

Monsters

The only thing we want is to be brought home. We all crave the moment when a little girl or boy points at us and shouts “I want that one!” And so I sat, high on the shelf, collecting dust. I was part of a new shipment. A big man in a fluorescent orange shirt had lifted the crate of us into the truck bed, the cold air ruffling my thin fur. I sat, one day, my orange ELAS ROF sticker pinned to my chest. The bell rang, as it had for 23 days, when a little girl walked in beside her mother.

She pointed at me, “Momma, that one’s pretty! I really really want it!”. The mother sighed and looked at her phone.

“Okay sweetie, but you have to wait until your birthday,” The woman reached up and pulled me from the cold linoleum. She carried me to the checkout counter I had wistfully stared at for so long, setting me down next to the acne-ridden cashier. The machine the cashier was using beeped a couple of times and then let out a satisfied ding. The cashier’s greasy hand lifted me up once more, now into a paper bag. I couldn’t see through the darkness of the bag, so I let the gentle and comforting rocking of the parcel lull me to sleep.

I woke up sometime later, bleary eyed and dumb. Where had I gone? I soon realized what had woken me up. The woman was unrolling the bag, it crackling under her manicured nails. She pulled me from the bag, gently unraveling the tag from my leg. She examined the paper.

“Could’ve gotten a better deal,” she mumbled, something glinting in her hand, “Sweetie, what candy do you want in here?”

I heard a muffled reply below me. I looked back at her hand. Why did she need scissors if she already took off my tag? She suddenly plunged the scissors into my stomach. I let out a

mental scream of pain as I started to feel a burning in my abdomen, cutting deep into my side. I wanted to scream in pain, but I couldn't make a sound. I heard the sickening noise of my skin ripping away, *snip, snip, snip*. The woman raised a bowl of candy, the shiny cellophane wrappings glinting from some unseen light above. She suddenly tipped the bowl into the hole she had just cut into my stomach. I faded in and out of consciousness, dizzy with pain. I faintly heard the woman squirting something onto my wound, her voice fading farther away as she placed my flesh she had just cut off onto the now sticky opening. The world faded to black as she asked the little girl, "Are you excited for your party?"

I woke up in the air. I felt a tug on my back, and as I glanced around I noticed I was hanging from a tree. Little children were running around, chasing each other with cake smeared faces. *A party*, I thought to myself as I tried to recall the last night. I could feel a dull throbbing in my side as I regained focus on the children, watching them gather into a small circle. One of the children, a little boy, took a piece of cloth and wrapped around his head, covering his eyes. Then the children began to chant, spinning the blindfolded child in a lazy circle. The woman handed the boy a long, brightly colored stick. He wobbled for a second, took a hesitant step forward, and began to walk. When he stood nearly level with me, the children shouted for him to stop. To my horror, the boy began to swing the stick back and forth, grazing my foot. Up and down and side to side, the stick flailed at me, taunting, until thwap! A dull pain flooded my leg as I took the time to process what was happening. The children were cheering, shouting garbled words of encouragement. Why were they happy? WHACK! The world spun as I received a skull cracking blow to my head. My vision swam with colors, the blow swinging me back. I made out a blurry silhouette of the boy removing the blindfold and aiming, with visual aid this time. He

swung the stick hard, and with a crack the place my ribs would have been broke open, candy in shiny cellophane spilling out. The children swarmed over, like vultures to a dead cat, picking at the fallen sweets. I swung slowly in a circle, forgotten, as these monsters ate my insides. The world faded to black, this time forever.

“Did you like your piñata?” Maria asked her daughter.

“I wish Mike hadn’t taken all the fun,” she replied, looking forlornly at the battered remains of the colorful animal shaped piñata. Not that it looked much like an animal anymore.

“What do you mean?”

“I wanted to hit it too.”