

FICTION

WHITER THAN THE DEVIL

Written by
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The voices in my head tell me that I'm a bad person. They tell me I've done bad things. Bad things to good people. They say I'm stupid and crazy. That I'm not good enough to be outside with the rest of the world. Well... they may be right. I don't know what I'm doing and I don't know what I'm saying. But I'm bad. I know that. They told me. The voices. They told me I'm bad, so I know I'm bad. I need to get them out. Just make them go away. The voices. They drive me insane. Always talking, talking, talking. They make me SCREAM!

I've been in this cage for too long. This cage of steel and concrete and wood and rust. It's all rust. It's been rusting for years now, just like me. I've been rusting for years too. The voices have made me rust. They've made me doubt myself. I think that I'm crazy. But it's just the voices. But I'm the voices. Am I the voices? Are the voices me? Do they control me, or do I control them? No, I don't control them. They control them. The bad men. The ones who wear white. White is the devil's colour. They're worse than the devil. At least the devil wouldn't lock me in here and beat me over and over and over again. That's what they do. They've locked me in my own mind. And now I'll never escape.

'Escape. I'll never escape. How can I escape my own mind? I know! I know! No you don't. Yes I do. I'll eat myself from the inside then there won't be any of me left. That's stupid. No it's not. Yes it is. You're right. My mind is eating me up already. Bye, liver. Bye, spine. Bye, lungs. Bye, heart. Bye, mind. They say I'm dangerous. The white-clothed men. That's why I'm in here. Who am I dangerous to? Myself? You? Them? Well, maybe. But maybe not.

'I know they watch me. They watch me constantly. On their screens in their safety rooms. What do I have in my room? A disgusting old mattress. A toilet that hasn't been cleaned for years. A camera. Look at me, camera. I'm talking to you. To the bad people who watch me – listen here. I will spit on your graves and watch you burn in hell. I will beat you and lock you up as you've done to me. I will cut you up and eat you, bit by bit. You hear me? I'll do it. I'LL DO IT. I'LL DO IT. I'LL DO IT!

'They're outside my door. The white men. I can hear them. Talking about me. I'll do it this time. I will. I'll fight back. I've sharpened my nails. Look. I'll scratch their eyes out. I'll do it. Shhh, they're coming.

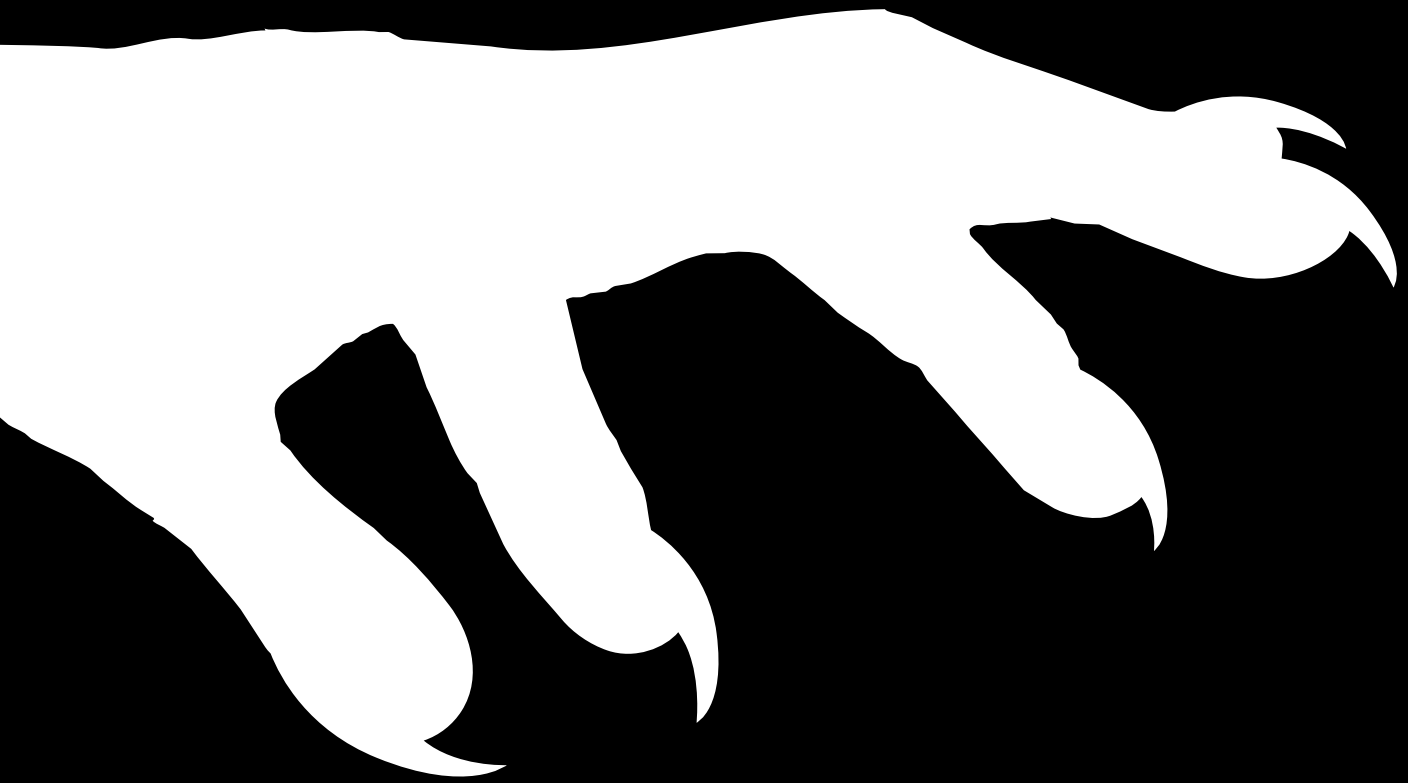
'GO TO HELL! NO NO NO. DON'T TAKE ME AWAY. DON'T TAKE ME. I HATE YOU. JUST KILL ME—'

