

Mother's Little Helper

By

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## Mother's Little Helper

"It's not funny, Bryan! You broke that kid's arm, you've been kicked out of school, this is going on your permanent record, and who knows what that boys parents might try to do!" Ethan yelled from his seat at the dinner table. "They might want to press charges or something!"

Bryan sighed and rolled his eyes. "Dad, I told you, all I did was punch him in the nose, I didn't break his arm!"

"Then who broke it then?"

Bryan opened his mouth to answer—

"And if you say your mother did it, I'm going to beat the shit out of you!"

"Ethan!" Debra shrieked from her seat. Her eyes were wide with shock, as if she'd never heard him speak like that before.

"Okay," Bryan shrugged. "I won't say it then."

Ethan's chair scrapped the floor as he sprung from his seat. "You think I'm playing with you?"

"No," Bryan used his spoon to sculpt the plate of mash potatoes in front of him. "Pretty much, sounds like you're yelling to me."

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"Boy!" Ethan lunged from around the table and snatched his son up by the collar.

Bryan met his father's glare without flinching; his dark brown eyes dared him to strike.

Debra leaned across the table and put a hand on Ethan's arm. "Let him go, Ethan. Don't hit him!"

Bryan cut her with his eyes. "I don't need your help."

"Who do you think you're talking too?" his father shook him.

Bryan gripped the edge of the dinner table to keep his balance.

"It's ok, Ethan. It's ok." Debra tried to sooth the beast.

Ethan glanced at Debra, then back to Bryan. "Go get in the bed!" he knifed a finger towards the living room, and then he released him.

Bryan took his sweet time straightening his shirt collar, all the while looking his father up and down. Ethan opened his mouth to say something, but Debra stopped him with a hand on his chest.

"Just let him go to his room, Ethan." She advised.

With a side long glance at Debra, Bryan left the dining room. He'd rather be upstairs in his room anyway, instead of faking it at the dinner table with them.

He stomped through the living room and grabbed his book bag off the couch. The evening news pulled his attention to the television. An anchor woman talked about a little girl who went missing from his school a couple days ago. She reported how her body was found in a dumpster somewhere earlier that afternoon.

Bryan knew the girl. Her name was Jessica Sanford. She was in his sixth grade class, and he had a crush on her that he would never admit to anyone but his mother. At the time, he didn't understand why his mother wanted to hurt her, the little girl was always nice to him, but if it would bring her back, he didn't care what his mother did.

Jessica's parents were on the television now, holding up a picture of their daughter. Jessica's red hair was pulled into two braids and her wide smile showed all her teeth. It was a school picture, and Bryan remembered when Jessica took it, because he had to wait in line behind her. Jessica's mother cried into her hands while her father spoke into the crowd of microphones that surrounded them.

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Bryan knew that he should've felt something for them, but he didn't. He'd have his mother back soon, so why should he be sad?

"What are you waiting for?" his father glared at him from the dining room.

"Nothing." Bryan headed for the stairs, but as he climbed the steps two at a time, he mumbled under his breath. "for you to die."

His father's room was at the top of the stairs, and his room was at the other end of the hall pass the bathroom. He poked his head into his father's room and took a deep breath in through his nose. His mother's scent was completely gone now. All he could smell was Debra's cheap perfume. He didn't know if Debra wore cheap perfume, but he liked to think she did. Either way, it didn't smell like his mother's, so it had to be cheap.

He drug his bare feet down the carpeted hallway to his room. He liked the way it felt between his toes. When his mother would come home from work, she would always sit in his room and talk with him about his day at school. They would dig their toes into the carpet fibers while they joked and laughed. He missed doing that with her, but he knew they'd be back at it again soon enough.

The lights were off in his room, but with the light shining up through his bedroom window, he caught the silhouette of his mother standing beside his bed.

"Oh, hi, Mom." he flicked on his light switch and slammed his door.

His mother didn't respond to his greeting. She swayed drunkenly at his bedside by the window. Her dark hair was tangled and matted with blood. Her head lolled to the side on the broken neck she suffered in her car accident. Bruises marred her face, and torn patches of flesh exposed bits of bone on her forehead and jaw. Her left eye was swollen shut, and the right one was a cloudy orb that stared vacantly.

