Demons

Ву

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1985. Old thick air sits low and fog like in the rest of the room. The air around the bed Circulates through the sharp plastic bedside table fan blades. The smell of death lingers about like a thief in the shadows, waiting.

82 year old Jacob Rollins lay in bed, center stage, as Susan 45, sits at his side. His dreary, deep sunken eyes blink a little slower at this age. His breathing, now a deliberate action. Even though these are things he's just had to grow accustomed to at his age, it is evident that something is obviously troubling him.

Jacob inhales a deep slow breath as he prepares to speak.

JACOB When does a man end, and a monster begin?

Susan looks up to her father with a shocked look on her face... Partly because of his question, but more so because he chose to speak at all.

Bewildered, she forces a confused smile, and speaks.

SUSAN What do you mean?

Jacob stares at the wall ahead of him, oblivous to his daughter, as if it's not her he's speaking to.

JACOB What are you to do when the lines of right and wrong become so skewed, you don't know which is which?

Susan puts her hand on her father's as she furrows her brow. In a caring nurturing tone, she speaks.

> SUSAN Hey, what's with these questions? What's troubling you?

This physical contact causes Jacob to look his daughter square in the eyes. He closes his and sighs, knowing now is the moment he's dreaded for decades.

> JACOB Sweetheart, when you're as close to death as I am, when each passing second becomes more profound and (MORE)

JACOB (cont'd) missed than the previous one, the last thing you want to do is waste it worrying about things in the past.

Susan smiles, she rubs his hand.

SUSAN No need to worry about the past.

Jacob pulls his hand back, the jolted move slightly startles Susan.

JACOB I'm not worried about my past..

A pause.

JACOB I'm haunted by it.

This statement resonates with Susan. She puts her hand in her lap, now actually paying attention to her father.

JACOB Dear, there is something about me, about my past that you have no memory of.. I've intentionally kept it out of my past, and out of our lives. locked away in the public records, but something that has never ceased haunt me.

A pause.

JACOB

People love to think of justice as black and white, guilty is guilty. But it's not always that way. More often than not, the line is invisible between the two, and it's up to me, my best judgment, to determine the outcome. But what happens when the innocent are guilty?

Susan cocks her head to the side, and speaks.

SUSAN What are you talking about?

Jacob, almost on autopilot, continues mumbling, arguing with himself.

JACOB

Times were different then. People were raised up to think a certain way. I know that's no excuse, but that somehow made it all ok. It somehow added so much more weight to the decision.

Susan raises her voice a little louder now as she attempts to get her father's attention.

SUSAN

DAD.

He snaps out of it, and looks over at her.

SUSAN What are you talking about? A case of yours?

He sighs and nods.

JACOB

a case of mine.

Jacob points to his closet.

JACOB Up there, top shelf, is a cardboard box. Bring it to me, please.

Susan impatiently rises, and scurries over to the bedroom closet. She reaches above her head to the shelf, and blindly grabs the box.

She brings the box full of old records and photographs to her father.

Jacob thumbs through the papers until, in the bottom of the box, he finds it. A picture. He somberly hands the photograph to Susan.

She looks at the picture, confused.

SUSAN

Who is this?

She lowers the image, revealing the mugshot of a short, baby faced, African American boy.

JACOB David. His name was David. He was 14 when the state executed him. The (MORE)

JACOB (cont'd) youngest person to ever be executed in the United States. And I put him there.

Susan's mouth inadvertently drops.

SUSAN What did he do?

Jacob sighs.

JACOB Short of being born black in South Carolina,

He shrugs his shoulders

JACOB I don't really know anymore.

Susan, obviously unimpressed by Jacob's answer, presses further.

SUSAN I mean what was he convicted of?

Jacob rubs his brow

JACOB

It was spring 1945. A Saturday. Two little girls, sisters, 8 and 10, leave their house in the morning to play. Their mother grows concerned when they don't show up for dinner. By ten that night, a full blown search team had gathered.. They found the girls at 8 o'clock on sunday morning. They were face down, naked, bloody, battered, and beaten in a nearby field.

Susan puts her hands to her mouth. Jacob, stone faced, continues speaking as if he's reliving the nightmare.

JACOB Coroner said there were over 20 broken bones between the two of them. They more than likely suffocated on their own blood.

Susan, horrified, can't hold it in any longer. She gasps.

SUSAN My God, that's horrible.

JACOB Obviously a case as horrifying as this, in a county as small as this, justice had to be served. No excuses.

Susan is taken aback by her father's last cold hard statement. She musters a response.

SUSAN And David, how was he connected?

Jacob sighs.

JACOB

David was known around town as a bully, a mean spirited kid. He routinely threatened to beat up or kill anyone who got to close to his lawn... The last time the girls where seen alive were in David's lawn.

Jacob speaks with a sickened tone in his voice. It's evident that still to this day, the case has deeply affected him.

JACOB They were asking about flowers. Little girls just interested in picking god damn flowers.

His voice breaks. Susan looks at her Father, half shocked he cursed in front of her, and saddened to see still how this all affected him.

Jacob clenches his old wrinkled fists.

She studies her father's words as his old time southern soul begins to show.

JACOB Something had to be done. A nigga boy killing two innocent white girls. I wasn't going to stand for that. No one was.

Susan puts her hands on his clenched fingers. Jacob exhales, and calms. She's always had a knack for calming him. His voice lowers.

