
Gallery of Nightmares

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Lost

Dark Fantasy Stories by
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A Wish Fulfilled

I tried screaming, but no sound came out. How long had I been here? Hours? Days? Years? No way to tell, but there was a good chance that, eventually, I'd go mad and secretly pray that I hadn't already done so.

The darkness that surrounded me made me feel like I was floating in an ocean of black water, except I couldn't feel the water. As I moved my hands down to feel my body, there was no sensation of movement or even touch. Only a coldness permeated my soul.

With a bright flash, the darkness became lighter. Shades of gray replaced the inky darkness, and muffled sounds lingered in the distance. They were faint but present. Actual light and sound! Soft blankets curled beneath my hands! I could feel my body again!

I slowly opened my eyes—I could feel them opening!—and looked around. The room was blurry and dark, but it wasn't like the darkness where I had been floating. In the corner of the room, a dark-skinned female glared at me with her arms crossed. Her skin was slightly dark green with patches of blackness and broken wings. Tattered skin hung from the stubs of her wings and disappeared into the darkness. Scars covered her face and body, and she was *not* happy to see me. Yet, as I focused more on her face, she disappeared.

I wonder who she was.

"You're awake! You're awake!" the healer cried as she entered the room. "Don't worry. The confusion is to be expected. You've been in a Death State for five months! We were hoping, but never thought you would wake this soon!"

She called into the next room near my bed, and two other healers rushed in.

I tried to look around, but my body didn't respond. "Where... am..... I?" I croaked out.

"Shh... Don't talk. You're at the Medini Infirmary in Edlowe. You were brought here after your fall. Just rest now, and we'll get you in better shape."

I looked into the healers' faces and saw their teeth rot and fall out. *No! Not again!* Their hair became brittle and straggly, and large clumps dropped onto the floor. The longer I looked, the more their soft skin turned into grey ash and dust.

The visions had returned, but I couldn't stop them. I closed my eyes abruptly and slowly opened them. Everything returned to normal.

"Are you okay?" The nearest healer asked while checking my vitals.

"Yeah," I said. "Just thought I saw something. I'm fine. Just tired."

She laid a glowing ShadowMyths card on my chest, recited a couple of inaudible words, and the card melted into my body. I'd seen street performers using similar cards, but it never occurred to me that healers would also use them. Made sense. I could feel my body getting warmer as the card began to melt.

"Just relax. This will help you sleep more easily. We'll be back in a little bit to check up on you."

As everything faded once more, the green-skinned woman appeared again. Nobody else seemed to notice her, though.

Probably my imagination.

For the next month, the scarred woman reappeared in the corner of my room every night, and she always stood there, glaring at me as black ooze dripped out of the scars on her body and face. I had grown accustomed to her appearance, but not to her persistent presence. Whenever I asked an attendant about her, they never saw the scarred woman. They kept repeating that it must be just a side effect of the medication—nothing to worry about.

Eventually, they released me and sent me home with an in-home caregiver. I was hopeful that the scarred woman would only be in the hospital and would now leave me alone.

I was wrong.

At night, she appeared at the foot of my bed, and every time I screamed, my caregiver would burst into the room, look around, and tell me nothing was there. Eventually, my calls for help were ignored. I guess I had cried wolf too many times.

On the nights when my caregiver didn't show up, the woman at the foot of my bed spread her broken wings, and an inky shadow washed over me. The same nothingness I had felt before I woke up in the hospital. It was cold and made me feel more alone than anything I'd ever known.

One night, she was at the edge of my bed, like usual, but this time, I didn't scream. Just waited for the darkness to take over. I don't know how many times my screams had been ignored, and the cold nothingness had taken over, but it barely registered anymore. Instead of the shadows covering me, her claws scraped against the bed frame as she climbed onto it.



She perched on the edge of the bed frame as if she were a bird deciding whether to eat a helpless worm. Her thick, tattered wings unfolded, and razor-sharp feathers glinted in the light. Occasionally, a feather scraped against the bed frame's wood, and I could easily imagine how she could tear me apart.

I tried to move away towards the bed's headboard, but fear froze my body. All I saw was her scarred face, the edges of her wings, and the ooze that dripped onto the bed.

After tilting her head from side to side several times, she crawled onto the bed towards me. Her mouth opened impossibly wide, and insects of every form flowed out! Caterpillars. Ants. Roaches. Centipedes! The insects mixed in with the ooze that still dripped from her wings and scars.

Large taloned hands formed out of the sides of my bed. Hands! Where did they come from? They held my arms and legs down. Even more hands appeared from the edges of my pillow and held my head down. Some clamped over my mouth, and others forced my eyes open. I fought against their holds and tried to scream, but it was too late. There was nothing I could do other than watch her crawl toward me, vomiting insects and dripping black ooze.

When she finally got close enough, she spoke in a hoarse voice that smelled of decayed earth and rot. "Why have you summoned me every night? What do you want?"

With a flick of her finger, the hands around my mouth dissolved into thick oily smoke and flowed off the sides of my pillow.

“What are you talking about?” I asked, my voice shaky. “I have no idea who you are! I didn’t summon you!”