She looked so much better than she did the first time she visited him. After that first night, he had nightmares for days, but they soon faded once he realized it was her.

She needed his help.

"Dad and Debra are downstairs." he tossed his book bag in a corner of his room, and then flopped on his bed. "She's been over here every night this week. She keeps telling me that she's helping Dad with things around the house, but when they think I'm sleep, they spend most of

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their time in your bedroom."

The bones in his mother's neck cracked as her head lolled back and rolled to the side.

"I know, right? I thought she was your friend too." He shook his head. "I guess they think we're that stupid."

The stairs creaked under the weight of movement, and muffled voices played in the hallway.

Bryan eyed his mother. "I guess their calling it an early night, huh?"

She swayed back and forth as if trying to keep her balance. The front of the cream pants suite she wore to work the day she died was covered in dried blood.

"I hear them at night, making sounds that you and Dad used to make sometimes, but she's a lot louder than you are." He sighed. "They're so annoying!"

There was a soft knock at his door.

"What do they want now? I'm in my room." He asked his twisted mother. "Why won't they leave me alone?"

The knock came again.

"I'm sleeping!" he called out.

"Bryan?" The door opened, and Debra invited herself in with a plastered smile. She closed the door and sat beside him on the bed. "You're not even in your bed clothes, little man."

Bryan squeezed his thumb and forefinger together. "Minor detail."

Debra chuckled and put a hand on his arm.

Bryan turned to his mother, and then back to Debra. "Don't touch me."

"Okay, okay, I'm sorry." She removed her hand.

"She doesn't get it, does she?" Bryan asked his mother.

Debra cocked an eyebrow and followed his gaze to the window. "Uh...who...who are you talking to?"

Bryan frowned. "My mother."

"Oh, okay." She nodded.

"Why? What do you want anyway?"

Debra sighed and seemed to weigh the words in her head. "Look, Bryan, I know things

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are awkward right now, and I don't want you to think that I'm trying to replace your mother, but your father and I--"

Bryan laughed hard and shook his head with a huge grin. "Debra, you couldn't replace my mother even if I liked you. Remember what she used to say? Whether it's in a garbage can or flower bed, trash is trash, right?"

Debra sat back on the bed as if the words physically hit her. The smile on her face melted and hardened into a snarl.

"Now, you listen to me, Bryan!" she grabbed him by the arm. "I'm not taking your shit anymore! I'm sorry that your mother's dead, but I didn't kill her! She was my best friend! You know that! So, I don't know why you keep being so mean to me!"

Suddenly, Bryan's mother lurched forward from the window.

Bryan fixed Debra with cold eyes. "I think you'd better let me go."

"No! I think you better listen to me!" Debra fired back.

Bryan's mother staggered around the bed on shaky legs with arms outstretched and fingers grabbing for Debra. Her head rocked side to side on her broken neck as she moved.

"Okay." Bryan shrugged. "Die then."

"What?" Debra shook him with both hands. "What did you say to me?"

Bryan liked being his mother's audience. Anticipation bubbled inside his stomach. It was like waiting to see someone get pranked, but he had to keep a straight face in order not to ruin the surprise.

His mother was upon Debra now.

"Your father and I love each other." Debra said. "I know you may not agree but--"

The corpse grabbed her by the neck. Startled, Debra jumped and turned. Her eyes widened in recognition. Her jaw dropped. She screamed.

Bryan thought it was funny how no one else could see his mother until she touched them. The looks on their faces were priceless. Like the look of sheer terror and confusion on Debra's face now. He thought it was kind of cool.

Debra fought against the corpse and wailed as it clawed at her throat and face. The unearthly figure pulled Debra off the bed and hurled her against the door.

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Footsteps rumbled down the hallway.

Bryan hopped off his bed and locked the door to his bedroom.

On the floor, Debra tried to gather herself. She looked around the room horrified. “What the hell was that, Bryan? What was that?” She reached up for the doorknob, but it wouldn’t turn. She looked at Bryan who offered nothing but a sly grin for her questioning glare.