JACOB

By Monday evening, police had David in custody. No warrant, and frankly, they didn't need one.. His parents weren't home and his siblings couldn't even spell "warrant" if their life depended on it. So they drug him out of his own house that night, and down to the station. That was the last time his family would ever see David alive.

Jacob reaches over to his bedside table and grabs the glass of water that's probably been there for days. He takes a gulp.

JACOB

I don't know what happened the next 3 hours in the interrogation room. As District Attorney, I made it specifically a point to not know what happened, but after three hours I had a broken boy... and a signed confession.

Susan clears the massive lump in her throat. Too uncomfortable to hear anymore, she speaks.

SUSAN

Dad, please it's ok, I don't need to hear this. I love you, I always will and nothing ch

Jacob, desperate, cuts her off. He pleads.

JACOB Susan, please. I just need you to hear this. It's extremely important to me that you do.

Reluctant, Susan closes her eyes and nods.

Jacob settles back into his story.

JACOB

I had all I needed to try David for double murder. No bail was set, and his trial would take place later that week. I made the decision to seek the death penalty, and it only took one afternoon in court to convince 13 white jurors that this was the appropriate course of (MORE) 6.

JACOB (cont'd) action. That David May would be executed for his heinous crimes.

Jacob's story is interrupted by a coughing fit. This gurgling, uncontrollable bloody cough reminds us why he's bed ridden, and why the house sits quiet, like it's already preparing for a wake.

Susan grabs a nearby rag, and tends to her dying father.

After a while, he is finally ready to continue.

JACOB

I didn't doubt my decision, not at that point. Surrounded by the County sheriff, District Judge, and 13 person Jury, all patting me on my back, I knew what occurred that day was a step towards retribution for the family. A family still grieving the loss of two little lives. I thought of you, Susan. I thought how would I feel if you were taken away from me. That hate fueled rage drove me. It wasn't his color. He could've been purple and it still wouldn't have mattered. It was the crime. It was the blood of those two little sisters on his hands.

Jacob chokes up again, but this time, not because of his stage 4 lung cancer, but because of his emotions. A tear trails down his sunken cheeks and hang on his fading jaw.

JACOB It wasn't until the day of his execution that I began to doubt. David's sister and mother met me at my car, weeping. "I was with David the whole day" His sister pleaded, "We were painting the house the whole weekend. I never let him out of my sight."

Susan's eyes begin to mist like that of her father's. But, like a bad wreck, she stays glued to her father, hanging on his every word.

JACOB This was the first time in my entire career that I had a family (MORE)

JACOB (cont'd)

approach me directly like that. I was taken aback. But I was more taken aback by her eyes. You can tell so much about a person from their eyes. Your grandmother always told me that. And these eyes, weren't lying. I thought it funny this was never brought up in interrogations, why wasn't this argued in court? But, after assurances from the Sheriff himself, and the signed confession, I knew we still had our killer.

A PAUSE.

JACOB

The time had finally come. They brought David into the execution chamber, shackles to big, with a bible at his side. I felt the dark cloud of doubt starting to creep up in my conscience. "He's guitly," I told myself. They had issues clasping the electrodes to the trembling boy's body. He couldn't have been 95 pounds soaking wet, and for the first time ever, I saw David as he truly was..

He gulps.

JACOB

A child. "He signed the confession," I assured myself. But when the officer had to use David's bible as a booster seat for the electric chair, I began to tremble.

Susan's leg begins to bob up and down as her nerves begin to get the better of her.

Jacob's tears begin fall steady now, an impressive sight judging by his drawn up, dehydrated body.

JACOB

The officer pulled out the adult sized black face mask as they charged the machine. I attempted to catch his eyes. I knew if I could just get a glimpse of David's eyes, that would be all the proof,

(MORE)

JACOB (cont'd)

all the assurance, I needed. "Spot the lie, tell the eye." But, David stared straight down as he silently wept. His cries became louder as they placed the pitch black mask over his face. I shook like a leaf as they read his last rights. This wasn't right. Killing a kid wouldn't save these girls. They were gone...

A pause.

JACOB

The officers pulled the lever right in the middle of an exhale from the boy. The sound of his vocal chords tensing up from the first jolt of electricity will haunt me in this life and the next. After the first electric charge, the black cloth face mask slipped off his small head, and finally I saw them... His eyes. His tear filled eyes. I tried as hard as I could, but no amount convincing would ever change what I saw in that poor boy's eyes. Truth. He was telling the truth. No matter what anyone else said, there was no blood on that boys hands.

Jacob lowers his head in shame and sobs. Susan, leans over and hugs her father.

> JACOB I have finally accepted my crimes. I killed a child, just like the murderer to those little girls. I've made my bed, now I'm ready to lie in it....

The two release from their loving embrace.

JACOB When does a man end and a monster begin?

He shrugs.

JACOB Who knows... But I'm more interested in knowing when a monster can go back to being a man. FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FIELD - DAY, DREAM

Two little sets blood covered feet can be seen in the grass, A 40 year old Jacob, horrified, makes his way closer. Suddenly, to his left, the lifeless body of David May lay in the tall amber grass.

Jacob panics, turns around, and notices the entire town behind him. Confused and flustered, he looks down and raises his hands.

His blood covered hands.

CUT TO BLACK.