

THE TERRORS THAT  
COME BY NIGHT

By  
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## THE PINK DRESS

FOURTEEN YEAR OLD ARBADELLA FREEMAN was on top of the world. She skipped along the sidewalk with glee, hoping someone, anyone, was looking out of their windows. Her pink dress was the result of two unlikely planets coming into alignment, first that some pink silk cloth came up for sale at all after Pearl Harbor, and second that her mother was able to afford to buy it. Her father was one of the Tuskegee Airmen, a war hero of the first magnitude but certainly making less than the butcher down the street, and for 1943 Harlem that was quite small.

She had begged and pled with her mother to wear that lovely Easter dress to school the next day. She did not want to admit that there was a young boy she wanted to impress, but her mother, who was a little girl once, understood such things and did not press the point. "But don' you get dat dress dirty young lady or dey's gonna be words, you understand?"

Arbadella understood all too well. She knew how many things her mother gave up for her and was suitably

grateful. She had looked at herself in the mirror and exclaimed, "I'm another Judy Garland, mama!" Except of course that Judy Garland was white, did not have pigtails, and had a lot of fine clothes. But her mother understood exactly what she meant and said, "You sho' do, honey. You is so beautiful, child, I just want to eat you up."

She passed the corner of Jonkers and Main where the Rabonowitz' lived. She liked Chaim who was about her age even though there was no question at the time nothing would come of it. After all, they were just friends. She had reserved her emerging feminine wiles for Jimmy. Still, it wouldn't hurt if Chaim looked out the window and saw her and thought she was pretty. "No harm in that," she thought. "No sir, no harm in telling the truth."

She looked at the apartment building and counted up three levels of windows and over five. Darn, the blinds were drawn! He would never see her! What a shame to let all that beauty go to waste!

She heard quick footsteps. Just then a man ran past her on the sidewalk. For one brief moment she saw that he was wearing a zoot suit, but his watch in his mad flight had come loose and was dragging behind him on the sidewalk at the end of its long chain. "Where's the fire?" she shouted after him but he didn't look around.

A car came out of a side street and turned on two wheels with a screech like a mad ghost in pain. What happened then seemed to take place in slow motion. There was a glint of a metal barrel sticking from the side

window of a brown Ford touring car. Then Arbadella heard what she thought was firecrackers. POP POP POP!

A stunning blow hit the side of her head. She heard a scream. It was her voice. The sidewalk was rushing toward her face. She tried to ward off the oncoming collision but her arms were not quick enough.

Darkness.

## TO SLEEP

MRS. FREEMAN SAT NEXT TO THE HOSPITAL bed, clutching her daughter's tiny hand. Arbadella's blood stained dress had been cut off and replaced with a sterile hospital gown, and her lovely face was swollen. The braided pigtails had been shorn by necessity and a bandage swathed her head.

"We are trying to keep the brain from swelling too much," the doctor explained slowly to the pained woman. "That's what happens when injuries like this occur. The brain has no where to go and it presses against the inside of the skull. That cuts blood off. That's why she's in a coma."

"Is my baby gonna live?" Mrs. Freeman asked in a hushed voice.

"We're doing everything we can. If she can possibly live, she will."

"When will she wake up?"

"Let's put it this way. We don't know how much damage was done and how much swelling there might be. She might be almost like her old self. She might be very different. And then there is the possibility we hope does not happen. She might not wake up."

Mrs. Freeman gasped. "Oh Sweet Jesus, no!"

"The longer she is under, the greater are the chances that she won't be her old self. But if you are a religious woman, it never hurts to get a second opinion from The Almighty."

Mrs. Freeman looked at her daughter and said gently, "If you can hear me baby, mama is here. Come back to me, sweetheart! Come back to me! And till you do, precious angel, may God give you sweet dreams, my love."

Hidden beneath the enigmatic face of Arbadella Freeman was anything but a sweet dream.

## DESTINATION UNKNOWN

ARBADELLA WALKED ALONG THE GRAY streets of a town with no name, searching the shadows fearfully for some clue to her escape. Before, as little children were wont to do, she would sometimes hear monsters stirring under the bed or rustling among the clothes in the closet. But before there was always momma. There was always the lamp and the love of someone whose love made every evil thing go away.

Here there was nothing but fear and anxiety. It had been so long, so dreadfully long, no telling if it had been hours or days. And the eyes that peered out of the alleyways would hiss or snicker, sometimes chasing her until she nearly collapsed.

One particularly nasty creature, however, did not run after her. He just relentlessly walked behind her, stopping when she turned around, but trailing her, waiting, watching, biding its time. That was the one she feared most of all. She knew it as "Mister Death."

She thought to evade the creature by running into a building. Frantically she went from side to side of the street trying doors, yanking the unyielding handles and beating frantically and screaming, "Help me! Help me PLEASE!" But the doors were all locked.

Then she thought to run down into an alley and try to lose it. She hurried along until she met a wall.

The alley was a blind alley.

She stood there with her back against the wall with a collection of sorry looking trashcans about her and waited as Mr. Death nearly passed by, then stopped, looked around, and spotting her came about the bend.

"If it's a dream," she thought, "will I really die if it kills me?"

In a moment of lucid thinking, she did the only thing she thought might help. She crossed her arms over her chest and shouted loudly, "Jesus! Jesus, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, and lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil!"

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## SHAZAM!

SUDDENLY, A FLASH OF GOLD LIT UP THE drab monochrome landscape. A lion, the largest lion Arbadella would imagine...or could imagine...interposed himself between her and the beast.

Oh great, another fierce creature! She called for a miracle and got a hungry lion! She felt let down, the worst let down of her life. God had abandoned her to her fate.

And yet the lion did not come for her. Instead he turned quickly and with a mighty slash of his paw turned the beast back. He then roared, long and deeply and powerfully, and the creature turned and hurried away.

When he turned about, Arbadella got a close look at the lion's face. It was a beautiful face, full of character and grace. The lion approached her but she made no attempt to run.

"Arbadella, sweetheart, come to me. I will not hurt you."

"I know," Arbadella said, "I can tell."

She came forward and, sensing it would be all right, placed her palms against his mane and felt the warm softness of his fur. "You saved me! You're my hero!"

The lion purred and nuzzled her gently. "This place is the prison of your fears, my child. You're asleep, and you will be asleep for a rather long time. I cannot leave you here to suffer. I'll take you to a place where you can make new friends and be safe from the terrors that come by night."

"Is it Heaven?"

"Not yet. You have more living to do before you die. But this place is a lot like Heaven. And you'll be happy to know it's in full color. It's also quite real. It will be your home until you're ready to wake up."

The lion breathed on the wall behind the trapped girl. A doorway formed in the brick wall. "This door leads to Narnia and freedom," Aslan said. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

"Seek and ye shall find," Arbadella whispered in awe.

"Ask and it shall be given unto you." The lion smiled and so did Arbadella.

**THE END**