The bedroom door shook and rattled.

Bryan’s mother grabbed Debra again.

Debra screamed and beat at the thing that appeared on top of her.

“Debra? Bryan?” Ethan banged on the door. “What the fuck is going on in there? Open the God-damned door!”

Bryan stood in the corner and watched his mother toss Debra onto his bed.

The door frame started to crack and splinter under the weight of his father’s grunts.

Bryan cringed and almost turned away when his mother dug her fingers into Debra’s eyes. He’d never heard anyone scream like that before. He pushed his hands over his ears to block out the sound.

His father burst through the door just as his mother knifed her hand into Debra’s chest. The corpse yanked and jerked until it ripped Debra’s beating heart out. Blood whipped back and splattered across his father’s face.

Bryan watched, as he had five times before, as the heart of his mother’s victim pulsed in her grasp with a greenish-blue energy. His mother inhaled the energy, through her mouth, and the shimmering light poured into her. The corpse staggered back and trembled. Something seemed to slither under the skin of her twisted neck. Bones snapped into place and reformed settling her head straight atop her shoulders. The bruising and swelling on her face faded, and the patches of torn flesh on her forehead and jaw regenerated. She looked at her son and blinked eyes that flared back to life, flickering from a lifeless grey to a brilliant brown.

She dropped Debra’s heart to the carpet. It was just a shriveled black thing now.

Ethan’s eyes screamed with disbelief of what he just witnessed. He looked around the room, then back to Debra’s body as it slid off the bed and crumbled to the floor. Blood ran down the front of her blouse from the hole in her chest. He eyed his son and took a step back.

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“What did you--What the fuck was that?”

Bryan smiled up at his mother. She was starting to look like her normal self again.

His father grabbed him by the collar and yelled at him. “What the hell are you smiling at?” his face was a contoured mixture of fear, anger, and disbelief.

Bryan grinned at his father. “I can’t say.”

“What? What do you mean you can’t say?”

“You said you’d beat the shit out of me if I said that again.”

Ethan’s eyes darted left and right searching, and then snapped back to his son.

“Your mother?” He pushed Bryan back against the wall. “She’s dead! What are you talking about?”

“You can see for yourself.” Bryan pointed at his mother as she stalked up behind his father.

Ethan spun around to see nothing. Only Debra’s body lay slumped beside the bed. Tears of blood cried from her raw eye sockets.

As his mother approached, Bryan slid from behind his father and inched towards the door.

“Shit, we have to do something about Debra.” Ethan stared at the body. “I have to call the pol—“

The corpse grabbed Ethan by the throat.

Ethan grabbed at the hands on his neck, and stared at what suddenly appeared. “Sh... Sheryl? What the hell?” He pushed her away. He raised his fists ready to swing but looked around the room confused. “Bryan, what the fuck is going on? We’ve got to get out of here! I think I saw your mother? Did you see it? Did you see her?”

“I told you it was her.” Bryan stood in the doorway.

“You can see her? Where is she?”

“She’s right in front of you.”

Sheryl grabbed Ethan and rammed his head back against the wall. He struggled against her as she seemed to lean in for a kiss. Her lips touched his, and then she bit down into his lower lip. He screamed and beat against her helplessly. With a sharp twist of her head, she tore his lip

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off.

Ethan fell to the floor, the bottom of his face and chin was smeared with blood. He crawled to the door on his hands and knees, while the spirit of his wife stalked behind him.

Bryan shared a look with his mother, and he ran out of the room. He bolted to the bathroom, turned the little switch on the inside doorknob, and then pulled the door closed. Next, he ran down the hall to his father's room and did the same with that door. At the staircase, he watched his father scamper out of his room and stagger to his feet. His mother trailed behind in a slow, deliberate walk.

His father ran to the bathroom and pounded on the locked door. Screaming for dear life, he looked around unaware of just how close his wife's ghost was to him. He ran down the hallway to his bedroom and pushed and kicked the locked door. He looked down the hallway at nothing, then turned to his son standing at the staircase and grabbed him by the shoulders.

