

THE DEVIL'S HYMN

A Collection of Short
Crime & Horror Stories

by

Rena Aliston



The Devil's Hymn: The Devil's Reign Book 2
A Collection of Short Crime & Horror Stories
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Content Warning

This is a crime and horror short story collection with dark themes. This book may contain content that triggers some readers, including death, murder, and torture.

For a full list of warnings, please refer to the book details page on my official website.

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The Devil's Hymn

The Rock

TIMOTHY GRASPED ONTO the flashlight as I chiseled the stone. The light bounced around as his eyes searched the field.

“Hold it still, dammit!”

He gripped tighter on the flashlight as a piece of the rock broke off.

My eyes widened as the diamond glistened. “Oh, look at her. She’s a beaut.”

“How much do you think we’ll get for her?”

My eyes darkened as I turned to face him. “You mean, how much will I get?” I grasped onto my knife and sliced through his throat. His body fell to the ground as a grin spread across my face.

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Secrets

IT STARTED AS a joke—a game—hide and seek. The first seeker, I found Shawna hiding in a bush. The others gathered around as she told her secret—she slept with Paul, January's ex-boyfriend.

January glared at her before laughing. "We were over years ago. But you were caught, so you're now the seeker."

We scattered around the forest as Shawna searched for us. A scream crashed against the sky, sending us trampling through the woods.

January hovered over Shawna's body, blood dripping from the log she held. Her eyes darted in our direction as she smiled. "Want to know my secret?"

Kia

“KIA,” I WHISPERED, peering through the dense fog as it danced around me. I knew better than to bring her to the park this late. Her parents were going to kill me. My feet brushed against the gravel, sending stones and leaves rustling through the night air.

My head turned as a branch snapped. A part of me wanted to shout out for her, but fear wrapped around my throat, forcing a squeal to emerge instead.

I jumped as a squirrel darted in front of me. A chuckle escaped as I placed my hand over my heart and closed my eyes.

I took a few deep breaths before continuing, checking my watch to make sure we returned home before her parents arrived. I didn’t enjoy babysitting, but if I was going to escape the clutches of this town, I needed money.

Making my way to the swing set, I spotted her blue jacket laying on a bed of leaves. I reached for it, bending over to pick it up as an enormous figure moved to my left. My body straightened. My heart beat against my chest. I turned—no one was there.

I picked up the jacket, clutching onto the fabric as I peered through the fog, hands feeling around for the swing chain. The swing creaked as the wind pushed it

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away from my hand. I waited for its return, but it never came.

My eyes widened as my head turned. There it stood. Big black eyes. Saliva running down its chin. It towered over me, opening its mouth as the mist cocooned its ochre colored body.

Sweat beaded across my forehead as I pulled the coat closer to my chest. I took a step backward. My foot connected with a branch, sending me crashing to the ground.

The monster snarled as it inched closer, feet marching over a bed of leaves as another breeze swept through. I froze as my back pressed against the soil. A tremble emerged as I dug my fingers into the dirt. My mind screamed move, but my body refused.

It hovered over me, one leg on each side of my torso. The fog cleared as it leaned over me, its warm breath caressing my face. Screams bellowed through the darkness as its mouth widened.

I raised my arms, attempting to block death's shadow from devouring me.

“Nova, what are you doing down there?”

The wind calmed as I removed my arms from my face.

She stood over me, one leg on each side of my torso, her breath intermingling with mine—Kia. A giggle escaped as she picked up her jacket and skipped around the playground.

My eyes fixated on the night sky as I laid on my back, hand on my chest. My breathing returned to

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normal as the last trace of fog disappeared.

I pushed myself up off of the ground. My eyebrows knitted as she twirled round the playground, dancing with the leaves as the creaking swing swayed back and forth.

I grabbed hold of her shoulders, forcing her to stand still. "Are you alright?"

"Of course."

"I thought you were missing."

Her blue eyes turned gray and then blue as she placed her hands over her mouth and giggled. "Don't be silly." She darted past me, running up the street.

I hesitated at first, but followed behind, turning the corner, crossing the street, and sprinting through the front yard. She forced her way inside the house, darting up the stairs as I closed the door.

