

4. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

I remember during the nineties I used to ride with my father while he was listening to Rush Limbaugh. When I was five or six, I would even sing along with the jingles on his show. But it didn't take me long to recognize the specious nature of the statistics that he cited. Basic research on the internet revealed the gaping holes in his argument.

It was only when I was twelve that I realized that there was another more devious side to his reasoning. Limbaugh attempted to reduce every detail of scientific fact to an impeachable anecdote. Then he would routinely claim that the storyteller had simply *made it all up*. His staff helped him discover rather bizarre exemplars that he would generalize to force fit a majority of the cases. He would then round off the edges that explained the circumstances of such unusual story-telling. With such a method, he could easily dismiss the women who decried abuse at Tailhook. He implied a level of narrative fluency on the part of the accusers that far outdid the brute mistreatment perpetrated by the accused.

He cleverly attributed a liberal conspiracy that motivated such story-telling. No doubt there were con artists who plied their craft by such intricate subterfuge. But such methodology was never something automatic, and often was indicative of some further level of mistreatment. Limbaugh would love to suggest that the young witnesses of child abuse were just such junior con artists.

When the Limbaughs of the world examined my incident with young Vince, they would no doubt accuse me of exaggeration. They would follow such defamation by saying that I simply made it all up. And there would be a host of willing detractors who would turn state's evidence just for the chance to besmirch my character. Go Suzie and her friends!

The final step would be to highlight my motives for trying to attack the upstanding Vince. I was not well-liked in the social circle. I was envious of the success of others. And I was overcome with some radical critique of the profit system and used my leftist cant to speak negatively of the hard-working citizens of Roswell. After all, Vince's father owned a car dealership. And I was trying to make a statement against making money and materialism.

Again Limbaugh's criticism boiled down to one simple fact: *I made it all up*.

The drive to the zombie lifestyle went one step further with Fox News. They had learned from their liberal opponents. In the nineties, they took their time to accuse liberals of making things up. In the new decade, they went one better: they themselves learned how to make things up. And from then on, they spent their time trying to create the perfect story with which to hoodwink the viewers.

If seeing was believing, that was all that it took. Once the world around you went zombie, no one would be able to tell the difference. You would turn the corner to catch a conversation, "When I was a boy..." He would stop in mid-sentence, and then he would continue...

But if he made up the story, there would be no continuation. Not until he made the right connection. And it would all flash before his eye like a TV movie. Made up just for TV.

"My daughter used to have the same problem. But we found a way to get her psyche adjusted." For once, Bill developed a complete thought on his own. Of course, Hazel was there to back him up. The only question was when they started this little game and where it would

end. I held my breath. That was my one salvation. I could see that they were working together, but they had no idea I was watching.

I was over Emma Moore Elementary as I resolved to serve my remaining sentence with what approximated a sunny demeanor. Even though I had accommodated myself to my exile, I retained a glimmer of hope that I still might find friends somewhere in my neighborhood. Esmeralda lived just down the street from me, and she seemed like a pleasant girl. I thought that I was adept at reading faces and was ready to test my skills. Pleasant seemed like the perfect antidote to Suzie and her parties.

Esme invited me down to her house to watch a movie. Her mother even made popcorn for us. She had a taste for old black and whites. Hitchcock and the like. I found this quite charming. We watched this Cary Grant picture. Her mother even took a peek in on us to make sure things were going well. In a friendly way, I felt that we were taking a journey back to the fifties. This was so different from the modern experience of Hazel and Bill. I felt as if I had truly found a home.

Every so often Esme talked about her men. I assumed that she meant boys from school. "We do things!"

I assumed that she meant video games. I had no reason to think otherwise. She tried to act very mature for her age. Her vocabulary proved to be almost as learned as mine. Every so often she would make a sexual comment that shocked me. But this all seemed part of her trying to act adult. I also attributed to the fact that her father didn't live with her, and she was trying to make up for his absence.

That evening as I was about to leave, Esme's mom stopped me by the door.

"Esme doesn't have many friends. So she's really excited that you stopped on by."

I started to make this a regular thing. This was my refuge from home and was also a lovely contrast with my days at school.

