

All Of My Monsters And Beautiful Women In Dreams

by Robert Crisman

1. Lamia

I slapped the venomous dream from his mouth before he could spit in my eyes; fuck him *and* his rage, fucking Tonton Macoute or whatever he was--and I got the hell out and away from that house and the fires that raged on all floors, and I fled the block like I'd fled the bombing of Dresden, four dreams and a lifetime ago.

Now, through dangerous streets ruled by gangsters, 12-year-old gangsters, I shifted shape in the shadows, and made my way out of the ruins.

My clothes fell away in the course of my flight and I skinned and ate dogs, and my brains shrank to nothing; I *stank*. I remember skirting a house that stood at the edge of a wood through which ran a gully--thank God!--because when the dark man flashing a badge and a gun ran out on the porch and then chased me, I morphed again and became a coyote and ghosted the gully and lost him.

I labored through canyons and quicksand and swamps, and came out at last on a street that I'd lived in, in some other dream where men still packed guns, but these men I knew--and I knew best of all to avoid them.

Ahead in an alley I saw a woman I'd played with, whom all the Young Kings called Lamia, who wore a black dress and a stripped-away smile, and she beckoned me into the alley. She had the *hunger*, that much I could see, and just for the chance to feast once again at my neck she would take me into her house and let me inside her 'til I grew new flesh, and shed tears that fell into my blood, that allowed her to bathe and grow young once again before daylight.

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/robert-crisman/all-of-my-monsters-and-beautiful--women-in-dreams>»

Copyright © 2011 Robert Crisman. All rights reserved.

2. Rammstein

The sky, wracked with thunderheads, flashed black and silver and deep azure blue as it fell into dusk, and again the men with the guns, in their wife-beater t-shirts and khakis appeared as I knew they would, and I watched through the slat in my hole as they milled like movie-set extras, snug-jawed and itchy, in front of the grocery where Rammstein had bought it at first light that morning.

I shot him at six as I came from Lamia's, and I'm here to tell you, with him it was kill or be killed. He'd wanted Lamia, she'd spit in his mouth, and he'd vowed to kill me, the man whom she sexed up and bled and protected.

I'd left at first light as I said, and stopped to get smokes at the grocery, and there Rammstein stood with his gun in his hand and I shot him; Lamia always let me see through her eyes as she fed, and she saw the *world*, and on this night she gave me a gun and told me to "shoot Rammstein dead," and then kissed me away out the door.

Now came the question of where to go next: I couldn't go back to Lamia, as she lay cacooned 'til the next hunger took her, and meanwhile, downtown was millions of miles away, a whole other world. Capitol Hill lay much closer--and up there were *hundreds* of places where I could hole up, some even with women that I'd known in life.

Linda, I knew, *loved* the dead...

I stayed for two days and a night in the bolthole there by the side of the laundry, not 100 yards from where I'd shot Rammstein, and I waited for all the men's rage to get lost in the drugs and then for the men to start killing each other. And all the while I dreamed, of a second death of a sort, the one that they tell you brings peace...

3. *In Flagrate Delicto*

The apartment houses on this cliff on Belmont on lower Capitol Hill in Seattle--abandoned and eyeless pueblos for block upon block, their doors hanging open or knocked off their hinges, and it seemed that my heart aged a good 20 years. Once these were warrens where I'd found my lovers, the girls with knives and tattoos on their asses, the asses I'd nuzzled in bed as they whispered sweet slurs and then drank me.

Now, who knew what squatters I'd find in these caves, or how rats might regard my intrusion, but I had to know what had happened, what neutron bomb had dispersed all the people, so I hoofed up the steps to the first house, and ducked in the entry that once held a door, and climbed to the attic, a sort of a garret where Linda had lived like a gypsy and loved all the dead boys who'd come for a piece of her wisdom.

The old wooden floors and the yellow walls echoed, and the only things left in the place were some beads and a picture, a polaroid, dusty, of Linda and I *in flagrante delicto*, and I remembered the night and the punk who'd popped in unseen and shot off a roll, with malice aforethought so he could go back and laugh and jack off with his buddies.

Linda had smiled and invited him into the bed for a taste then and there, and the fool put that polaroid down and she *knifed* him, and licked the knife clean with all the rage in the *world* in her eyes, rage that slowly gave way to a desolate hunger, a hunger that I'd *never* seen...

I sat in shock on the bed as she cried, and I loved her *fiercely* as she stared and stared, and her hunger sucked me into her eyes and forced me to tears, made me *weak*--and I knew in that moment that love was an *undertow* dragging me far out to sea, and that if I didn't break free I would drown in this dream-turned-to-sheer-sawtoothed-hell.