"B'yan, " he pleaded. "'ake h'r stohs! 'here is she? I can't see h'r! I can't see h'r!"

Bryan looked at his father's disfigured face. His exposed lower teeth flashed like bloody sugar cubes in the absence of his bottom lip. He looked past his father at his mother approaching. She was smiling at him. He hadn't seen her smile in months and he found himself smiling back at her—

"B'yan, 'here is she?" his father shook him.

"Down the hallway," He pointed. "She's coming for you."

Ethan looked down the hallway, and then bolted down the staircase.

Bryan saw his mother blink into existence at the bottom of the stairs. He didn't know she could do that. She never did that before. A devilish grin painted her face.

Ethan was heading straight for her, and he screamed when she grabbed hold of him. He tried to pull away, but his efforts were futile.

Bryan started down the steps but jumped when his mother's fist punched through his father's back. She clutched his beating heart in her hands. With a smile, she yanked her hand free and let the body collapse on the stairs in a twisted heap.

She stared at the heart in her hand, brought it up to her mouth, and inhaled. Shimmering greenish-blue energy slithered from her husband's heart and into her mouth. She threw her head

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back and took it in.

“Mom?” Bryan called to her.

She looked up at him and let his father’s organ fall to the steps. She beckoned him with her bloody hand and smiled. He went to her, hopped over his father’s body, and hugged her tight.

“You’re back?” he looked up into her smiling face. She looked just as she did that morning before she got in her car to go to work, before she got into that car accident, before she died. Her brown eyes were vibrant, her flesh was warm, and her smile touched his soul.

“Yes,” she nodded. “I’m back.” She laughed, squeezed Bryan in a loving embrace, and kissed him on the cheek. She turned and looked at herself in a small oval mirror on the wall at the bottom of the stairs. She pulled at her cheeks as if her flesh would peel away from the bone, but when skin bounced back supple and firm, she flashed a toothy grin.

“I can’t believe it, Mom! This is so great! Everything was so messed up while you were gone.”

“Were they?” she caressed his cheek with a bloody hand. “Well, trust me, things will be different now that I’m back; and guess what!” She smiled.

“What?”

“I’m not your mother.” She grabbed him by the throat. “But I thank you for believing in me.” Her hand tightened like a vice. “I couldn’t have made it back without you.”

Bryan’s mind raced, it spun on itself. He didn’t understand. He pulled away from his mother, and fell back over his father’s body and onto the steps.

“What...what do you mean you’re not my mother?” he rubbed the pain in his neck.

“I’m not her. I never was. She’s dead you silly boy. She’s not here.” She laughed at him.

“She’s not...here?” he got to his feet. “Then...then where is she?”

“I’m not sure, really.” She frowned in thought. “Hell is such a big place, you know?”  
Laughter bubbled out of her mouth.

“H...Hell?” Bryan took a step up the stairs.

“It was nice of her to take my place, though I don’t think she realized that’s what I was asking of her. Death can be rather confusing for first timers.”

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“No, no, NO!” Bryan took another step back. This could not be happening. What had he done? He should’ve known better. Why would his mother want to kill people? At the time, he was just so happy to see her again. He just assumed she was angry at being dead or something, and then with each time she killed, she seemed to become more and more of herself again. He wanted his mother to come back so much, he would’ve done anything. He had done anything. He helped his mother--this thing, kill homeless people on the street, Jessica from his class, his mother’s best friend, his father, and now it wanted him.

“Where are you going, Bryan? After what you’ve seen, you don’t really think you can get away from me do you?” the woman smiled. “You helped me regain my strength, so I guess it’s only right that I show you the results of all your hard work...and treachery.”

Bryan backed up the stairs and his father’s corpse jerked. Its arm moved. It reached up and grabbed the staircase banister and pulled itself up on its feet. It turned towards him on the staircase. Bryan could see clear through the hole in its chest.

”You helped me kill him, now he’ll help me kill you.” His mother mocked.

Bryan spun around and tore up the staircase. His father kept a gun in his room. He didn’t know how to use it, but he had to do something.

“NO, NO, NO!” he banged on the door. He forgot he locked it.