I thought that I was in touch with something full of hope. Sure it was only evenings watching movies but I felt as if I was entering an alternative world that welcomed my kind. I seemed to walk in air among these phantoms, and I accepted myself as an ethereal being. This must have been the feeling shared by those early travelers who first watched the early movies of the late nineteenth century. They were the first to bring these spirits to life so that they could live among us. Esme helped me create these miracles, and I cherished her for her power.

One night I was over there, and she revealed to me, "I have a treat."

It was *Singing in the Rain* with Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds. We both went crazy imitating the dances. We were bouncing off the walls and tables. Esme's mom came down.

"What is going on down here?" she screamed.

But when she saw that we were dancing a big smile came over her face.

"Kids, do you need anything more?"

"Mom, I'm OK."

We were all doing fantastic!

I had heard about these movies, but I had no idea that they could be so fun. This was a place of safety for me. Nevertheless, there continued to be these unusual clues that things were not all right.

Sometimes in the middle of a movie, Esme would get all weird about what was going on

in a bedroom.

“They’re obviously having sex. They never showed anything in those days.”

It was as if she wanted to see more. Something was disturbing the pastoral calm. Every so often she would tell me about her friends. There was Tim.

“He’s a little older. But I feel comfortable when I’m with him.”

And there was Eddie.

“Eddie has his own house. We go party there. You have to come with me when I go up there.”

It sounded like a fine idea, and I agreed to go along with her.

I had the strangest dream. Esme was a queen, an evil queen. And she realized that I was her rival. And she was using her powers to stalk me. She had tracked me back to my house. It was deserted. And I decided to hide under my bed. It seemed like such a stupid choice.

Esme wandered into my room looking for me. She searched everywhere except under the bed. She left the room as if she had missed me.

“You think that you’ve escaped. I know exactly where you’ve been hiding. Under the bed.”

I tried to scamper away, but she tackled me.

“Please don’t hurt me!”

“The more that you resist, my sweet, the more that I will torment you.”

The dream was absurd. I had enough mental anguish from Suzie and Vince. I needed no more to upset me. I took the dream for exactly what it was, the sign of an overactive imagination. I could hardly accuse Esme of being a persecuting queen.

On the other hand, I felt trepidation about accompanying Esme to visit her friends. Her house was something that I knew. I liked her mom. But I wanted to avoid at all cost these mysterious friends and the unknown house.

I feared that I had already assented to a meeting. I would have to prepare myself for the worst no matter how bad that could be. After all, they couldn’t be worse than my nightmare. Or could they?

I finally relented. Tim picked us up at Esme’s and drove us to a house.

Tim pulled out the key and let us in.

“Is this your place?” I asked.

“No, it’s Eddie’s. He’s a cool guy. He lets me bring my friends here.”

“Yeah, he’s a cool guy,” I said under my breath. So this was Eddie’s. I went in last. I felt as if I was entering a haunted house.

There was a set of wooden stairs to my right. Rather narrow, compared to what I was used to. They stopped at a landing with a window. Then they continued at a right angle.

“We’re going downstairs.”

“Great,” I replied.

Esme was still pretty mellow as if she was high or something. But I had been with her for a while and didn’t notice her taking anything. Maybe she was just in awe over everything. Of course, she’d been here before.

The downstairs basement was finished in some cheap seventies style. It looked like a scene out of one of those disco movie. There was even a disco ball down there.

In the middle of the room was a pool table. I sucked at pool. I tried to play.

“You’re pretty good.” Eddie was trying to be nice.

I got bored playing after while. Esme had got pretty good from coming here a lot. I watched her do a tough banking shot.

“So, Tim, where do you live.?”

“I share a place with a roommate on Buford highway.”

“How do you pay for it?”

“Eddie gives me money. And I work part-time at a gas station.”

“So you do odd jobs for Eddie.”

Esme joined in, “You could call them very odd.” She laughed to herself.

I turned to her, “Are you OK?”

“Why? Did I hit that shot badly?”

She seemed oblivious to it all.

Eddie called out to me, “Haley, go get us some drinks.”

I just wanted a coke. But I knew that Esme wanted a beer along with Eddie.

It was deserted upstairs. The street lights came into the window of the kitchen to cast a strange shadow, like a gargoyle or something.

I turned on the light to make the shadow disappear. Eddie had one of those old Maytag fridges. I pulled out the drinks and headed back downstairs.

“If you’re bored Haley, there are movies to watch upstairs.”

