

It's Not Polite to Stare

by Jan Alonso

This experience is one I had as a teen that recently got jogged because of a family reunion. As a child, growing up in the countryside I found the days to be peaceful and the nights beautiful. Occasionally though we would get strangely heavy fog, on those days my parents would become paranoid; Locking doors, shutting windows, and the thing that they stressed the most about was ensuring that the curtains and blinds were drawn. On multiple occasions we would ask why, the only response was, "it's not polite to stare." That behavior seemed normal for any child, but the terror in their words expressed a different sentiment. Where we lived, the countryside was a bit like the wild lands. The nearest law enforcement agency was miles away and we couldn't rely on them to protect us.

Now my father, he's one of the bravest men I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, a boar hunter by blood. But what drove home the fact that we were to fear the fog was that whenever it showed up, my father would get cold sweats, and generally take on a cowardly attitude, refusing to even go outside if it wasn't essential to our survival. Fast forward to our high school days and everything is fine. One day our parents had to leave for a week or so to visit a dying family member. They wanted us to come along but my two siblings and I were too busy doing our own things to go along. In response they decided to leave us at home, so long as we didn't cause too much trouble and promised that whenever the heavy fog came around, to essentially barricade ourselves inside the house.

We agreed, it was going to be awesome to be left alone for an entire week. A few nights later, as we were fast asleep a huge fog rolled in. Ever since I was little I had a sixth sense whenever this type of fog rolled in. I really don't know what to call it, all I do know is that had

my sixth sense not woken me up, I don't know if we'd still be alive. As the fog rolled in, I instantly woke up, the hairs on my body standing on edge. I quickly realized that the entire house was covered in a fog so thick it looked like something out of the mist. Remembering my parents' worry I rushed to wake my brother. When he woke up, he noticed that the fog had practically surrounded our house, he hurriedly got up and scrambled in shutting the curtains in our room. While I went across the hall into my sister's room. I was expecting her to be asleep but she was sitting up and staring out her window. She didn't even bother to acknowledge me, she just continued looking. Wanting to know what it was that had her attention, I went over to her window. I stared for a bit until I noticed a black silhouette getting bigger and bigger, coming closer to us.

My initial reaction was to open the window and see if it was one of our neighbors. But my sister put her hand on my own, shaking her head. I knew better than to go against her decision to keep the window closed. Soon after she closed the blinds to her window and we continued going through the house performing our parent's ritual. Eventually we met back up in the hallway, going over every single thing that had been locked, shut, or drawn. All that was left was to close the blinds in the bathroom and the kitchen, the door as well. My brother decided to do the bathroom while I went for the kitchen, sis was just doing an inspection of the living room. What I spotted on that fateful night will never leave me. Even now that I live in the city, whenever a fog rolls through I go to lock the doors and close my curtains. As I went for the kitchen, standing there I saw my mother, but she was different. She had this core chilling, toothy smile. Her eyes were devoid of anything that even remotely screamed humanity. As if someone or something had sucked her very existence out of her body and simply wore her as some kind of skin suit. To this day I don't know if anything I saw was actually her or something else. But with

a too polite of a tone she told me that she was coming in and to not be afraid. The doorknob turned and instinctively I ran for the door. It—because whatever it was, it wasn't my mother—began to open the door when I shoved it closed. This didn't go down well with it, because it started banging on the door. Yelling that it was my mother and that it wasn't very polite to close the door on her. The banging was getting harder and harder, drawing the attention of both my brother and sister who came to me only to see me holding the door closed against our mother. They were confused, I would've been too, had I not seen the face of it.

But realizing that if I didn't close the door, it would get inside; I yelled at them to come help. Without hesitation they did and together we were able to lock the door in its face. However, we still had to close the door blind, and as we got up we found it with empty eye sockets; Dark and soul consuming darkness. Its mouth wasn't much better, open, as if shocked by our refusal to let it in. As we lowered the blind, its face came with it. My siblings and I never broke eye contact for that brief time that we lowered the door blind. But what it said as we finished closing the blind will never leave me. "It's not polite to stare."