I paced around the living room, wringing my hands as the tires scraped against the gravel driveway. *What happened? What's wrong with Kia? Do her parents know?* My body jolted as the car door slammed.

Their laughter penetrated through the window, traveling up the concrete steps and into the house.

"Nova, how was everything?" Kia's mom asked as she removed her coat.

"Fine, just fine."

"Good."

"It's foggy tonight," Kia's dad said, as his eyes darted in my direction.

"We barely saw the road. It hasn't been this foggy in years," Kia's mom said as she brushed my hair

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over my shoulder. "You didn't go out, did you?"

"Of course not."

Her father's eyes stalked me as I lowered my head to the floor.

I grabbed my jacket from the arm of the couch and scurried to the door.

"Will you be available next weekend?"

My heart beat against my chest as my feet hesitated to move. "I'll have to look at my schedule."

"Well, of course, dear. Let us know."

"Yes, ma'am." I hurried out of the house and down the steps. My soul screamed 'keep moving', but I didn't. I turned. I had to see.

My eyes darted toward Kia's room. There she stood, in the window, smiling as my mind struggled to make sense of what happened.

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Sheila

THE MISSED CALL notification popped up on the screen. I dialed Sheila's number. A piercing sound radiated from my cell. I threw the phone on the table and got ready for work.

The rest of the day was uneventful—a few meetings followed by an impromptu dinner date. Dave called an hour after I got home, asking if I'd seen Sheila. She sent him a weird message about something being inside her, but no one could find her.

Glass shattered in the kitchen as I hung up the phone. I ran downstairs. There she stood. Matted hair. Knife in hand. Sheila.

Skeletons

EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN my dad's son showed up last week, bag in hand, asking to see his father. My mother studied his complexion—darker than ours, but he bore those trademark eyes.

They argued. The name, March Chambers, danced off of her tongue. He admitted to the affair and knowing about the child—his child, even though he never used those words.

I thought they moved past it, but I knew I was wrong when I walked into the kitchen. My mother stood over his body, laughing. She glanced over her shoulder and smiled. “Don't be sad. He wasn't your real father.”

The Snatcher

I SPRIED TOWARD the kitchen as my cell vibrated across the countertop. “Hi mom.”

“Hi sweetie. We have another fog advisory.”

“Oh, no. Not another one. When is this going to end?”

“At this rate, never. I mean, they aren’t even trying to figure this out.”

I pulled the phone away from my ear as my mother’s yelling clashed with the beeping of the horn. “Dad?”

“Of course...impatient. I have an appointment. I’ll call you later.”

A little voice crept around the corner as I placed my cell on the counter.

“Mom, I’m going outside.”

“Jenny, no!” I ran to the back door, blocking the knob.

“But mom—”

“I know, honey. You’re too young to understand. Go play in the other room.”

“Ok,” Jenny said as she lowered her head and ambled to the living area.

“What was that about?” Paul set his suitcase on the table.

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“My mom called.”

“Oh God! Here we go again. Let me guess...fog advisory.”

“Paul—”

“We talked about this, Sally. Why does this town keep living in the past?”

“You weren't here. You don't know what happened!”

“Twenty years! When are you going to stop this?” Paul placed his hands on his hips and glared at me. “You need to think about our daughter.”

“I am thinking about her, damn it!”

Paul moaned as he picked up his briefcase. “I'm headed to work. We'll talk about this when I get home.”

My eyes followed him as he walked toward the door. Even though I knew he was right, I couldn't stop thinking about Jimmy.

“Mommy, will you come and play with me?”

“Give me a couple minutes angel face and I'll be right with you.”

I sat on the stool and placed my head in my hands. The memories flooded back as tears streamed down my cheeks.

It came out of the fog, but no one knew what it was. Everyone thought it was a hoax. Our parents accused us of lying. The news played it down until more children disappeared. Our local government offered no solution, so me and my friends did the only thing we could do. We named it—The Snatcher.



“Hurry Sally! You’re going to be late.”

“I’m coming, mom.” I grabbed my bookbag from the edge of the bed and ran down the steps. “Can I go to the park after school?”

“Yes, but be home by dinner.”

Lisa and I sprinted out of the building, darting past the buses and through an open field. We rounded the corner of our apartment complex, shuffling through our bags.