He had a bunch of videos and a few DVD’s. I found a horror movie complete with the weirdest screams. I was nodding off as I put it in.

I turned it off after a half an hour and went back downstairs.

“If you’re going to come down, bring us drinks,” Esme made her point to me.

“I wasn’t thinking.”

“Don’t bother,” said Tim.

“No, I’m thirsty.” Esme was bitching me out. I ran back upstairs with more drinks.

Esme was in a freaky mood. I couldn’t take it. I just wanted to leave.

Tim was trying to smooth things over, “Go upstairs and we’ll come up in about a half-hour.”

I turned the horror movie back on. A girl was getting chased around the house by a guy with an ax. It felt scary because I could hear footsteps upstairs above the entertainment room. I ignored the noises. Some people that I know can’t stand horror. It gives them nightmares. Not me. But my imagination was playing tricks with me. I felt like there were ghosts in the house.

I went back downstairs. Esme was lining up a difficult shot. But when she heard me, it threw her off, and she missed.

“I thought that you were going to wait upstairs,” she said.

“I was. But I heard noises.”

Tim informed me, “It’s Eddie. He just got up from his nap.”

I guessed that was the problem.

“I’ll just wait for you.”

“We’ll leave soon.”

I felt like a prisoner.

The movie was getting silly. The monster was chasing everyone with an ax. Everyone was yelling these crazy yells. I started to imitate them. It helped me settle down.

Every time that a character yelled on TV, I would yell. I was enjoying myself. But something more unusual started to happen. I would yell. Then someone else would yell back. I stopped the DVD, but the yelling continued.

I was really afraid. I opened the door to the downstairs. I could hear Esme yelling. She was screaming louder and louder. Tim was trying to kill her. I needed to stop him. I kept quiet so I wouldn't get caught.

There they both were on the pool table naked. And he was thrusting inside her. And she was lost in the throes of passion. Neither one knew that I was there. I had never seen anything like this. I was freaking out. I wanted to scream back. I wanted to do something. I just ran back up the stairs.

When I got to the top of the stairs, he was there. I jumped ten feet in the air. It was Eddie.

"I didn't break in! Tim brought me."

"A friend of Tim's is a friend of mine."

I felt cornered.

"So what have you been doing?"

"Watching a movie."

"Great. I love to watch movies. This is my place. I'm Eddie."

"I'm Haley."

"How old are you?"

I wanted to sound older. I didn't want to let on how frightened I was, "I'm fourteen"

"You look a little young for fourteen. But what do I know.?"

"Well, I really should go now. It's getting late."

"Are you going to wait for Tim and Esme?"

"They may be a while. They're deep in a game of pool downstairs."

"Yeah, once they get into playing, they get so excited, they can't stop. Sometimes I have to help them out."

"Really?"

He seemed concerned, "I do what I can. It's even better when they let me play. Don't you play pool."

He was moving closer to me.

"I'm not very good."

I was looking for the door. I wanted to make my break.

Eddie offered me some advice, "You only get good if you practice. We all are beginners sometime. I bet that I could give you some help."

"That sounds really gracious. Maybe another time."

"Of course. I've got some great books to look at in my study. Do you like to read about knights and dragons."

I was hesitant. I didn't want to let on how I really felt.

"I'd like to come back another time to look at your books. But it's getting late, and I

should get home.”

“It is late. Too late to go home on your own. Tim and Esme should be ready in a while.”

“They were having a lot of fun down there.”

“They do get carried away. If you want to wait a while, I could drive you.”

I wanted to call my parents to come and get me. But I didn’t want then quizzing me about my friends. I started to walk towards the door. It was dead bolt and there was no key around. I hoped that it was open.

It wasn’t.

“I’ve had some kids trying to break in. So I locked the door. Sorry about that. I could get the key.”

I was getting frantic. “You do that!”

“Let’s go upstairs. I can show you some books. I’m really a nice man.”

He reminded me of the old horror actor Boris Karloff. I had watched some of his movies.

“Just let me go.”

“I’m not holding you against your will. Just go and get Esme and you can leave.”

“I just have to go on my own.”

“Esme has come upstairs with me before. She loves my books.”

“I want to go.” There were tears in my eyes. If he was going to try something, would he do it now while we were alone. He must have known what was going on downstairs.