Sniffing the air around her, she glared at me. “I’m the Angel of Mercy. In the middle of the night, *you* always summon *me*. Why? What do you want?”

“Angel of Mercy? You’re not her! She is supposed to be beautiful and kind-looking! Bathing the room in her glorious light! You’re a demon!”

“I am who I am.” Her voice stayed calm. “Answer my question, or I will rip the answer out of you. Slowly. So very slowly.”

“A friend told me about you,” I muttered, slowly putting what I knew about her together. “All my life, I’ve seen things decay. Not a lot. Just enough. But ever since I came out of the Death State, it’s been getting worse. *Everything* is decaying. When I see babies, I see them grow, age, and die. Same with every person I look at. Their eyes fall out. Their skin grows sallow and cracks. Open sores erupt from their bodies. Flowers. Plants. Buildings. Everything. All I see is death and decay. You’ve got to help me!”

The hands around my eyes dissolved as tears fell from my eyes.

“Please! You have to help me. I don’t want to see that anymore.”

She stared at me for a long time. “I can help you,” she muttered after a while. “However, there is a price for my services. Are you willing to pay?”

“Absolutely! I’d do anything!”

With a smile, she gently leaned over and kissed my forehead. The kiss burned like nothing I'd ever felt, and the smell of charred flesh filled the room. The insects, ooze, and hands all dissolved in an instant.

She returned to the edge of the bed. "Shall we begin?"

Remember. You agreed to this."



She looked up to the ceiling and began to chant.

Naloth Neek Sect Shibach

Naloth Neek Sect Shibala

Tok Seth Noch

The words repeated over and over again

From the heart of darkness, Shibach, show yourself.

Payment shall be made. Payment shall be given.

This for me. Next for you.

Naloth Neek Sect Shibach

Naloth Neek Sect Shibala

Tok Seth Noch

Black ooze erupted from her eyes, body, and wings, and the thick ichor flowed toward the ceiling and clung to every inch of it. Once complete, the ceiling looked like a lake of darkness.

As her chanting continued, the room grew dimmer and dimmer. Ice formed at the ceiling's edges and worked its way down the walls. The slight crackling sound got louder and louder, and I could see my breath. Uncontrollably, I shivered.

A giant skull emerged from the ceiling pool overhead, and with a quick flap of her wings, she flew up and clung to it. Her wings held her in place as she kissed the forehead of the skull.

She screamed as the ooze flowed off of her body and into the skull's eye sockets. The more she melted into the ceiling, the more human she appeared. Her sores and scars disappeared, and her body decayed.

Then, she was gone.

After some time, she crawled out of the skull's left eye socket with fully formed wings and no scars. From what I saw with her back to me, her body was as black as ever but fully healed. Still clinging to the skull on the ceiling, she twisted her head like an owl and fully faced me.

Her face had a wicked grin as black ooze fell from her eyes and hair. It was thick as oil and smelled of carrion, and the first droplets fell onto my chest, neck, and face. Intense pain burned those areas as more and more ichor dropped to cause even more agony. The smell of charred flesh was sickening, but the sores healed as quickly as they appeared.

The ooze fell like heavy, concentrated rain, and I tried to move my head out of the way, but hands appeared from the edge of my pillows again and held me in place. More hands appeared from the edge of my bed and held the rest of me down.

As it fell, the ooze flowed down my throat and coated my eyes, and my vision blurred as I tried to spit it out of my mouth. I couldn't even close my mouth because taloned hands forced it open. Sensations of gagging, pain, and burning overwhelmed me.

Eventually, everything stopped.

The angel of mercy dropped from the ceiling, or at least, I was pretty sure it was her. Things were getting harder to see. She landed beside my bed, and the hands holding my head and body dissolved. I immediately wiped

as much of the black ichor from my face, but everything still appeared blurry. The skull on the ceiling and the ice on the walls receded while an intense darkness covered most of the room.

“Remember. You agreed to this,” she laughed softly.

Something was wrong. No more ooze coated my mouth, but... something... my stomach! There was something in my stomach! Whatever was in there forced it to grow larger and larger. Tighter and tighter. Under my skin, I could see the outline of hands and... Was that a face? What was happening!?

I tried to scream, but all I could do was gag. And the gagging wouldn't stop. The thing in my stomach was coming up, and I couldn't stop it. Ooze, mixed with dead roaches and other insects, poured out of my mouth, burning me.

The room got even more blurry.

My jaw dislocated as I vomited, and from somewhere in front of me, the cry of a child pierced the air. A tiny baby about the size of my fist: it was perfectly formed but smaller than usual.

From the side of my bed, a dark shape I was sure was the angel of mercy, picked up the baby and cradled it in her arms. “It's okay, little one. You're going to be okay. Shhhh... I'm here for you.” Her eyes then landed on me. “I have fulfilled your wish. You will no longer see dead and decaying things. And I will be back for three more children.”

She laughed as she faded into the darkness.

At this point, the entire room was pitch black. The coldness and smell of dirt were gone. But why was it still black? I felt my eyes. The burning ooze was no longer there.

My hand reached out to the light ball on my nightstand, but it was already warm... the light ball was already on!

Nothing.

She fulfilled her promise. I no longer saw death and decay. I no longer saw anything.

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