“I’ll give you my lunch money tomorrow if you do my homework,” Lisa said as she swung her backpack over her shoulder.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes. I can’t stand science. Who wants to dissect frogs and shit? Anyway, I have to pass if I want to stay on my mom’s good side. She already threatened to ground me.”

We sprinted toward the swings as the park came into view. Our laughter echoed off of the clear blue sky as we chased each other around the playground.

“How long can you stay out?”

“My dad gets home a little after five. We always eat dinner together.”

“I’m glad someone’s mom cooks around here,” Brian said as he ran toward us. He tossed his duffel bag on the ground and glanced into the woods. “It’s getting

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foggy. I guess we better be careful. The Snatcher might be watching.”

“My mom says there’s no snatcher,” Lisa said. “Absentee parents took those kids.”

Brian threw his head back in laughter. “Obviously therapy isn’t helping her.”

“Let me tell you something,” Lisa growled as she lunged toward him. “My mom is—”

I placed my hand over Lisa’s mouth. “What was that?” A faint howl crept out of the forest as we huddled together.

Lisa removed my hand from her mouth and glanced at me. “Great! Is everyone around here scared? It was the wind. It howls, you know?”

“No, listen. It’s getting closer.”

“Look.” Brian stretched forth his finger, but we couldn’t see anything. “Someone’s coming.”

A shadowy figure crept within the mist. We stepped closer, trying to make out the image.

Lisa clutched onto my arm. “Maybe we should leave.”

Silence enveloped us. My heart crashed against my chest as a brisk wind swept through. We screamed as someone jumped out of the fog.

My eyebrows knitted as a chuckle inched closer.

“Oh Jimmy. I hate you!” Lisa said as she punched his shoulder.

“Yeah man,” Brian said. “That wasn’t cool.”

“Awww, you babies. Are you afraid of The Snatcher?” His head rocked back and forth as he pursed

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his lips. “There is no snatcher, you hear? And if there is, I’ll kill him, because I ain’t afraid of no—”

The fog thickened. Grayish blue arms jutted out of the mist and grabbed Jimmy.

Lisa and I screamed. Brian backed away before bolting through the park and toward the apartment complex.

The blue sky returned as the mist disappeared. Lisa collapsed to the ground as I stared into the forest. A part of me hoped it was a joke. Jimmy would walk out of the woods, laughing, pointing his finger in our direction. But he didn’t.

Parents sprinted across the field, gathering around and questioning us until the police showed up.

I told Officer Peterson what happened. His forehead knitted as he tried to make sense of everything.

Brian and Lisa corroborated my story, adding a few things I forgot.

We waited for weeks for answers, but none came and they never found Jimmy.



Twenty years had passed and I’m still traumatized. I wondered what happened to Jimmy and the others. Where are the children? Are they alive?

My husband never understood. He moved here years after the events stopped, but the locals remem-

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bered. I remembered.

Although not as widespread, kids still came up missing on foggy days. The Snatcher lingered in the wooded area surrounding town, waiting patiently for its next victim.

I glanced over at Jenny, playing on the floor in front of the couch. She was safe, unaware of the dangers lurking outside. And I'd do whatever it took to keep her away from the fog.

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Also By Author

Short Stories

The Devil's Grave (Owl-Raven Books 2024)

Poetry

Shadows and Mirrors (Owl-Raven Books 2023)

Woven Tales (Owl-Raven Books, 2024)

Conjure Volume 1 (Owl-Raven Books, 2024)

The Red Hour (Owl-Raven Books, 2024)

Divine Madness (Owl-Raven Books, 2025)

Versified Series

Versified Darkness (Lulu Press, 2008)

Versified Delusions (Lulu Press, 2012)

Unspeakable Truths Series

Damnation Begins (Lulu Press, 2007)

Baptism By Blood (Lulu Press, 2009)

Author's Note

Dear Reader,

I hope you enjoyed *The Devil's Hymn*, the second book in The Devil's Reign series. The third and final book is coming in 2026.

If you loved the book, I would greatly appreciate a short review on the page where you purchased the book. Reviews make a huge difference in helping new readers.

Bilahú:k! (Thank you!)