

Tracy Li

Age: 14, Grade: 9

School Name: Spain Park High School, Birmingham, AL

Educator: Jessica Quisenberry

Category: Short Story

Black Water

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I could feel something was wrong that Thursday afternoon.

As I trod back home from my grandparents' house, the dark gray clouds above never boomed or flashed; they just held onto their rain. The southern summer wind swirled around me, silent as it crept from behind: no swaying of the trees, no rustling of the bushes. I rubbed my goosebump-lined arms, the hot breeze still blowing. This was the kind of day where your lively neighborhood - filled with playful screams, barking and meowing, parents pushing their kids' strollers - was swallowed up in silence.

My feet patter on the concrete as I twist the dust-coated doorknob. Short hair itches my neck. Fibers on my sock catch on the wooden floor as I grab the TV remote and plop onto the couch.

"Your hair actually looks really pretty, it would look good with my claw clip," Mom says from behind me.

I snap around. My eyebrows furrow and my mouth contort into an upside-down "U."

"It's *hideous*, and *you* forced me to cut it! Also, I don't want your ugly claw clip--just go away!" I glare at Mom until she disappears.

Thunder rattles the room. Rain splats on the roof as gray clouds swallow sunlight. Plopping on the couch, yanking the blanket, and pushing the red "on" button, I stare at the TV. On screen, a girl plops on a bed and buries herself in layers of quilts, her head peeking out. She hides her chin under fabric as her parents close the door, shoving the light away. Outside, raindrops explode on our window and lightning flashes, illuminating the curtain a bright purple. I glance back at the TV. Mist oozes towards the girl and four shadows crawl up her bed, their claws stabbing the mattress. Puffing out her mouth, her foggy breath slows and vaporizes into the darkness. I wrap the blanket around me and curl my clammy feet into a ball. The camera zooms in, sliding the shadows closer and closer to the edge of the screen. As I stare at the sleeping girl, darkness seeps out the edges of my TV to the walls, stiff claws clinging onto my room.

"Yara, It's ten already! -And stop watching horror movies," Mom yells from her room.

"No!"

A white pause button hovers over the four shadows. As I click the red off button, my reflection glares back through the shiny black screen.

"Ughh, I hate Mom."

I throw the blanket off and walk to the kitchen. Spewing out of the tap, cold water gushes into my tall orange cup and sprinkles onto my arm. Chin-length hair swings back and forth, prickling my cheeks. As I yank my hair and pull it behind my ears, I trudge to my bedroom, gulping my water before setting the empty cup on my desk. Dark gray sweeps across my room. I switch off the lights and flop on my bed. The fan whirs left and right and left and right, breathing life into the shadows. Long, dark cylindrical shapes stretch from the curtain rods across the ceiling. Sweat coats my neck. Hair pricks my cheeks. Sticking my legs out of my blanket, my wide eyes peer at the contorting shadows. My feet slide back into my blanket. Rolling left, I squeeze my eyes until everything becomes black. Opening my eyes until a sliver of red pierces through, I glance at the clock: a crimson "4:04" blinks against black. Suddenly, cold shoves the summer heat away, the kind of cold that could pierce flesh, seep into bones, and turn water to ice.

My eyes jerk wide open. Four humanoid shadows crawl up the wall, knocking over the orange cup. I shriek. Dark gray clouds surge across my ceiling. Rain tumbles on my face. Heavy drops pound my face. The shadows slither towards me, gulping furniture in black, the darkness still thirsty.

Suddenly, light flickers outside.

Mom stumbles in, "Are you oka-." She stops. The shadows swivel away from me, looming over Mom as their frigid

jaws stretch and contort towards her head; their dark vapor figures condense into black water as they swirl around Mom's body and swallow her screams.

"RUN YARAAAAAAA..."

My shallow, short breaths fade into the still air as I stare at Mom dissolve into gray. Cold crawls up my cheeks as their needle-like teeth turn to me. Claws raking, the shadows' spiky fingernails tear through my tangled hair. As the darkness devours the last bits of light in the room, the cold numbs me and everything turns black.

Lemon-yellow rays flow into my light pink room. My fan waves back and forth and back and forth, the gentle breeze stirring my hair. I turn under my warm cream-colored blanket, the folds over my legs like waves in the sea. Beside me, my tall orange cup, filled to the brim with water, loiters on my desk, casting a long gray shadow. On the very edge, black water trickles down the cup. A lump swells in my throat. Tossing my blanket to the side, my feet pound the cool carpet as I run to Mom's room.

I shove her door open, "Mom?"

Nothing.

"M-Mom, are you asleep?"

Nothing.

"MOM!" I scream.

Brushing past wrinkled blankets, I sprint to the bathroom. Empty. Slippers sit next to the unlocked garage door. My trembling legs inch towards the shoes. As the door creaks open, Mom's motionless Mercedes mocks me. As I gaze at the vacant black car, my reflection in a puddle stares at me, a claw clip claspings her short hair behind her wet, gray cheeks.