“Calm down, child. I mean you no harm,” he pretended to reassure me. But I could see that he was getting ready to attack. I ran to the door again. I wrestled with the lock.

My hands were wet. They slipped off the lock.

“You are going to need the key.” He pulled the key from his pocket and held it above me.

I jumped for it like a little dog.

“Don’t worry, Haley, I am going to let you go.” I hated the way he said *let you go*, as if I was in a cage.

As I ran from the house, I turned in the wrong direction. I was going away from my house. I kept moving until I was tuckered out. Then I just wandered on. Tim found me in his car.

“Get in.”

“You left me there; I’m not getting in there with you.”

Esme was next to him, “Don’t be silly. We’re at least five miles from our place. Maybe more with all that you walked.”

“I don’t want to go. Go screw off.”

Tim got out of there car and led me to the back seat. I had this vision of them taking me back to Eddie.

“I don’t want to go back there.”

Esme wanted me to calm down. “You had nothing to be afraid of. I’ve been upstairs with him. The books are nothing to be afraid of.”

Tim contradicted her, “You shouldn’t have gone up there with him.”

“Tim, you left me alone in the house.”

To get back to my place, he needed to drive past Eddie’s. It was all dark now. There wasn’t even a light on in front. Still, I was waiting for him to slow down and stop.

“You never have to come back there,” Tim told me.

Esme sighed.

Tim ended dropping us at Esme’s.

“What were you doing down there?” I was shocked.

“Don’t be so naive, Haley. You know good and well what we were doing down there.”

“You’re all of twelve years old. How old is Tim?”

“He’s eighteen or nineteen. But it’s no big deal. I like it.”

“Your body’s hardly ready for it.”

“I’ve been doing it for while. I like it. You should have gone upstairs with Eddie.”

“What do you mean?”

“He’s got some really nice books up there.” When she said that, I felt enclosed in the darkness.

“What do you mean?”

“He’s giving me gifts. He’s given me presents.”

“He’s an old man.”

“He’s not that old. And he has feelings. He cares for me. Almost like a father.”

“Your father would never do that sort of thing to you.”

She seemed lost, “You don’t know my father. He doesn’t live with us anymore.”

I was curious, “Was he ever like that?”

“No, but he scared me a lot. He drank, and he screamed at me a lot.”

“That’s not the same thing.”

“It wasn’t your experience. You can’t know.”

I didn’t want to know. I just wanted to get away as quickly as I could. Esme had found her own way of coping. But it just seemed to bring the horror to life. Every second was a new nightmare.

“Tim and I had fun. I’ve had fun with Eddie. He has a job, and his own house. He’s not that old. He’s in his thirties. And he makes me feel like an adult.”

“Does he give you drugs?”

“He lets me make my own decisions

“But you’re not an adult.”

“You can’t say that. I’m as old as I want to be.”

I had this nightmare that Eddie had me tied down to the bed. He was coming closer to me. I was losing my mind.

I thought about reporting him to the police. But what could I say. He never actually did anything to me. And I only had suspicions about him and Esme. Besides, I didn’t want to get my parents involved. They would only lecture me about sex. That was the last thing that I needed.

Needless to say, I couldn’t go back to visit Esme. I couldn’t put that image of her having sex with Tim out of my mind. I wasn’t a prude. There was more going on here. In some way or other, she was being coerced in that house. And it didn’t stop with Tim. I was surprised that I couldn’t figure out anything when I was first over at her house. Her mother was always so nice. I really feel that she knew nothing of what was going on. She maintained this view of her daughter as the sweetest angel. Little did she suspect the spine-tingling horror that enticed her

own child.

I think that it is the hardest thing in our lives to let go of this innocence. In many ways it is a false image created by the Bills and Hazels to shelter us from the actual truths of our lives. It is only a short step to the images of domination that captivate the television viewer. That is precisely what appealed to Esme. More than I, she felt excluded from the hip kids at school. She saw the trappings of privilege. And she felt the hurt of her father's abandonment. So she reconciled herself to this replacement.. It made her seem like an adult when adults were really absent from her life.

She could have shared all this with her mother. But she blamed her mother for the end result. This was her own way of getting back at her mother. It was so tragic. I wished that I could intervene. I just wanted to shut down. All this had been so overwhelming for me. I just knew that there was something more important in my life.

