

There's Something Wrong With The TV
By Martim Nunes Pinto

My story began years ago. I was sixteen, carefree and lazy just like everyone else was at that age. My parents were divorced but my dad had won the custody so I lived with him. It was Saturday and I was sleeping in my comfortable when I suddenly woke up with my heart racing. Was it a nightmare? I couldn't remember. My curtains were closed but I could hear the sounds of a storm outside: the rain falling, the wind blowing and the occasional thunder.

I glanced at my phone to check the time: 6:30. I found that strange because I felt like I had slept a lot more so I turned the TV on to double check. It was one of those analog TVs that remain black for a few seconds before showing any image so when the screen finally lit I was caught completely off guard.

The TV was showing a low quality picture of a dead man sitting in a chair with a stuffed moose head replacing his own head, surrounded by a circle of blood. It took me a few seconds to realize that the man was sitting in our living room, with the stuffed moose head that we have over the fireplace and that that person was my... dad!? Then it was just static. I freaked out. I jumped off my bed, unplugged the TV and ran to my father's room.

"Dad!?" I shouted. I opened my door and there was my dad, comfortably sleeping ignoring the storm outside.

"Dad?" I said again, this time with less power.

"Son?...." he mumbled half a sleep "Did something happen?"

I wasn't sure what had happen. The horrible image that felt very real a few seconds ago but it was all foggy now, like a dream you don't remember very well.

"Nothing, it's just... I had a nightmare." Maybe it really was a nightmare. "Can I go sleep with you?"

He mumbled something close to a yes and I laid next to him feeling surprisingly sleepy again. When I woke up later the rain was gone and so was my dad I freaked for a bit then remembered that he had a golf tournament that morning. I laid back in his bed and tried to watch TV for a while but that sick image refused to leave my head. I eventually got hungry and walked down the stairs to the kitchen. As I was hopping down the stairs I started to smell a foul stench, a stench of rotten meat. Then I started to hear a dripping sound.

Instead of turning right to the kitchen when I reached the bottom I turned left and entered the living room where that reek seemed to come from. Then the fear returned. Sitting in the middle of the room was a dead man with a stuffed moose head where his normal head should be, surrounded by a circle of blood. His wrists were sliced and the way he was sitting looked like he was stretching. I vomited and passed out.

The cops appeared a few hours later, the neighbors were noticing the smell. When I woke up they told me that my dad had killed himself but I didn't believe them. Even if he did have a hidden motive to kill himself he would never have done it in such wicked way. I told them about my dream, but just shook their heads and commented on how strange this situation was. A few minutes later my mom came to pick me up; I was going to live with her.

I didn't sleep the first nights. That horrible image was carved in my brain every time I closed my eyes; I could still smell the stench, hear the blood drip of his hands and hit the ground. The nights I was able to sleep were filled with nightmares that I would forget the very next morning and sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night feeling empty and sad and I would cry until morning. I missed my dad. I also stayed away from televisions as much as I could, I was afraid that if I watched TV that disturbing image would appear to haunt me... but this time with me in it.

The lack of sleep started to affect me during day: I would sometimes see things that weren't there like floating lights and shadows. One time when walking back home I swear I heard the sound of footsteps of someone behind me but when I turned around there was no-one there. I kept walking and a few minutes later I heard footsteps again, this time closer but like before, when I turned around there was no-one there. I started to run and the footsteps started to get louder. I kept looking back hoping to see something, wanting to see something but there was nothing. And nothing sometimes can be scarier than anything.

I also stopped eating and became thin and fragile. All of that, combined with my asthma made me spend my 17th birthday after passing out during a PE class.

And just when things couldn't get worse, it happened again. It was all over the news: a woman found dead in her apartment, sitting in a chair while wearing a horse head, surrounded by a circle of blood. The police quickly connected this death with my dad's and brought me up for interrogation. This time they were very interested in my dream and I told everything I remembered. Eventually, the investigation led nowhere and there weren't any more strange occurrences until my last year of college.

