

Awakening

By:

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The gun within reach, Ed opened the door. He had checked the security monitor and was not surprised to look down at the pre-teen girl standing on his porch. What did surprise him was the tomahawk hanging from her belt. It looked hefty, but she did not seem bothered by its obvious weight.

"May I help you?" he asked, even as he scanned the surroundings. Anyone else out there would have triggered the motion sensors, but old habits were hard to break.

"Is Evelyn home?" The girl's voice sounded more mature than her stature and appearance would indicate.

Ed focused on her. Not many people around these parts knew his girlfriend's name. They had moved here a few years back and had kept to themselves. Especially so, considering the two previous attempts on Evelyn's life.

Ed looked at the tomahawk and stole a side glance to his gun.

"You would not make it." The girl's voice was matter-of-fact, and she seemed relaxed, but Ed knew, as people knew these things, she spoke truthfully.

They stood for a half minute before Evelyn came up beside him.

"Who's at the door?" she asked.

The girl bowed her head and dropped to one knee. "My Queen, I offer my services."

Ed looked at Evelyn, and when he looked back, the girl was once more standing upright, but this time a little straighter, almost in a formal pose.

"... Uh ... what ... I mean, who ... " Ed was not sure which of the dozen questions swirling in his mind he should ask.

"Please, we should get inside. I don't think I was followed, but you are near awakening, and The Bidden are searching for you." The girl motioned inside the home as she spoke.

A beep. Then another. And another. And more still. The motion sensors were going off all around the house. Ed had already grabbed his gun when the first creature crashed through the kitchen window.

It had barely landed when the tomahawk embedded itself in its head. It must have been thrown with some force, as it nearly split the creature's skull in half.

He turned back to the girl, and then moved to be near Evelyn. The girl stopped him with one hand, and it felt like he was pressing against solid rock. She held out her other hand and, with a juicy noise, the tomahawk returned to her.

She grabbed it out of mid-air, and without stopping, jumped over Evelyn, landing between two more creatures. In a motion too fast to follow, she sliced them both in two.

"Quick," she said, "to your shower!"

Ed stood motionless, trying to process what was happening.

"NOW!" the girl's voice moved them to action, and they sprinted down the hallway, the girl bringing up the rear.

They burst into the main bathroom, and the girl unceremoniously yanked the shower's glass door off the hinges, and shoved them both in the shower as she turned on the water. The cold water was a jolt, and they tried to avoid the jet, but the girl held them fast.

"Whatever you do, whatever you see, if you want to live do not step outside the stream. FOR ANY REASON!"

With that, she turned to dispatch another creature, and then two more, and then half the wall was ripped away by a grotesque upright figure.

"Great," said the girl, "a Solid-i." As she spoke, the figure reached out and grabbed the girl, dragging her from the bathroom.

"DO NOT LEAVE THE STREAM!" Her voice died down even as they heard the sound of her tomahawk striking what must have been dense flesh.

Shivering, standing in the warming stream of water, Ed and Evelyn watched a number of creatures file into the room, silent, but focused on the pair in the shower. Ed remembered his gun and shot at one. The creature did not even flinch, and wherever the bullet had struck, it had no visible effect.

They stood, letting the water run over them as a few more creatures jammed in the confined area. The pressure from the creatures pushing from behind caused one at the front to lose its balance and lurch forward. It stepped into a small puddle that was forming outside the shower, and immediately howled in obvious pain. Ed was about to splash the rest but stopped in shock.

Evelyn was changing in front of his eyes. As he watched, her hair lengthened and changed to a deep black. She grew a few inches, and her frail figure filled out to something a fit athlete would envy. Her eyes closed, she took a deep breath, and when she opened them, they were as black as her hair.

"Stay here." Her voice had changed as well, sporting a deep, musical timber.

As she spoke, she lifted her hands, and her nails were now at least six inches long, and glowing.

Ed would have tried to stop her as she stepped out of the shower, but his brain was trying to process it all, and keeping him frozen as he stared at the transformed love of his life.

Evelyn's normally gentle face was now a mask of fury; beautiful and terrible fury.

The front line of beasts tried to back up, but the wall of creatures behind them impeded their retreat. Evelyn, his Evelyn, tore into them. Silent, swift, and a blur of movements. The wall of creatures broke, but not before twenty or so fell atop each other, practically cut to shreds.

Ed recovered from his stupor and stepped out to follow her as she chased them into the hall. Instantly, two creatures crashed through the small window to his right and were upon him, teeth and nails flashing and tearing at him.

The last thing he heard was a furious scream that sounded part war cry and part anguish.

Ed woke to an eerie quiet. No; he heard the soft murmur of voices. He tried rising from the bed, but the pain awoke to assault him on multiple fronts. He grunted as he lay back down.

Evelyn and the girl appeared at his side. They carefully stripped some of the soaked towels wrapped around him and replaced them with fresh ones. Neither spoke.

It took a few minutes for the pain to subside, and for his brain to clear.

"What the hell is going on?" He meant to put more emphasis to his question, but he lacked the strength.

Evelyn was about to answer but instead both she and the girl turned. A tall, muscular man had entered the bedroom. Not quite looking like a man, but definitively humanoid, he was wrapped in a loose cape, black metal visible underneath when he moved.

He stopped in front of Evelyn and the girl. Two more figures entered, short weapons-like implements held in each of their hands, and they went to stand on either side of Evelyn and the girl. One last figure entered and made his ... no, her way to Ed. She stooped down and carefully lifted and removed each of the towels.

She then opened a small container she carried and sprinkled the content on Ed. Immediately numb, Ed watched as his skin was literally being rebuilt, the deep wounds healing, the cuts closing. He almost missed the conversation between Evelyn and the man.

"... told me you would handle this personally, that no harm would come to him. He nearly died."

"I take the blame for it." The girl had spoken, stepping in front of Evelyn.

Evelyn gently moved her out of the way. "No, Lynd; the responsibility was mine. The consequence is mine to bear."

The man flicked the cape over one shoulder and drew a slightly curved knife. Upon clearing the sheath, its cutting edge glowed green. Evelyn offered her throat.

"NO!"

Ed had never moved so fast in his life, or with such power. He was not sure how, but he ended up standing in front of Evelyn and the girl, his back to them. The man who had drawn the knife was embedded halfway into the drywall, and the other two were doubled up on the ground.

The remaining figure nodded. "Nearly awake, now."