I could have easily succumbed to the pressure of Bill and Hazel to rush off to church on Sunday morning. But their glib condemnation would have made it even harder for Esme to make her way. Maybe I was being just as judgmental as the were by shutting my friend out. But what could I say. I wasn't going to convince her to stop having sex with Tim. And if it wasn't Tim, it would be someone just like him.

Maybe I could tell her that Eddie was a pervert. And over time she would distance herself from his influence. But there was a darkness that I feared that was too intense for me to figure out.

I thought about it deep and hard. There was nothing whatsoever that appealed to me in that house. From the moment that I walked in there, it gave me the creeps. I didn't like the pool playing. I hated watching movies there. And I recoiled in fear when Eddie appeared. That was all that I could say.

I didn't want to get drunk so that I could numb myself to the pain. I wanted to face it head on and then cast it off from my experience. I didn't have to put up with that shit. If Bill and Hazel had been more adept at their indoctrination, I might have surrendered more easily. Eddie offered Esme money. He gave her alcohol. He gave her drugs. He gave her the tools to take her psyche back from a submissive mother and a dominating father. In so doing, she was submitting to a new order. It was the same as Bill and Hazel worshipping at the altar of the new Moloch.

Just thinking about it all gave me a strength to resist. But I also felt crushed. Was there nothing in the world that could stand up against the onslaught?

There was an even worse alternative. One day, Esme could turn against her jailers by surrendering to a more severe master. More than anyone, she was the perfect candidate for a total conversion. She could turn her back on the world of pleasure and embrace an even more exacting authority. On that Sunday, Bill and Hazel could pick up the poor darling and profess their faith together.

I could feel the authority figures embracing me. The jack boots marched in the distance. And I was lulled to sleep by their rhythmic pace. There was to be no rest for the wicked. And the devil's work was never done.

I looked at a pile of school books on my desk. Indeed, tomorrow was Sunday, and I could commit myself to study as a way of relieving my pain. For the time being, that was hardly

sufficient. I felt as if I was seeing things. Eddie had somehow made it into my room.

I worked to close out that image. But I just remembered the door locking behind me.
 “You’d like to stay.”

Vince had been one thing. He had twisted his way psychologically into the heart of my being. But Eddie went further. He tore at my guts and left nothing behind to make my defense. I had been battling Bill and Hazel all along. The zombies were only the beginning. Behind these foot soldiers was a more systematic force. Eddie was the practitioner. He thought of himself as a leader. He had his band of followers like some twisted Peter Pan. He recognized that his kids understood the pipes of power, and he knew how eloquently to blow the tune.

What was strangest for me was how Esme had made the transition from the magic of motion pictures to the terror of his sordid location. I always thought that she had the refined skills to counter such appeals. If I was wrong about her, I felt mistaken about myself. I had twice resisted the traps in my way. But what new snares had been set on my path. I felt susceptible to a more proficient Eddie.

Bill and Hazel left the house to me for the hours that they were at church. In the empty rooms, the ghosts had the opportunity to assert their power. But the heavy light of day drowned out their radiance. These twinkling stars of the night sky had no resilience against the strong morning sun. I used this time to regain my vigor. Sure I had slipped that night into the depths, but I let the noonday heat burn off any lasting depression. This was to be my time without any outside interference.

Before the owners made it back, I had buried myself deeply in my books. When Bill looked in on me, he was reassured that the holy message had also pervaded my spirit. I looked up from my books and smiled. All the mysteries that smile betrayed were lost on his blind faith.

Hazel may have been slightly more circumspect. After all, what child would willingly submit to the books on a lonely Sunday morning. But she took my book worm nature for granted even if she ultimately feared its consequences. She was still in awe of the whole process, and truly wondered if a twelve year old had the intellect to figure it all out. She took my resistance to her belief as a mere juvenile indiscretion. Not that her faith was based on that much theological profundity, but she still felt that she could take me to the mat on any argument on matters supernatural.

For me, that was exactly her motivation. Although not Catholic, she was of the strain that wanted the holy water to bless her every inclination. She relied on the Church to assert its authority where she had abdicated her own motherly instincts. The long arm of the Church provided a more logical caress than her own touch. Even if she was to remain emotionally cold, she could leave it to religion to fill in for whatever gaps in her own emotional makeup.

