

Three Roses

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The world was too dark as I walked down the street. That was strange. Even as I trekked beneath the streetlights, I couldn't make out what was in front of me. Nervously, I pulled my jacket closer to my body and sped up. I rubbed the sides of my arms, shivering. There was Third street and Rose Avenue. Relief filled me as I continued my pace, knowing my house was a short distance away.

After a few moments I squinted back at the street signs, Third and Rose. My footsteps trailed to a slow crawl. I must have taken a wrong turn, nodding I faced forward urging myself to continue moving. A few moments later, I stared once again at the signs Third and Rose. Maybe I had just misread the signs the first time. I continued on. When the signs came into view I couldn't help but gawk at the words. I hadn't taken any turns, I should be home by now. Someone must have put something into my drink at the... where did I come from this late at night?

I came to a sudden halt at the realization; I didn't remember how I got here. I started to run as panic bubbled up in my chest.

I passed the signs Third and Rose.

There they were again. Third and Rose.

Third and Rose.

NO.

Third and Rose.

I screamed, clenching my fists, as I stopped underneath the streetlight once again.

Pausing to search my surroundings, my head tilted in confusion. There was something more off

than the never ending streets. I cried out slapping my hands over my mouth when it came to me; there was no sound. No echoes, no voices, I couldn't even hear my feet hitting the ground.

“Hello!” I shouted. The sound of my voice seemed to halt prematurely.

I was shaking now, turning in circles as I waited for something to be different. By the time I turned back to the street signs something had revealed itself. Its blackened face resembled a burn victim as it stepped into the strange flicker of the streetlight I was under. Its teeth were covered in the same soot that emitted from each breath it drew. It leaned forward snarling inches from my face.

“Ahhhhhhh!” My eyes forced themselves open, revealing my moonlit bedroom. There was an open window to my left, and my vanity to my right. My heart raced thumping in my chest cavity even as I gazed at the familiar room. I attempted to sit up but my body remained frozen against the bed. There wasn't even a twitch from my finger. I tried to settle my breathing in an effort to calm myself down. Movement from the corner of my eye hindered this as I watched as a black figure crawled out from behind my footboard.

Its face was burned severely with black dusted fangs. My mouth opened but there was no scream as the creature moved over me. It crawled up the bed, disfigured claws grasping at my legs as it moved closer to my face. I urged myself to move, to do anything to push myself away. As it inched forward I could see the bent angle of its spine as it twisted up and then sharply down as if broken.

Nausea built up in my throat as I made out another set of arms and hands. The disfigured hands traveled up my body, brushing past my stomach and collarbone before his entire body finally settled directly in front of me. The worst part about him was his eyes. Milky white hooded against blackened, burnt flesh. My fingers twitched against my covers. All I needed was

a second more. The creature got closer still. The hole where a nose should be brushed against my cheek. I shuddered once again before throwing myself off the bed and away from it.

My voice finally crawled out of my throat as I screamed, half-stumbling half-crawling toward the door. I turned back for a moment before I reached for the door knob. But to my surprise there was no creature in sight. All that remained of the interaction was the tangled up covers on the floor. I hesitated, crouching slightly down as I peeked under the bed and around the corners of the room. There was nothing, just a bad dream that left tear streaks on my face.

I clenched my chest as I plopped down in front of my vanity, trying to chase away the image of the disfigured creature. After my heart finally settled I rested my warmed forehead against the cool table glancing up to look at the mirror.

I fumbled out of the chair as I caught a glimpse of something next to me. To my horror there was an object placed on my vanity. One that had not been there before.

Three burnt roses rested within a clear glass vase.