It was the final week and I was in law school. I was much healthier than in high school: sometimes I would sleep peacefully and I had started to eat more; I had to if I wanted to keep up with all the lectures. I wasn't living on campus, but with a friend who lived nearby. He was out, buying dinner and I was sitting at the dinner table. He had been watching TV and forgot to turn it off when he left so I had that as a background noise. I still didn't watch TV but I didn't mind when he did and the background noise helped me concentrate. I was taking notes of a manual when I realized that I couldn't hear the TV. I figured it must have turned off by itself to save power since it had happened before and paid no attention to it.

A few minutes later I was still studying when I saw a white light coming from the TV. I thought that was odd and got up to check it out. When I looked at it I saw static and reached my arm to turn it off and on. When I was about to press the switch I saw it again: there was another dead body sitting on a chair, surrounded by a circle of blood. There was no animal mask this time and I could clearly see who the victim's face, in this case my face. The picture disappeared and it was just static now.

I started to panic, and quickly I realized I was having an asthma attack. I grabbed my inhaler and started to calm down. I had to get away from that house before whatever was coming after me arrived. I dashed to my room, grabbed my bag and flipped upside down to empty it. All my books were now in the ground and inside the bag were my wallet, my keys, my inhaler, some clothes, and a few chocolate bars. I had my phone in my left pocket and in the right one a Swiss army knife my dad once gave me for my birthday. I left a note a note to my friend and rushed to the door but stopped when I looked at it.

Someone in the other side was turning the door knob. I froze for a moment.

"Max? Is that you?" I asked

But there was no response. I stood there in silence while the person kept turning the door knob like they didn't realize that the door was locked and that if they kept doing the door would eventually open. Gathering all my courage, I stepped forward and looked through the peephole... but there was no-one there. I tried to focus and see if there was someone in the distance and then, out of nowhere, a black eye filled the whole peep hole looking back at me. Shit, he saw me! The man started to ram at the door and tried to knock it off it's hinges. I backed out and ran to the back door that led to the garden.

I step into the garden and looked around for an exit. He apparently gave up with the door because I heard a window breaking. Without thinking I jumped the fence and ran to some woods behind my house. I ran without stopping for a while but fearing another asthma attack I stopped

and leant against a tree. I looked around and saw no sign of him so I sat down to catch my breath. I closed my eyes and tried to trace a plan. I was thinking where to go next when I heard footsteps behind me.

I held my breath and tried to understand where he was. I realized he was walking about 5 meters behind me but he didn't know I was sitting behind a tree. He was murmuring something and sometimes he would growl and cough. I did not peek but I didn't need to do it to realize that I wasn't dealing with a human. I waited in silence until I could no longer hear him and got up slowly. I walked a few steps and step on a branch. I heard the thing hollow in the distance and running to me. Shit, how could he have heard it from so far away?

I started to run again, this time towards the edge of the forest. At the end there was a highway where cars were driving so fast that if they hit me I would be instantly dead. There was no time to think about that, I could hear the thing closing in very fast and had no choice but to jump to the middle off the road. I somehow managed to evade all the cars and reach the other side of the highway. I looked back and I saw the thing in the distance. I did not have my glasses on so I couldn't see it very well but I clearly saw that it was walking on two legs. I wanted to get out of there and keep moving but I was mesmerized by that creature, I wanted to see what it looked like. It had step on the highway and was getting closer when suddenly, out of nowhere, a semi-truck hit it sending it flying. That took me out of my trance and without looking back I got out of there.

I did not return to my home immediately. I hid in my college's library for a while, waiting to see if the thing would return and if it did I would be surrounded by other people and that made feel safer. The thing never came but it wasn't splatted in the highway like I hoped it would be. Maybe it died from the injuries of the crash or maybe it gave up on me to go find another prey. Whatever happened, that night I slept better than ever.

Years have passed since that thing last appeared to haunt me and many things have changed. I'm well paid lawyer now and I have a daughter that I love. I once lived in fear but now everything has changed and.... Wait a minute, my daughter just called me. What is it sweetie? I'll be right back, there's something wrong with the TV.

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