

HOW I BECAME THE NIGHTMARE QUEEN

a one-act play by
Peter M. Floyd

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CAST OF CHARACTERS:

CASS
MOM
THE SOFTWARE BUG
THE WERE-TERRIER
THE FISH-EATING ZOMBIE
THE CHAMBERLAIN
THE CHANCELLOR
THE NIGHTMARE QUEEN
A MAN IN A BLACK HOOD
A GHOST WITH AN EVIL LAUGH
AN ALLIGATOR BEAST

Scene: CASS's bedroom, that of an ordinary if somewhat imaginative eleven-year-old girl, with posters of fantastical scenes and creatures on the wall and various bits of clothing strewn about. CASS is stretched out in her bed, wearing a T-shirt and pajama bottoms, texting on her phone. Something sent to her makes her laugh. At that moment, the bedroom door opens, and MOM enters.

MOM
What was that?

CASS
Nothing.

MOM
Something made you laugh, Cass.

CASS
No, I was only laughing 'cause I thought it was funny that my Mom was sitting outside just waiting to hear me laugh so she could come in and ask why.

MOM
I wasn't just lurking around waiting to hear you laugh. I wanted to see why you weren't in bed.

CASS
I *am* in bed.

MOM

You're not asleep.

CASS

I would be asleep if my Mom wouldn't keep talking to me.

MOM

No, you'd be texting. Why don't you turn out the lights now and actually go to sleep?

CASS

Because it's too early! Why should I have to go to sleep at 10:00? Jerry gets to stay up as late as he wants.

MOM

Jerry's older. You're still a kid, Cass.

CASS

I'm not a kid! I'm twelve years old.

MOM

Not yet.

CASS

I'm eleven years, ten months, and (*thinks for a moment*) sixteen days old. I might as well be twelve.

MOM

Twelve years old is still a kid.

CASS

No! Almost a teenager.

MOM

Almost. Now, go to bed and have pleasant dreams.

CASS

Who needs pleasant dreams? I don't. Bring on the nightmares. I can take 'em. Only kids are scared of bad dreams. I say the scarier the better.

MOM

Don't wish for nightmares, Cass. You'll be sorry.

CASS

Whatever.

MOM
Goodnight, Cass.

CASS
'Night.

MOM goes out the door.

CASS
Come on, nightmares. Scare you me if you think you can.

CASS turns off the light next to her bed, making the stage go dim. She rolls over and tries to sleep. After a moment, three figures enter, but not through the door of the room. Depending on the detail of the set, they can come in through a closet door, or perhaps just appear through the walls. In the dim light, they are no more than shadows. They are the SOFTWARE BUG, the WERE-TERRIER, and the FISH-EATING ZOMBIE.

SOFTWARE BUG (*spookily*)
Hey, little girl! We're coming to get you!

CASS (*sitting up*)
What?

SOFTWARE BUG (*pedantically*)
I said, "Hey, little girl! We're coming to get you!"

CASS turns on the light to reveal the three visitors. The SOFTWARE BUG is an insect-like creature with large antennae, the WERE-TERRIOR is part dog and part human, and the FISH-EATING ZOMBIE is a zombie chewing on a fish. Note that the costumes for the three characters need not be elaborate; indeed, they should look a bit lame.

CASS
I am not a little girl. I'm almost a teenager.

WERE-TERRIER
Well, whatever you are, we're coming for you.

CASS
Seems like you're already here. Who are you people?

SOFTWARE BUG
We're not people. We're monsters!

WERE-TERRIER
Monsters! Arf, arf!

ZOMBIE
Urrggh!

CASS
Oh, so this is my nightmare!

WERE-TERRIER
That's right! We're the darkest fiends from your
imagination! I am – the Were-Terrier!

CASS
The *what*?

WERE-TERRIER
The Were-Terrier! Part human, part dog, and totally fierce
and savage! Arf! Arf!

SOFTWARE BUG
And I'm what everybody fears: I'm the software bug! I make
your software buggy! And I've got these big antennae.
Aren't they scary?

ZOMBIE
Urrgh!

CASS
What about this one?

SOFTWARE BUG
That's the Fish-Eating Zombie.

CASS
You mean "flesh-eating zombie."

SOFTWARE BUG
No, fish-eating. This one really likes fish.

ZOMBIE
Zombie likes fish!

CASS

And why are you all here again?

WERE-TERRIER

To scare you! To terrify you! To petrify you!

The WERE-TERRIER howls, but it is a high-pitched and decidedly unfrightening sound.

CASS

But you're not scary.

SOFTWARE BUG

What are you talking about? We're terrifying! Arrgh! (*The BUG wiggles its antennae in a way meant to be threatening.*)

CASS

Totally boring. And you (*to the WERE-TERRIER*), terriers aren't scary at all.

