

Can't sleep By Zumie

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Runie shivered in her bed, it seemed to be getting a bit cooler inside as the temperature dropped outside. The winds were now howling outside the windows of her room. She didn't like the idea of sleeping by herself on such a stormy night, but she had to get over her fear eventually.

"There's nothing to fear outside! Nothing at all..." she said as she pulled the blanket over her head. The windows were closed and curtains were drawn, a little lamp in the corner that usually gave off a cozy yellow light made all the shadows in the room twisted and big.

"This is stupid..!" she insisted to herself. She still didn't allow herself to come out from the safety of her blankets. The sounds of the wind picking up speed were too loud for her to ignore now. She moved her head up slowly and looked around the room ... all was normal.

At first she wasn't sure where she had picked up this absurd fright of thunderstorms, but then she remembered that when she was young, her father used to make her stay out during them. She'd sleep beside one of the barn yard animals for comfort, normally a cow or something. They didn't seem to mind too much either, in fact they actually almost seemed to enjoy her company. The storms from her old life were violent, always hail, always extreme winds, and bad dreams when she was alone.

She shook her head once again, "No, no! This is different, snap out of it Runie! You're 35 years old!" she said to herself. She got up out of bed, moving the blankets away from her. She padded across the carpeted floor bare feet and looked at the lamp. She wanted to make sure it was alright for the night, safe to leave alone. The windows creaked, and the outside shutters rocked. The sounds of light scratches could be heard from behind, like something was trying to get in. That always happened here though; there were beasts outside during the storms. They'd come out to look for something to eat. Maybe. No one was actually totally certain why they appeared or where they came from.

Though the complex was more than secure enough to forbid them passage inside, still the idea flew in her mind that one of those things could get in. Even though she knew there was nothing to really worry about. What would it look like? Would it be really scary? She didn't dare look out at the storm for the fear of it Elise told her it was a bad idea. That if they saw living beings they could go into a frenzy. However, the creatures outside didn't scare her as much as the storm itself did.

Runie sighed and stared at the lamp with its yellow shade, its brass like body that looked oddly plant like, and the object in general seemed to be like it was supposed to be a tulip.

“No, no...” she shook her head and walked around “I can’t. No!” She stopped in her room and wondered if there was something, anything to help her feel more comfortable. There were books and something that looked like a TV set, but it never worked well in storms. The room itself was a fairly decent too, depending on how you looked at it. The bed was a double, with a red satin skirt and matching canopy above. The blankets were different colors but the sheets themselves were white. The carpet was a slightly darker maroon shade than the ones that accented the bed but still close to be considered the same. Green trim was circled around the room.

The framing along the wall and the floor was some kind of dark wood and the walls were a beige color, save the one on the end with the tulip lamp which was another dark shade of red. Near the front of her bed was a desk with different books and papers scattered about. The TV was in the corner facing the side of the bed and its left side, beside the desk, there was a dresser. The room was odd because it had two closets for some reason, though one had a hard time guessing why.

Runie stopped and sighed “I have to relax...” she said, as she finished her survey of her room. “I wonder if I will ever get to sleep...”

Runie tried to think, wondering what time it was, finally looking up at a clock above her desk --1:25am. She sighed, not very many people stayed up late here since there wasn’t exactly anything to do this late at night. She was up, but she was normally fooling around with her boyfriend so that was out of the question. Elise would be asleep and so was her daughter. Rosalie might be up..

Runie didn’t like it but she thought she might have to admit defeat. She wondered if she could also bug Daniel to perhaps sleep in his room. He probably wouldn’t mind, but his pet might. Chickie was a six foot tall chicken. He looked a bit like an ostrich and seemed to be a bit temperamental than a bird had any right to be. Runie wondered if there would be a good chance Chickie might decide her sweet eyes looked yummy or not but she shook her head. “It would squawk like crazy at a time like this...” she muttered and rubbed the area between her eyes. Maybe she really had painted herself into a corner.

There was also Alex who was pretty new and didn’t like storms either. Alex was 13 though, and even though Runie didn’t have anything against him; she knew that having him sleep with a woman who looked 18 might cause his head to explode.(or maybe something else to explode, either way in more ways than one it could be messy). Sure he had slept with Rosalie before but he was 8 at the time, not on the cusp of puberty.

It suddenly hit her, Ursula! Ursula was the night owl around here; she'd still be awake, right? Maybe she could bunk with her? The only thing was-that Ursula was on the second floor.

Although on the same side of the building, she was a bit close to what people called a "dark quarter" the area that didn't have as much light due to the fact that there was hardly anyone else living near Ursula's room. A shudder passed through Runie. What if one of those things was hiding there in the shadows waiting to pounce on her? What if one of those things could come out from behind and drag her away into the darkness outside, into the storm never to be seen again? Who knew where those creatures were from or what kind of magic they possessed?

