

Death of a Family

Written by

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Darkness. A boy's whisper breaks the silence. A small pale light pierces through. It grows and grows before consuming everything. All is white.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDINGS - EVENING

UNKNOWN POV:

A deep breath. A haunting groan. The being's vision clears up. It surveys its surroundings.

Wind howling. Trees swaying. Crickets chirping.

The being extends its shadowy arm. The light from the setting sun touches its hand. Small ashes rain down. The being moans harshly before bringing its arm back.

The being gazes upon a few apartment buildings. It notices a teenage girl parking her car and entering the complex. The being gives a low chuckle before its vision becomes black.

EXT. OBIOMA APARTMENT - EVENING

FAITH (17, African American) walks with her backpack on her back. She reaches her apartment door and Faith pauses. She sighs heavily before she brings out her keys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faith shuts the door behind her.

DING! DING!

Faith grabs her phone from her pocket. She taps the screen rapidly.

FAITH
(under her breath)
Please be it! Please be it!

Faith's phone screen turns on. She reads the screen, and her eyes go wide. Faith lets out a small chuckle.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(quietly screaming)
Yes! Yes! YES! YES!

LAILA (O.S.)
FAITH?! YOU'RE HERE?! YOU'RE HERE?!

FAITH
(whispering)
Oh no...

LAILA (8, African American) runs out of her room. She rushes to Faith and embraces her with a big hug. Faith accidentally drops her phone.

FAITH (CONT'D)
Laila. We talked about this.

LAILA
You promised though! For today!

FAITH
I said someone would take you.
What? Mama couldn't? Dad?

Faith pushes Laila off of her and picks up her phone. Laila looks down and picks at her fingers.

LAILA
Aaron said that Mama's at work
again. And Dad...ummm...

Faith frowns at Laila's downcast gaze. She kneels down and digs through her backpack. Laila tilts her head.

FAITH
Was waitin' til' we all got here,
but might as well. Happy Birthday.

Faith brings out a pretty scrapbook. She presents it to Laila. Laila gasps with joy. She snatches the gift and jumps up and down.

LAILA
I LOVE IT! I LOVE IT! THANK YOU!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

FAITH
Okay! Okay! Chill out, Laila.
(sighing heavily)
Get dressed. I'll take you.

Laila rushes back to their room. Faith slowly follows her.

INT. FAITH AND LAILA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faith enters the room. She watches Laila shares a small grin.

Laila rushes over to her dresser and picks up a bunch of family photos. One of them slips out of Laila's hand.

Faith picks it up and stares at the photo of their family making silly faces.

FAITH

Hey. Where's Aaron, anyway? Laila?

Faith looks up to see Laila in her closet, digging through her large piles of clothes.

FAITH (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Guess I'll go find him.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The being's black eyes and sharp white pupils emerges from the shadows. It clings to the darkness and looks around.

THE BEING'S POV:

Faith enters the dimly-lit hallway. She rolls her eyes.

FAITH

He mess with the thermostat again?

Come on, Aaron.

Faith shivers at the incoming cold air. She rubs her arms and proceed forward into the hallway.

The being gives an unearthly whisper. Faith stops and backs away a bit. She looks around.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Aaron? Is that you? Laila...

Faith blinks her eyes rapidly. She unknowingly walk towards the growing darkness. Her eyes slowly turning black with white pupils. Faith moves closer. Closer. Closer.

The being's whisper turns into a haunting chuckle. Suddenly...

BANG!

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

AARON (14, African American) opens his door. He jumps at the sight of Faith in her trance. He claps right in front of her.

AARON

Yo! Faith! What are you doing?!

Faith shakes her head. Her eyes revert back to know. She glance around. Silence. A dimly lit hallway. The only bright light comes from her and Laila's room.

AARON (CONT'D)
Hello?! Earth to Faith! You can hear me?!

FAITH
I...Don't snap those nasty fingers in my face!

INT. AARON'S ROOM

Aaron turns around and look at his fingers. They're covered in ashes. The tips are black. Aaron rubs them vigorously.

FAITH
Matter of fact, better tend to that ashy face, too, Zeke?

AARON
Don't call me that!
(grunting)
What do you want?

Faith peeps her head into the room.

FAITH
'Bout to take Laila shopping since no one's here. Was wondering...

Faith sniffs and pinches her nose. She gazes at Aaron's room. Her eyebrows burrow.

The room is dimly lit by yellow candles. Crystals and tarot cards lay scattered all over the room. Dream catchers hang from the ceiling.

FAITH (CONT'D)
Aaron! Why do you still have this?! Dad told you to get rid of all this stuff a while ago! Where is he anyway?

Aaron waves his arm in the air.

AARON
Where do you think he's at? Church for the bible study, or choir practice, or...whatever they do.

FAITH

Well, can you please get rid of all of this stuff?! What if Dad finds this stuff?! Or Mama?!

AARON

So what?! Mama's at Keili Hospital all the time. And Dad's too busy 'healing' himself.

(scoffing)

Like he's being honest with himself.

FAITH

It's called grieving. Come on. You know how Grandpa's death affected him. The least you can do is not add onto it.

Aaron gently rubs a bruise mark on his upper left arm. He covers it and stares at his room. His jaw tenses.

AARON

The least I can do is just stay out of his way. Like what you're planning to do, huh?

FAITH

Aaron. I-

LAILA (O.S.)

(singing)

FAITH! I'M READY! HURRY UP!

Faith looks at the hallway and back to Aaron in his room. Aaron turns to Faith. He flicks his wrist.

