

I Hope My Mom Doesn't Check Under the Bed

I know it hurts; I know you want to sleep. I'm as weary of your fears as you are of my venom. You know what I want—make her believe. Give her to me; then I'll leave.

The monster's appeal still echoes in the midst of violent nightmares and hallucinations that stretch for months on end. At the flick of a light switch, that's when he appears—when the darkness is too new to see it, he happens under the bed. He's not a horned beast nor has rows of sharp devouring teeth; he's not under every bed. He glides from shadow to shadow as a dark mist, wafting into rooms nightly to feed on fresh fear. Normally, he moves on after a single visit.

You know I'm real; you won't forget until she knows.

The night starts the same way: as eyes adjust to the dark and familiar objects take sinister shapes, the air dances in the stillness of a tomb. Molecules take shape; spattering onto walls, floor, ceiling; congealing into misshapen dark spots. He rakes his tendrils into the covers and across the trembling spine. The dark spots take form and new life: spiders! Prickling, probing legs of lengths unknown in nature take the tendrils' place over the covers, stilettoing the swaddled mass. Tears mingle with cold sweat in the salty pillowcase.

Scream like last night. Wake her up. Tell her I'm here.

The spiders bite, heating the covers. The venom burns the little air pocketed inside, burns through to pajamas and skin. His ghostly vapor swirls in the air above, taunting, grazing on terror. His spiders swarm toys, walls, the covers that remain. What little light penetrates the shades shines at the ends of hairy tufts and gleams off their abdomens. Their mouthpieces click in hunger, legs tap in a cacophony of cadences. He's tired of this—his screams echo inside the tiny head.

Convince her! Call her in here! Scream for your mother! Let me have her!

A wail bounces through the room and under the door. Footsteps across wooden floor plod through the nightmare's torture. The door opens and spotlights the same replayed scene. I hope my mom doesn't check under the bed.