With that, the screen blackened. Their eyes were frozen to the bulky screen, which had darkened completely in an instant.

'Woah,' said Tommy with astonishment.

Aly didn't reply. She couldn't. Her mouth was taped shut; physically, she couldn't utter a sound. After a pregnant pause, Tommy turned his flashlight towards Aly to make sure she was still there. Apart from her pupils quickly constricting in an effort to protect her eyes from the blinding light, her whole body was frozen.

'Alyyyyy, hellooooo,' Tommy whispered while shaking Aly's arm from side to side. As if a trance had suddenly been broken – or akin to how the young girl was awoken from her sleep at the touch of her lover's lips on hers – Aly, in a much less elegant way, jerked out of her own enchantment.



'Yeah, creepy,' she murmured.

Walking down the half-broken steps leading to the deserted front yard, Aly looked down at the tape in her hand, fondling it. The moonlight allowed her to see its scars, and she wondered how, after all these years, it still played.

'Als, look,' the voice from behind her breathed. She turned around and was immediately attracted to the light coming from Tommy's phone. As she peered in, he began reciting, 'The Concetta Ramos Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Oregon shut down in 1953, after rumours of severe patient abuse led to the suicide of owner James Acosta'

He took a slight pause for dramatic effect and looked up at the moulding walls, which were full of profane graffiti. He moved closer to examine the façade and noticed what looked like the leftovers of a sign barely hanging on, connecting the remaining letters with those that were stolen by the winds and shifty kids with ladders, to complete the name of the institution that he was currently reading about on Wikipedia.

'The institution was said to lock patients up in enclosed rooms, and nurses known as the "white men" due to their all-white clothing would, according to Acosta's suicide letter, attempt to "beat the devil out of their sick minds". Some patients were also put through severe psychosurgery, which left many of them unable to perform basic bodily functions, sources claim. After Acosta's sudden death, the nurses and other workers moved away, and the residents of the institution were left locked in their rooms. Due to bad publicity, no one cared to take over the hospital, and the patients all died as a result of severe malnourishment and dehydration.'

The two youths looked at each other in disbelief. They didn't seem to care about the building which, as a midnight adventure, they had been sneaking into. But now, having seen that tape and reading about the horrid lives and deaths of those poor people, the shivers that crawled up their spines seemed endless.

'Today, the hospital has become an attraction site for all those interested in ghost stories,' the webpage continued, 'as countless fan pages, blogs, and magazine articles have dedicated posts to the phantasmagorical sights and sounds which have been seen and heard by hundreds of prowling onlookers. Some say that the patients' screams for liberation are still heard to this very day, whilst others have seen men, women, and children roaming around the hospital grounds, almost invisible-like. "Could these anecdotes be true, or are they resultant of our fantasy-filled contemporary society, which craves to fill our necessity for the imaginary?" critic Stephen Baldwin questions.'

Tommy locked the screen and put his phone in his pocket. They both stood there, flabbergasted, at a complete loss for words.

'That's horrible,' Aly whispered, 'that poor woman. Those poor people. How could they have just left them all there to die? What is wrong with people?' Silence reigned between the two once again until Tommy broke it a few minutes later, asking Aly for the name of the woman they had seen on the tape. She looked down at it once again and turned it over to reveal a strip of white tape on its side with large, cursive writing. 'Madelaine Rose,' she told him.

'Yes?' it hissed. **T**