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IT'S TERROR TIME

BY

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Night surrounded the farmhouse like fog moving in on a Newfoundland skiff. The maple leaves rustled, sweeping nature's music in through an open attic window.

On the other side of the room, a loving figure appeared in the doorway. "Okay you two. Time for bed. Lights out."

"Night-night mom," sang the girls.

The light switch flicked. Darkness rushed in, silencing the prayers of bedtime. Only branch tips tapping the tin roof disturbed the quietness.

"Nightie-night," she said, easing the door closed.

"Mommy, could you leave it open a little bit?" Emily asked.

The door crept back open. "Is that alright with you, kiddo?"

Hannah rolled over. Hung her head down from the top bunk like a dead bird trapped in a radiator grill. She sneered at her younger sister, "Yeah, guess so."

"Alright then, go to sleep and not a peep out of you."

"Mom?"

Her mother sighed. "What now, Emily?"

"What time is it?"

"It's bedtime. Now, get to sleep."

She pulled the door, leaving it open enough allowing the yellowish thread of light room enough to slink inside from the hall.

“Fraidy-cat,” Hannah whispered. She rolled back away from the edge of her bed and played shadow puppets on the wall.

“Am not!” Emily pouted.

Their mother’s footfalls softly padded down the first flight of stairs. Their sounds paused. After a moment of silence, they continued to the next flight until they disappeared altogether.

Silvery moon rays flooded the bedroom through the mullioned dormer at the end of their bed. Hannah arched her fingers and wiggled her wrists in the light. “You’re just a baby, you know?”

“Am not. I’m five!” her sister bellowed.

Silent and strange shadowy creatures danced across the flowered wallpaper behind Hannah’s manipulating hands.

Emily raised her legs and rested her feet against the bottom of Hannah’s top bunk mattress.

“Don’t,” demanded Hannah, “get to sleep, will ya?”

Emily giggled as she pushed upwardly on the mattress. “What time is it?”

Hannah plowed her fist into the soft top of her mattress. “Stop it! Stop kicking!”

Emily kept pushing Hannah’s mattress from below, giggling the whole time. “What time is it?” she kept calling.

A thick fluffy cloud passed across the heavens. The moonlight soon evaporated from the room. Darkness flooded through the dark glass. The bedroom became a shadowy grim void.

Hannah used her elbow and walloped the surface of her mattress again. “I ... told ... you ... to STOP IT!”

Their mother's voice rang up the stairs. "Emily, if you don't stop bugging your sister, either me or your father will come up. And if that happens, you'll both be sorry."

Emily's legs floated back down to her bed. "Boy, she's got ears like a hawk!" she said, as she slipped beneath the blankets.

"Hawks don't have ears stupid," Hannah said. "It's, 'she's got ears like a bat!'"

"So what. Who cares? Still hears pretty good for a mom!"

Emily's legs bounced up and once again kicked Hannah's mattress. The blanket pinned beneath Emily's tiny feet dangled from the bottom of the top mattress like a corpse at the end of a hangman's noose.

"Hannah hung over the top bed-rail, "If you do that again, I'll come down and thump ya, then I'll turn into a monster and eat your boney little body."

"Sure . . . you ain't got the guts," Emily laughed.

"I will. DAMMIT!"

"You can't."

"Why not?" Hannah hissed.

"Cuz, you're not old enough."

"Got years over you, juvey."

"Don't matter, you still can't."

"And just why not?" Hannah snuffed.

"How you gonna explain my blood on the blankets tomorrow? And where will you tell mom I disappeared to?"

"Won't matter, you were adopted and nobody'll care."

"LIAR!"

“Why do you think we get schoolin’ at home? Mom and dad doesn’t want anyone to know you’re alive. You were adopted when you were a titty baby. Look in the mirror. You don’t even look like us!”

Emily dropped her feet; sat up and glanced in the darkened dresser mirror across from her. A sliver of light created an unknown entity in the reflection. She fell back onto her bed, rolled over and cornered her tiny body against the wall. She whipped her blanket over her head and wept. “I am not adopted,” she said slowly. “You can’t tell me ‘at.” She paused for a second and then shouted, “YOU ARE!”

Hannah grinned. “That’s why we live way out in the middle of nowhere,” Hannah’s little eyes glittered like diamonds on velvet in the moonlight, “I still ‘member when they brought you home. You were nothing but a whiny baby brat.”

Emily sobbed. “You’re a liar. You’re makin’ it all up! You don’t look like family either.” Her tears saturated her pillow.

Their mother’s angry voice shot up the stairs like a gun blast. “THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING!”

The pair became silent. Hannah whispered, “you’re adopted, you’re adopted.”

Emily sobbed, “stop it, okay? Jus’ please stop it. I’ll be good, I promise. I’ll go to sleep. Jus’ say I’m not adopted.”

Hannah slipped off the top bunk and pulled the blanket down with her. She draped it over her head and danced about the room. “What time is it, Em? It’s terror time! What time is it, Em? Time to eat ya! I eat crusty skulls and bone-rack ribs. What time is it, Em? It’s midnight snack time! Nobody’ll notice you gone, my little baby sister brat. Mom and dad will find another kid to adopt. They’ve got lots of time. Not like you, Em. You’re time is up, I’m gonna drink your blood and eat ya like slop!”

Emily coiled up inside her blanket. “Leave me alone, Hannah. I’ll go to sleep, I promise. I won’t kick your bed no more.”

A noise which sounded like moth wings beating against a glass lampshade, echoed from the hallway, just beyond their room.

“What time is it our little adopted Emily? It’s terror time,” Hannah chanted. “What time is it, Em? It’s terror time.” What time — .”

The bedroom door exploded open. It slammed against the back wall like a sledgehammer smashing concrete. “WHAT DID I TELL YOU TWO?” Her voice whooped through the shadows like a raging bat. The odor of rotted hamburger hung in the air.

The hall light became a mere phantom. Its glow all but extinguished. Great winged shadows burned up the walls next to the bunk-beds. Hannah and Emily whipped their blankets down from their heads. Both recoiled in horror. Two fat scaly creatures oscillated in their bedroom doorway. Two sets of golden eyes flashed, drool oozed from their red fangs. Long white tongues licked the darkness as one grumbled in a watery tone. “You’re both wrong. Neither of you are family!”

THE END