We waited 'til dark, then rolled the boy up in a rug and stacked him down there in the basement with dopefiends who'd died, and I felt the fear and the need to *escape*, and all through the night she didn't blink once as I held her and told her I loved her...

4. A Vision Of Sex

I started away from Belmont, and walked to John as it curved away to the left and then straightened abruptly and came into Boylston, not quite same way it would have in life. We ghosts are treated to different landscapes in dreams, and people run hotter or colder, or younger or older, or wiser perhaps than they would if you'd eaten, say, liver and onions for dinner, instead of the ribeye you'd drooled for.

All that by the way. I came to a house on a corner, set back in the shadows of trees, a ratty, unpainted house, cobbled together with dappled brown wood, with a deep porch strewn with the leavings of decades, among which were bones, maybe those of old friends whom I'd left by the wayside back then when the world was far younger.

I came up on the porch like a cat with all senses sharpened, ready to run at the first *snick* of danger, and out of the shadows stepped...oh my sweet Jesus...*Susan Dzivak*--a girl that I'd *worshipped* when I was a boy, a blonde Slovak beauty, my delft-blue-eyed lover for one tick of time, grown up and unclothed in the soft, shadowed light, who whispered to me, "It's time you learned wisdom."

I must have been some kind of fool: it seemed, in those shadows, that she promised sex--but when I approached her she turned toward the door with what seemed like a look of reproach, and only then did I see the shackles she wore on her wrists and her ankles, and all those red welts on her backside.

Something inside of me caught in my chest and sirens went off, and I could not *breathe*, and then...I heard the first drummings of wisdom alright, and, underscoring that wisdom, a raucous saxophone laughter, spitting a soundtracked vision of sex as the hissing of apes and the screaming of all the bought children...

5. Two Ghosts

Susan led me into the house, a naked, tortured Madonna, the girl I'd wanted to lay down in clover, to love her and fill up the deep hole inside me--two incompatible things, *n'est ce pas*?

We went inside and I stared at her shackles and welts, stigmata belonging in rooms with barred windows where guards all wear scars from their knife fighting days and their rapes.

Susan looked back at me once as we moved through the rooms, and her blue eyes had died, which meant that she'd gone beyond pain and now was a ghost who truly belonged in this dream.

Every room in the house was stripped bare and the walls were nicotine yellow, like walls in all dreams, and as we passed through, I heard this sort of a white noise consisting of voices, crushed tiny voices, like giggles from every grave in the world, corralled and tamped down and then tossed in a sack, and dumped in these rooms, perhaps to remind me that even the echoes of friendships I'd held were no more.

We finally came to a room, in the center of which a square wooden table was set, and there stood a woman, gray-haired and rawboned and gaunt, with dead eyes like Susan's, and who held a plate of food in her hand and bade Susan sit in the table's lone chair. Susan complied, zombie-like, her head now held low, and it seemed to me that her bones had been turned to warm wax.

The woman set the plate down and stepped back, staring straight at me and through me, and Susan sat with her hands hanging down at her sides, dead eyes on nothing--and time just stopped ticking, and this is what life here had come to.

6. Predators' Feast

I don't yet know just how I escaped from that house with the visions of Susan in shackles subsiding, but thank all the gods *however* it happened. I've been in my share of the various hells that

there are, in dreams and in what they call life, but the sheer cobwebbed *evil* that put those two women there at that table in freeze-frame--Susan ensnackled and zombied, with all those red welts, and whoever that gaunt harpy was who melted her bones as she sat there--and the food on the plate that the harpy set down, and the *look* that she gave me as Susan sat slumped, deadened to every last hunger: this was the final quotidian numbing that served as the end of all hope.

Yet now I was home in this dream, and home was an old rooming house, on Harvard near Mercer on Capitol Hill in Seattle, a virtual *city* of hallways and tunnels and long-misplaced rooms, five blocks and a million miles away from the horror, and a mere half-a-block from the theater district on Broadway where young hip-eoisie sell their bodies and souls to see and be seen in the mirror.

It was twilight, the sky was near-black and streaked red, and I wanted a punk porno bimbo tonight, one I might tie to the bed, and get lost in her wetness, her odor, her screams--or cry as she took me and made me drink urine, and ate me alive in midair.

A *predators'* feast, in so many ways the old re-enactment of horror-made-heaven, and charade of a power exchange that reshapes the flesh and brings all the fluids to boil, with the added advantage of chaining the myriad dangers attending spontaneous combustion and freedom--and *please* let it be that it ease, at least on this night, the horror of hell that I saw in dead Susan's eyes.