Runie shook her head again; ideas going in and out were cluttering her mind. If she wasn't careful she'd shake her head right off at this rate. Of course there's none, but what if Ursula was asleep? It's not like she had a reason to keep awake.

Runie frowned a moment later as the room was suddenly lit by a bright flash of lightning and a massive crack of thunder shook the walls, it sounded more like a dynamite explosion than a crack of thunder however.

"Screw this!" she said and ran out the door which immediately closed behind her. She hurried and saw the two heavy, carved wooden doors and ran through them to the staircase. The staircase was open with a large sense of lobby beyond.

The shutters all across the windows at this time and the bright lightning which allowed her to easily to run up the semi-spiraled set of stairs to the next floor. She finally climbed up and closed the door at the top as she gasped for breath. She didn't really check the lobby. She wasn't going to wait and nose around; she had to get to Ursula's room before another crack of thunder could scare her.

She ran down the dim hallway cutting to the right. The hallway was a straight one and she ran, feet thudding along the carpet. Almost tripping once as she ran. The doorways in the complex were, well, complex, but you could easily get used to them since every hall had unique signs and indicators like different pieces of art and what not. Either way, there was Ursula's door, a pale blue light glowing above it as it sat on the edge of a dark quarter. Runie ran and suddenly got frightened, what was that?

A shadow? Something was lurking in the dark quarter; something large and unseen was stalking its prey waiting for the right chance. It had gotten Ursula and now she was next! She could see the shape of its shadow, clear cut as the strange beast looked like some kind of malformed cat, its muscles bulging under its fuzzy black fur. Runie didn't-, no, couldn't let it end like this, and with that she rushed towards the door opening and closing it, not bothering to knock.

Ursula jumped as she ran in; she was there at her desk in her underwear. She had a strange set of goggles on her head; it looked like she was soldering something together. "What?" she asked putting her soldering iron onto its stand "What's wrong? You look like you've seen a ghost..."

"I-" Runie's voice squeaked a bit so she cleared her throat, "I don't know what I saw. I just came out here to see you b-because of the storm you know... And uh, I-I think one of the things from outside got in here.. I-I saw it in the hallway outside your door-"

"What?" She asked her face deadpan. She looked around quickly and pulled something out of the drawer of her desk, a light blue glow coming from the top of it. She got up and ran over, lightly brushing Runie aside as she opened the door, shining the power light to the end of the dark quarter of the hall. "It came from the dark quarter I assume, right?"

"Yeah, I-I think so.. it was there.. It looked kinda like a panther..."

Ursula sighed and looked at Runie shaking her head as she held up the device. "Come here for a moment."

Hesitantly, Runie came forward out into the hall, her head popping out from behind the door as she looked down the dark quarter. That thing was still there, unmoving yet looking as if it was about to pounce. Ursula pointed to the end of the hall.

"Is that what you saw?" she asked, motioning to the figure.

"Y-yeah," Runie said, not sure what to expect. Ursula stared and shone the light on the figure, and the light transformed the image instantly. The shadows and structure of the muscular beast transformed into a twisted vestige in the light. The face also changed and was obliterated, the strange cat turning into, a furnace?

It was a furnace, an antique furnace that was the true form of this strange beast. Runie stared for a moment and then started to laugh herself silly. Almost falling backwards as she slid against the door frame. Ursula shook her head at her, "Quiet, dummy," she said to Runie, helping her up, "You'll wake up everyone!"

"S-sorry," Runie said trying to calm herself as they went back into Ursula's room, "It's just so stupid, I thought it was some kind of weird demon cat!"

"Well, now you know better," she said, turning off the light and tossing it onto her bed. "I would've thought it was light enough since I added that little neon tube, but I guess not."

"Yeah, that bulb kind of doesn't help the atmosphere." she said, nodding to herself as she finally got herself under control. "Uh, anyway, so where was I... Oh yeah. Can I sleep with you tonight?"

“W-what?!” Ursula stammered as she stared in shock, “I don’t like women, if-“

“No! Not for that, stupid!” Runie said waving her arms, still giggling. “I mean, uh, because of the storm.” She said as she looked around Ursula’s room. Everywhere there was posters and equipment, wires, how could anyone be comfortable in a place like this? It looked like a junk heap. Ursula certainly didn’t have a thing for being tidy.

“Well, I’d uh... I’d like to help you... sorta....” Ursula said uncomfortably as she looked down noticing she was still in her underwear. “But I don’t really have any room, on my bed.. in case you didn’t notice..” she motioned with a hand to her double bed that sat up against the wall.

One side seemed to be unmade but for a clear white sheet with a green flannel blanket. The other side unfortunately was covered with junk of all kinds. Some kind of motor parts, tools, various books on different subjects, some notes, what appeared to be some kind of desktop computer. It looked like it anyway, there were a number of dials along its side. Snack wrappers, more books and pieces of clothing. It was true, anyone who wanted to sleep or spend the night with Ursula would take a back seat to her surplus of electrical equipment.

