

# *A dark smile*

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Everything was black, the rain has been beating a dark tattoo across the skin of the land for hours now, and the thunder seemed everlasting. Not that he would mind - he didn't care in the slightest. Moreover, there was something calming in the way the rain and the noise absorbed his thoughts. He was sitting on a rotten tree trunk in the middle of a forest, although it didn't feel like a middle of anything, it felt like the edge of an abyss. There was only him in his wet pair of jeans, a wet shirt, and a damaged leather jacket; bare footed and cold. And the only thought that occupied his mind was "Why?". A single, dangerous word, a question with only a void as an answer. That was until he didn't feel like he was alone in his solitude. That was a bad, very bad sign. His personal catastrophe is coming for him.

The rain still existed, somewhere far, too far beyond his perception, mainly because his *perception* was focused on a familiar dark figure hidden in the shadows.

"Well, hello there, little scared boy," a hoarse voice said as always when he decided to visit him, "why aren't we smiling today, huh?"

"'Cause I'm not feeling very smiley today, if you've failed to notice. Now, go away," the boy tried to sound calm but he wasn't and the worst thing was that the monster knew that. It knew everything.

It laughed. The monster was the best at laughing as the boy had never encountered anyone who would laugh or smile or even chuckle like that and it never failed to make him shiver. Maybe that's why he named the monster S. Or maybe he named it S. because of something else, it was a long time ago, he doesn't remember, he doesn't *want* to remember when the monster appeared for the first time but before he even starts to realize that, it is too late.

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*He has been going to school for six years now. He was very young, very happy and very pure. A little kid who didn't know much about the world. Although he didn't like studying that much, he was excited every morning when he woke up for school - his teacher was the nicest person in the world, he had a few very close friends and a few very stubborn "enemies" with whom he often competed in math assignments, and often lost because, well, math was not really his thing.*

*His thing was history. He could spend hours reading about kings and queens, knights and battles won because of strategic leadership. But most of all he loved mysterious stories about dark, big castles. He had travelled most of the country trying to find out more about gloomy paintings hanging on the walls made out of stone, pretty furniture or empty hallways on which ghosts silently floated. He wasn't really sure about that ghost part, his empirical parents never wanted him to believe anything "not scientifically proven" but he swears he could sometimes hear them: small voices whispering to his ear, telling him something he never quite understood.*

*One grey evening, he was visiting a nearby castle, and wandered into a shady hallway. It was cold, unpleasant and a "do not enter" sign was attached to the chain pulled across an entrance. He stopped caring about permissions a long time ago. Knowledge comes with a price, right? He wanted to convince himself it also felt abandoned, since there was no furniture or any equipment whatsoever apart for one mirror on the opposite wall showing him his own reflection. Except...he did not feel alone. As to confirm his unnerving thoughts, he heard a laugh behind him. No one was behind him, when he checked the mirror, but when he turned around, a dark figure greeted him with the first of many "Well, hello there, little scared boy," and a wide, scary grin. In that moment, he knew that smile, oh that awfully big smile, will chase him for many years to come.*

*He was about to learn a lot about the world today.*

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He came to the conclusion that the reason he gave it a name is because he had to define it somehow, make it limited, in a way. Say S. and know what to expect. He didn't realize he made him more real like that, because since the monster first heard its name, it started to show up more frequently, happier and somehow more complete, like the name give it a purpose. And maybe it did and the boy hated that so damn much.

The monster crawled closer to him, making the space around them feel like a bubble nobody could pop, he felt trepidation about not being able to breath, the air felt like a poisoned gas and the grass beneath his feet felt like venomous serpents. Illusion seemed to be the most real thing in the universe.

"So, little boy," it hissed, bared teeth lining its constant smile, "why are you ignoring me? It makes me very sad, you know. Just sitting in your head, trying to get a piece of your valuable attention, sometimes I just feel like I'm behind the door, listening, eavesdropping, everything is unsuccessful. I'm wondering how much you'd care if I smashed your head with a hammer..."

The boy started shaking helplessly, anxiously thinking how he even ended up here, with monsters inside his head and rain drops carving a way in his skin. The rain caused everything appear blurry and vague as if the world existed behind a dirty window. *Didn't make the dread go away, so it's worthless,* he thought.

"...you're very cold little boy, very cold heartless little man, hm. Why won't you just let me help? Please, why won't you - "

"I don't *want* your help. What does that even mean?"

A smirk quickly covered with a laugh. It was a malicious smirk, the boy recognized that much but it didn't really provide an answer to his question. The monster did that sometimes, it smiled as if it explained everything, so the boy presumed to be left in the dark as always. But the monster put its prolonged arm around his shoulder, fingers with ivory nails were painfully slowly scratching his cheeks as the monsters' lips touched gently but somehow menacingly the boy's ear.

"Let me be you."

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It stopped raining. A small fragment of something that appeared to be the Moon emerged from behind the rain clouds looking like an uninvited guest trembling, longing to watch this freak show performed by a teenage boy talking to shadows in the middle of a forest. Maybe the Moon felt sorry for him and provided its presence on the scene, so the boy wouldn't feel so embarrassed when he finds out how alone he really is. Whatever the reason is, Moon's lightly illuminating the forest, rain drops are falling down the leaves in unequal intervals, some of them staying stuck in the curves, waiting for wind to blow them off. Magic, if you please.

*Let me be you*, the boy didn't wish to understand those words, he wanted to feel repelled by even hearing those words. It scared him he did not. It terrified him that one piece of his broken, tired soul even considered it.

"Why?" he questioned warily.

A different kind of expression came into view. It could still be called a smile but this time it looked sad. Not genuinely sad, it was more guarded, yet undeniably melancholic.

"Foolish boy," the monster proclaimed abruptly loudly and squeezed boy's shoulders it still held tightly, "what do you think the world has prepared for you, hm? Suffering, pain, solitude and other heart-wrenching calamities which will lead to your quiet death. You see, and I will be the only one mourning for you. Who else would truly feel your absence as a hole in their heart? Only me and that's just because I *am* you. Is this what you want?"

*No*, the boy mused but did not say. He knew the monster heard it anyway.

*No*.

"Let me in, kiddo. I will make you a better person. I will make you visible. Loveable. Braver and together we'll be more real than ever before."

He knew he didn't want to. Not really. It was just...he was so, so tired. He looked at the sky where clouds created a space for stars, and fell down with his back on the wet grass, closed his eyes, gripped somewhere between a smile and a cry unable to tell which of these two he really wants to have on his face.

After a while, the monster disappeared.

"Well hello there," the boy voiced "why aren't we smiling today?"

He smiled with the biggest grin of all, grin that never failed to make everyone shiver.