He turned around and his father was nearly on top of him. He dodged his father’s groping hands, and ran down the hall way to climb out of his bedroom window, but just as he got to his room, he skidded to a halt and practically fell into Debra as she staggered out of the room. She fixed him with empty eye sockets, and her mouth worked as if she was trying to scream.

Something grabbed the back of Bryan’s shirt. He spun around and pushed his father away. Debra took hold of his arms, and Bryan struggled against the two corpses. His father’s hands wrapped around his throat from behind, and Debra snapped at his face with her teeth.

Bryan reached up, snatched a handful of Debra’s hair, and whirled around to throw her to the floor. He wrenched himself free of his father’s hands and pushed him back into Debra. The two corpses collided and tumbled to the floor.

Bryan ran in to his room—

“Still think you can get away?” His mother sat on his bed waiting.

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He backed up into the hallway. His father and Debra were still coming for him. He eyed the thing sitting on his bed that looked like his mother, and then he looked at the window behind it.

“You might as well try it.” His mother stood from the bed. “You just might get away.”

It was right. What else could he do? All he wanted was his mother. That’s all he ever wanted. He wanted to hug her, and talk to her, and kiss her on her cheek. He yearned for her warm protective embrace. He missed her so much.

His dream had become a nightmare.

He tried to keep a straight face and blink away the tears that blurred his vision. He didn’t want to cry, but tears rolled down his cheeks anyway. There was a sinking feeling in his chest. He felt like he was standing at his mother’s funeral all over again.

Debra and his father were just about to grab him, but Bryan ducked and ran into his room. He just had to make it to the window.

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Clutching the beating organ in her hand, Eiradaht drained it dry of all spiritual energy. It blackened and shriveled up, like a giant raisin, within her leaching grasp. Its rhythmic pulsing shuttered, and then ceased. The human soul melted into her like butter on toast, and sent a warm shiver up her spine.

She tossed the empty black husk onto the bed next to its foolish owner. Bryan lay twisted among the sheets. His mouth gaped open in a silent scream, and his bloodshot eyes stared empty above tear streaked cheeks. A ragged hole pitted his chest where his heart once beat safely behind his ribcage.

Three souls in one night would normally have been a feast for any other Symniherjj, but Eiradaht had only been teased by the morsels tonight. They were but mere appetizers to her. In fact, her hunger had grown stronger since devouring the boy’s soul. She was famished and thought maybe she was just becoming gluttonous in her old age.

She hadn't walked this realm since horses pulled those idiotic chariots the humans rode so

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proudly, and she was elated to see that human's were still just as naive and gullible as ever. It made hunting them that much more enjoyable, and she did take joy in playing with the little boy. He was so eager to be his mother's little helper. He might have made a good servant if she hadn't been so hungry.

She turned to Ethan and Debra's corpses, who stood beside the bed obediently waiting her next command like a couple of mangy dogs. With a dismissive wave of her hand, she withdrew the remnants of their souls back into herself, and they collapsed into a lifeless tangle of arms and legs.

A deep yearning screamed within her and tore at the very center of her being. She was beginning to shake with starvation. She needed more human souls, and with the ability to take the form of any soul she's devoured, being in the human realm, made her wolf a in sheep's clothing.

Eiradaht transformed herself, sculpted her flesh and bones into the shape of Bryan. She slipped into clothes she stole from his dresser and left the house of corpses behind. She ventured out into the chilly darkness of night, into the human-filled streets. They were such fools for children in distress, and using the shapes of Bryan and that whiney little bitch Jessica, she had both a male and female disguise to play in.

Bryan would do for now, until she got bored or was forced to change. She couldn't wait to find another soul to toy with. Driven by their desires, humans became so easy to corrupt once she knew what they wanted. Corrupting them was the act of fattening them up for the slaughter, and was almost as satisfying as devouring them. She would salivate over the little piggy while she fed it, and dream of how good it will look on her dinner plate, and how juicy it will taste in her mouth.

Corrupt and devour, corrupt and devour. There were countless ways to play with humans, and though she knew she shouldn't, Eiradaht would never stop playing with her food.

It was just too much fun.