

Them

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It was a dark and gelid autumn afternoon, the only thing that could be heard was the sound of the wind hitting aggressively the mountains. I was with my dog Duke, as always. We lived in a tiny wood cabin with two windows and a door on the edge of the town. It was that season of the year when trees have grown up so much that they cover the entire sky, creating a carpet of fallen red leaves. That day I had let Duke go out to hunt a few rabbits, as usual, but he never came back.

Duke was a good dog, self-dependent in every sense of the word, tall and stock. Unlike me, an apprentice of many things, that could barely survive an intense cold. Nevertheless, there was something that I had always been worried about, Duke had a secret, he could see the dead. Oh yes, ghosts that were people, with family, friends and everything you can imagine.

However, the dead that Duke used to see were extremely dangerous, hostile, and full of anger and fear. All because before they died, had lived in the most gruesome fear of their lives, and they couldn't escape from that darkness, from the shadows that stalked them insatiably.

I taught him to not follow them, because once they catch you they won't let you go, they feed on you. And that thought drove me completely crazy, because I couldn't do anything.

That same night, something knocked on my door, I ran out thinking it would be Duke, but to my surprise, it was nothing more than a toy, a nefarious toy, similar to the rattles my wife used to carve before.

—“Is this a joke?” I thought.

I bent down with the last breath that remained in my soul and when I touched it, I could hear the weak voice of a child. But it was not just any kid, I recognized that sob, it was my son. At that moment, I realized why Duke didn't come back.

I was already one of them.