WERE-TERRIER

'Course we are! We've got "terror" right in our name! "Terror-ier," right? (*Tries pronouncing it.*) "Terrier-or." "Terr-or-ier-or."

CASS

Yeah, whatever.

ZOMBIE

Zombie is scary! Zombies always scary.

CASS

Scary to a trout, maybe. Not to anyone who doesn't have fins.

ZOMBIE

Ooh. Now Zombie has hurt feelings.

WERE-TERRIER

"Terror-er."

CASS

I mean, who thought you guys could be scary?

SOFTWARE BUG

Well, the Queen, of course.

CASS

Queen? What queen?

SOFTWARE BUG (*dramatically*)

The... Nightmare Queen!

CASS

And who is that, exactly?

SOFTWARE BUG

The Nightmare Queen! The Queen, you know, of, well, of Nightmares. She's the one that created us.

CASS

She must be pretty new on the job then.

WERE-TERRIOR

Oh, no. She's been the Queen for as long as we can remember.

CASS

Really? 'Cause, no offence, but you guys are about as scary as a kitten video. I don't think your Queen knows what she's doing.

SOFTWARE BUG

Oh, you have no idea. In her time, she's created some dream creatures that would scare you half to death.

WERE-TERRIER

Yes, like the Midnight Axe-Man. Or Doctor Bones.

ZOMBIE

Don't forget Scissorhead Shark. Shark makes Zombie shiver.

SOFTWARE BUG

Then there was the Brotherhood of the Half Faces. I still get chills thinking of them. They were masterpieces.

The SOFTWARE BUG, the WERE-TERRIER, and the ZOMBIE all shiver appreciatively.

WERE-TERRIER

But lately the Queen's just hasn't been inspired. Instead of coming up with genuine terrors, she just has, well, us.

SOFTWARE BUG

Her heart just isn't in it any more.

ZOMBIE

Queen has lost her spark. That makes Zombie sad. (*It chews its fish mournfully.*)

WERE-TERRIER

Well, let's face it, she's been doing this for a long time. She's probably run out of ideas.

CASS

Well, can't anyone else come up with any ideas?

SOFTWARE BUG

What, one of us think of something scary?

CASS

Sure, why not? Thinking of scary things is easy.

SOFTWARE BUG

Oh, I don't know.

WERE-TERRIER

Oh, I can think of something scary! Umm... (*thinks for a bit*) Give me time.

ZOMBIE

No more fish. That would be scary.

SOFTWARE BUG

Only to you, Zombie.

WERE-TERRIER

Ooh, I've got it! How about someone who's a redhead by day, but at night turns into... a blonde person! That would be scary.

CASS

No, it wouldn't.

WERE-TERRIER

No, it wouldn't.

CASS

Can't you think of anything better than that? Like, I don't know, a big frog-creature with eyes two feet wide and a tongue that's actually a cobra!

SOFTWARE BUG, WERE-TERRIER and ZOMBIE

Ooh!

CASS

Or a man dressed all in black who creeps into your bedroom at night and steals your breath, which he keeps in a big jar!

SOFTWARE BUG, WERE-TERRIER and ZOMBIE

Ooh!

CASS

Or how about a monster that you can only see out of the corner of your eye, so you don't really know what it looks like, but you know it's horrible and it's going to grab you when you're not looking.

SOFTWARE BUG, WERE-TERRIER and ZOMBIE

Ooh!

SOFTWARE BUG

Those are great. You came up with those yourself?

CASS

Sure. It's not hard.

ZOMBIE

Zombie could never think of that. Not in a million years.

CASS

Look, you know what you should do? You should take me to see this queen of yours. I could give her some ideas for some good nightmares, instead of the lame-o ones she's been coming up with.

WERE-TERRIER

I don't know.

SOFTWARE BUG

Maybe we should. What's the harm?

ZOMBIE

Queen might get mad.

SOFTWARE BUG

Sure, but she'll get mad at Cass, not us.

WERE-TERRIER

Good point. Okay, let's go see the Queen!

CASS

Great! Is she far away?

SOFTWARE BUG

In the Land of Dreams, nothing is far away. To get somewhere, all you have to do is close your eyes and wish yourself there.

CASS

That's it?

WERE-TERRIER

That's it. Ready? We'll all say, "I wish to be in the Queen's castle."

CASS

I guess so.

The four of them all close their eyes.

CASS, SOFTWARE BUG, WERE-TERRIER and ZOMBIE
I wish to be in the Queen's castle.

(The ZOMBIE might actually say, "Zombie wishes to be in Queen's castle.")

The lights perhaps flicker a bit.

SOFTWARE BUG

You may open your eyes now.

The setting is now the QUEEN's throne room, dominated by a very large throne which now stands empty.

FOR FULL SCRIPT, CONTACT PMFLOYD01@GMAIL.COM