Oh Mommy! Religion was the nugget around which all other aspects of consumerism could expand their influence. Since she muted some of her buying habits, she believed that she was not as subject to the excesses of materialism that affected the other super moms. She had opted for a more conservative strain of the same theology. Work was thus based on the assurances of the consumer lifestyle to sustain its benefactors. She really took no time to analyze the actual nuances of the economics. Why should she when she still counted herself among the chosen few? Such were the deeply-embedded nostrums that drove community life in hospitable Roswell. I had no complaints.

The spacious kitchens and light-filled dining rooms and breakfast nooks were signs enough of a sentient divinity who held the order together. If the Lord inhabited the holy of holies, he was even more at home in these suburban confines. The architects of the suburban developments confidently allowed the burning spirit to dwell in their souls. And as a reward for such visitation, they extended their vision in spiraling geometries of these hillside communities. It was the elegantly designed amusement park of the soul.

As the newly endowed teen drivers tried to take advantage of these banked turns, they understood the deviousness that was locked away in these infernal plans. The developers had imprinted an eternity of intellectual challenges upon the landscape. If there was a lingering doubt within any single edifice, there appeared a systematic order that could overpower any agnostic. Drive me, baby!

For the poor souls like myself who continued to make their way on bicycle, the certitude was not so evident. And each trip only added further proof that all was not right in this artificial paradise. Knees were not for kneeling but for scraping on the unforgiving pavement so I did what I could to counter the messages of suburbia. And as night approached I realized that I would again have to face the demons ensconced in our devoted community.

It is one thing to realize the source of the deviance exhibited by Eddie. It was quite another to be able to resist his influence. Even I had quite soundly resisted his touch, there were still the after-effects of my encounter. Sunday night started to look bleak indeed as I again remembered all the features of that terrible visit.

“I remember when I was a girl,”

Precisely, this was the beginning of my troubles. How could I cast off the demon who had now burrowed himself into the heart of my being. The nasty parasite!

This seemed worse than the rats of *Nosferatu*. I could sense him mumbling next to me. If I would just lie back and allow the vile waters to flow into me. It was going to be next to impossible to sleep with such upheaval. This was just the cycle within which Esme found herself. She hated herself, hated her deformity. And when the hate became so intense, it was the drug that numbed her, and she sought it out.

She needed a million Tims to free her from the one Eddie. And when he was inside her, she could forget Eddie. And once, Tim must have seemed cute to her. But now he was only ravaged. And the it would be the same with every Tim. Down deep she craved the raw contact, and she had been turned into a devotee of Eddie. She pretended that it was different, but even Tim knew us much.

I felt that the rat was gnawing me from the inside. I screamed out but there was no sound. My fear suffocated me. Even if I quieted the monster tonight, how long would this suffering continue.

I was one of the lucky ones. I had survived intact. Unlike Vince, Eddie never made any claims to my person. But his dominance was more onerous. Was there no medicine to contain my fever?

I understood Esme’s transformation. She may have resisted the advances of her father. What had driven her into the arms of Eddie? Perhaps he had lured her to the house. Tim may have helped the first time. Or there may have been someone else. Early on, Eddie offered her an escape from her family and from her history. His alternative was more dastardly, but the

immediate rewards were a delight.

Eddie needed drugs. Just his form was enough of a narcotic for me. I could feel myself slipping into his realm. This was not restful sleep. I could feel the spirit battered in the nightmare.

I was certain that there were younger victims. Esme pretended such confidence, but her pain was apparent. I wished that I could warn the mother. How had she let her blindness obscure the facts of her daughter's enchaining. It all went back to the husband. Down deep, The mother blamed Esme for alienating her affection.

I wanted my perspective back. I could find no humor to ease me out of the depths of melancholy. I could not enjoy the experience. I would have hated being pinned to the pool table while Tim thrust his way inside of me.

Vince had tried to get inside. He had failed miserably. But Eddie had crushed me. For the time being, I felt that was sitting at the foot of his stairs waiting for him to hand me the key.

"See how easily you can gain your liberty."

"I refuse to give you what I want."

I was a little like Little Red Riding Hood. I was about to give myself to the nasty wolf, and he had all the attitude of a kind grandmother.

"Give me your hand, and I'll lead you out of the darkness."

"Open the door, fucker!"

I felt that I had crushed him. I fell asleep.