

Cat's Eyes

So the kid's greetin' and bawlin' again and I need to get up to see her. She's only wee I know, but this is getting' to be a pure joke. I'm workin' most of my days to pay for the stuff she's sleepin' and greetin' on and all she can do is sit there wae a sore face. She's keepin' me up all night an' it's just no workin'. So I get quickly out of my bed and move quietly along the wee blue corridor and there she is, under thae pink covers of hers hidin' like a limpet when the seagulls come tae shore. It's a weird position she's in; foetal I think it's called, aw curled up in the corner of her bed next tae the far wall. The only thing I can see is a wee blond curl peekin' out o' the side to the right, shiverin' a bit. I pull the covers off her with difficulty, annoyed at the fact she's still scared when her maw's right in front of her offerin' help. Out comes a wee face, aw red from her cryin' and strainin'. She's sweatin' like nobody's business and the wetness on her sheets and now on my shoulders is there to prove it. Her eyes are aw puffy as well from her rubbin' at them.

She says 'Mum' a few times and reaches out tryin' to hug me but bumps one of my bruises instead. I pull her close for a bit, touchin' her sore eyes, tryin' to calm her down and she eases just a bit. Her breathin' stops jumpin' that funny way after a few minutes when she starts to get sleepy again. The only way I know she's still alert is by how tightly she's holdin' onto my shirt and buryin' her face into my hands.

I leave her for just a minute to go into the bathroom right next to her bedroom to get her a damp cloth an' she's shoutin' me back in a panic straight away.

I'm exhausted like her, an this havin' to rush about isnae helpin'. The dog's startin' to walk about downstairs as well, obviously wakened by the noises we're makin', an I can hear his claws on the floor.

I go back and when she's lyin' down nice again I fix her jammies an' wipe her curls away from her face to give her head a kiss. She's still a wee bit weepy, and keeps lookin' over my shoulder at the door. Hers is just across from thae big black stairs of ours an it's almost as if she knows he's there.

'It's alright,' I tell her, 'Uncle Jim's downstairs sleepin' on the couch so he won't be getting' in again. Uncle Jim won't let him, ye hear?' I try to sound as reassurin' as possible but it doesn't look like it's workin'. Her eyes still show fear though she's givin' me that smile to convince me otherwise. She's still afraid of what the night brings.

Ever since that bastard Tam came up here one night, out of his face steamin' and shoutin' all the abuse under the sun, she hasn't had a good night's sleep. Neither have I. She's still scared he's comin' back. Runnin' up those stairs again like he does every Friday with that mad smile on his face that says nobody is goin' to bed early that night.

I say I'm goin' back to bed soon cause I'm tired, and I can hear her breathing get sharper like she's scared that when the darkness comes so will he. I can't let her sleep

anywhere else but here though, it's no safe an she never wets her own bed. But when I'm standin' to go across the corridor silently again she starts her whimperin' and cryin' to get me to stay just one more minute. But I'm just too drained to stay. It's been well over an hour an' my patience is wearin' thin. I love her, aye, and I feel sorry for her, aye, but it's startin' to get light outside and all I can think about is sleep. Even the wee cat clock in the other corner above the cheap wardrobes is mockin' me with the tickin' of its eyes, swayin' from side to side above its big Cheshire grin. It's tick-tockin' reminds me of how close the morning is, an' gentle cheeps from the birds outside tell me the sun's already on its way.

She's tellin' me she's scared and other stuff I already know, an' I can see the sweat's back gain, so I just can't walk away, even at this point. So I go back again over to the bed and I stroke her face downwards across her nose, the way that sends her to sleep, and I'm no waitin' long till she's calm again and her eyes are shut. She's sleepin' once again for the time being, and hopefully this time it'll be until I'm ready for work. I think it's funny how they sleep aw sprawled out in every position all over the place when they're wee, yet when they get older and know more about how the world works they curl up into these wee balls, like they're scared. She's only ever slept that way since Tam started visitin'.

I tiptoe back along the corridor once again, tryin' not to make a sound, switchin' the bathroom light off as I go so it doesn't run up the bill. I'm back in my bed at last, lunging for my white sheets and fluffy pillows. As soon as my head touches them, though, I can hear her again, mumblin' in her sleep to cuddly toys with no answer to her problems. I'm scared she's bein' too noisy, but I'm more afraid of makin' too much noise by gettin' up to close her door over.

'You better shut her the fuck up before I do,' Tam says beside me, before rollin' over to face the window.