“Whoa, that is a lot of junk. Don’t you have storage for it?” Runie asked, looking to see if any of it could be moved easily.

“I do, but I bring some back and forth so much it’s impossible to keep track of. Not only that some are too heavy.. I should get another room closer to it, but I don’t like walking around in these storms either. I seen one of those things out there you know. I ain’t taking the chance of seeing another one.” Ursula said before shaking her head. “But nobody is in here for the night anyway, so there’s no real reason to worry about it.”

Runie looked at her and shook her head, “How can you live like this?”

“I live just fine... Ursula said, as she sat down on her chair spinning about again to face her work. “Besides, if something does come in, I can throw a heavy piece of metal at it. That should do something.”

Runie stared for a moment, her blue eyes looking like they were trying to recall something on their own. Her forehead slightly creased in thought before looking down again.

“Hey!” she said, suddenly remembering, “You said you seen one of those monsters outside during the storm? What did it look like?” she asked, scooting over on a small stool towards Ursula’s work desk.

Ursula slowly turned towards Runie, the yellow glow of the light giving her this kind of creepy expression that suddenly made Runie feel uncomfortable. That look that said ‘Oh, you

really wanna know?' But the look quickly vanished, just like the shadow of the demon cat did in the hallway.

"Hm.. well.." she began as she started to work on the circuit board again. "It was a lot bigger than I thought it would be, I'd say, it was about 6 feet tall, maybe taller. But it was in the air you see... it was kind of this grey color, and it had wings, big wings."

"Big wings? Was it like... a bird?"

"More like a dinosaur, you know... did they have those in your universe? It was like a pterodactyl- no, that's not right. It's like it wanted to look like that, but its wings were ragged and its mouth was just sort of like a mask. It was all red and bloody on the inside, as to what it came out... like... its guts from inside were alive or something.. It's hard to explain..."

Runie shivered, she didn't much like the description. And although she didn't know whether or not dinosaurs lived on her planet she had heard and seen them since she had started living here. "W-what happened?"

"I went out one evening to get a snack and go to the bathroom. When I came back I saw one of the shutters had failed and it was sitting there in the window. It saw me instantly, like it was looking for something inside. I thought it was a dinosaur, but then it started to smash its head against the window and it opened its mouth. I thought it had killed itself but this weird stringy, bloody pink mass came out, It was like a worm or something

"The claws were scratching against the window and the whole thing's body started to melt and change. I didn't know into what but all I could do was screaming." She kept soldering as she took another piece of what looked to be a transistor, it was so small it could have been mistaken for a piece of rice. "I don't know how long I screamed, but I remember Elise coming along eventually and she shook me and slapped me so hard I think she busted my lip. She was like 'What the hell's the matter?! What is it?!' and I said 'I saw one of them! I saw one of them!' and pointed to the window up there. Nothing was there though now, but something had been... the skin of it's body, the pterodactyl, it was still there... like it molted away..."

"D-d-d-did-" Runie began, "Did they e-ever find it?"

"Huh? Of course not... but it probably flew away.. I know I was still looking at the window, but I don't remember anything after it started to change... only that Elise was there the next minute smacking me across the face. She felt real bad about it..."

Runie looked a bit disturbed... it changed? Into what? Why was it a dinosaur?? Was it something like a parasite? "You never tired to find out what those things outside from the storms were?"

"I ain't going out there!" Ursula shook her head; nobody wanted to risk doing it, not even Elise. "She's seen them too, and yeah... ask her tomorrow she'll tell you more about it.."

Runie shook more and more "UM! Uh! H-how about, you come to my room? I mean, for the night!" Runie fidgeted nervously, "You know, in case uh..."

Ursula sighed and placed the soldering iron on its stand, "Fine... but on one condition."

Runie slept comfortably next to Ursula in the bed, it was almost 2:30am now, and she was starting to wish she had gone to sleep at the same time as Runie. The storm on this side was louder, nowonder why she had such a hard time getting to sleep. Her room was cozy though and a bit bigger... less junk and Runie had two closets! TWO! Holy crap!

"Well I guess I could talk to Elise tomorrow about it.." Ursula said as she kept soldering in bed beside Runie. A little piece of metal fell and dripped onto a strand of Runie's hair, molding it to the blanket.

"Uh oh... uh... that'll just be between me and the pterodactyls outside I guess..." Ursula said, thinking it'd be kind of funny to see Runie wonder how her hair could be burnt to the blanket. She didn't think Runie was that stupid though for it to go unnoticed for long though.

Suddenly a screech came from outside, a strange loud harking that was similar to a bird, or maybe the wind. The shutter on the outside window shook in unison with the strange piercing sound.

Ursula's pupils shrank and she put her soldering iron and circuit board away in a safe place, "Aah fuck this shit!" she said, turning off the light before cuddling up to Runie in the darkness as she tried to go to sleep for the night.