he hadn't had time to relax yet.

When he sleepily got up from his bed, just for a moment he really missed America.

He wore the wrinkled clothes of the night before, thrown jumbled onto the chair: a pair of brown trousers, a black shirt and a dark jacket. He put on his polished, black shoes.

He didn't enjoy wearing youthful attire, despite his recent twenty-sixth birthday. He slowly went to the kitchen downstairs and drank long gulps of a watered-down coffee left in a pitcher near the sink.