AARON

BYE!

FAITH

(sighing)

Fine. Whatever. You do you then, I guess.

Faith leaves. Aaron closes and locks the door. He sits on the floor and gives a sigh of relief.

AARON

(to himself)

Thank God.

Aaron looks at his hands again. He stands up and walks to his bed.

Aaron picks the UMBRA-NULL, a black leathery book with worn out pages, from the mattress. White demonic sigils runs all over the cover. A gray crystal lays at the center.

Aaron throughs the book across the room. All of the candles immediately go out. Only darkness remains. Aaron sits down and rocks back and forth. Aaron clamps his hands to his head.

AARON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I'm good. I'm good. Its. Not. Here!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faith brings her keeps out. Laila walks through the door with her scrapbook in hand. Faith closes the door behind them.

AARON (O.S.)
(whispering)
*It ain't gonna happen! It ain't
gonna happen! It ain't gonna
happen! It ain't gonna happen!*

INT. CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Faith turns her attention on the busy road. She steers the wheel with one hand. Faith takes every now and then to take in the beautiful starry night.

Laila sits in the back next to a stack of family photos. She has her opened scrapbook between her legs. She blasts it with loads of glue and glitter.

LAILA
I wanna listen to some music. Play
the melon song, Faith.

FAITH
No! I told you. We ain't listening
to that song again. We'll be home
soon, anyway. Just wait.

LAILA
But I'm scrapbooking! It helps me!

Laila looks down. She pick up Faith's phone from the floor.

LAILA (CONT'D)
Nevermind. I got it.

FAITH
What?

Faith feels her pockets. Empty. Faith turns back to see Laila messing with her phone. Faith turns back to the road. She extends her hand to Laila.

FAITH (CONT'D)
Hand it over, Laila! Now!

LAILA
What's uni...unice...v...

FAITH
Give! It!

Faith snatches the phone out of Laila's hand. She glances at her screen, and the phone unlocks itself. It shows all of her notifications. She reads the top title.

IT READS: Temah State University Acceptance Letter.

Faith turns off the screen. She puts it into her pocket. Faith notices the glitter on her hand before spotting it all over the floor.

FAITH (CONT'D)
What?! *GOD!* You're making a mess!

LAILA
I'm hurrying up. I need my
scrapbook ready for Mama comes
back.

Faith pauses. She turns her attention back to the road.

FAITH
...she'll like it, Laila.

LAILA
And me and Mama will stay up all
night! Maybe Aaron too!
(gasping)
You think Dad will stay up too?!

FAITH
Maybe...

Laila grabs one of her photos and slips it into her scrapbook.

LAILA
We'll sing my favorite song! And
eat strawberry shortcake too! And
play games! And, and, and, and you
can stay up with us too! Right?!

The car goes silent. Faith clenches the steering wheel tighter. Laila picks at her fingers again.

LAILA (CONT'D)
(light chuckling)
Faith? Faith! FAITH!

FAITH
(talking over)
I heard you! I heard you. No. No. I
got...school stuff to do.

LAILA
WHAT?! You *always* say that!
Everyone *always* say that!

Laila huffs. She crosses her arms and makes a pouty face.

LAILA (CONT'D)
My birthday, my rules! I want all
of us together! YOU CAN'T SAY NO!

FAITH
WELL, MAYBE I'M NOT GONNA! MAYBE, I
HAVE GOT BETTER STUFF TO DO THAN
SPEND TIME WITH *THIS* FAMILY! YA
EVER THOUGHT OF THAT?! HUH?!

Faith pants heavily. She turns to see Laila crying.

FAITH (CONT'D)
Look, Laila. I didn't mean to yell.
C'mon.

Faith reaches out for Laila. Laila shrugs it off. Laila squirms and knocks over her scrapbook and photos. She accidentally unbuckles her seatbelt. Faith moans.

FAITH (CONT'D)
Laila, spot it. I'll be there,
okay?! Laila. *Laila!* UGH!

Laila cries harder. Faith faces forwards. That's when...

...Faith sees the being: NULLUTH. Its shadowy figure emerges from the windshield. It gives a distorted roar. Nulluth extends its sharp fingers to Faith's forehead.

FAITH (CONT'D)
AHHH!

Faith shuts her eyes.

OVER BLACK:

CRASH!

Silence...

Faith slowly opens her eyes. She groans. The airbag slowly deflates. Faith's vision clears up.

Faith squints at the empty windshield. Blood drips from Faith's mouth. Bruises and large cuts cover her body.

CRACK! CRACK!

Faith struggles to move her neck. She surveys the damaged car.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(mumbling)
Laila. *Laila!* You good...

Faith finds nothing but the torn apart scrapbook and photos. Flashing red and blue lights come into the windows' view.

Faith look forward to see...

...Laila outside of the car and unconscious on the ground. Laila is in a middle of a growing puddle of blood. Her body is spread out and riddled with cuts and opened wounds.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(panting)
AHHHHHHHHHH-

CUT TO:

INT. KEILI HOSPITAL - MR. GUTIERREZ'S ROOM - NIGHT

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

A flatline appears on a monitor. CHRISTIAN (80, Mexican) lies still on his medical bed. Eyes and mouth wide open.

He is surrounded by his crying family. The children hug their parents tightly. The aunts and uncles turn away from the pale body and hide their tears.

Faith's mother, ZURI (48, African) enters the room. She frowns. Zuri walks up to the family.

ZURI
(to herself)
Christian...
(to the family)
I am sorry for your loss.