

# *“The Black Hair”*

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Inspired by the story  
*“The Reconciliation”*

Recorded by Lafcadio Hearn



**B**oth husband and wife refused to look at each other for what felt like an eternity. James stood, arms crossed, back to Catalina. He wouldn't look at her, knew if he did he might crumble. This was what he must do. And this silence was worse than Cat exploding at him. He wanted her too. James wanted her to scream and yell and throw a tantrum. She had every right to. But she didn't. She just... sat there... head down... black hair in her face.

Her black hair...

Fuck this...

"Is it because of Cody?"

No... not this. Anything but this.

James wanted to crumble, but didn't, answered, "No." Cody was dead. Hit by a car.

"We can try again," Cat begged. "I... I didn't want to. But we can try again. Please, James! I... I love you."

Those three words.

He loved her too. But she was part of why he was here now, why he was trapped, why he couldn't grow and fulfil those ambitions of his. And not just because he had knocked Cat up. Jesus, he could not deny these feelings. He loved her. He loved her more than most things.

Almost as much as his personal ambitions.

Almost...

He had to leave, aimlessly looked down, noticed his crooked tie, decided to straighten it. If he was going to walk out, James was going to do it looking collected. There's no need for others to judge him for what he is doing. They would mock him. Those at the office would certainly spread rumors, and James couldn't have that.

It was night. Typical. Another long day of work at an office making jack shit. James hardly ever returned home with the sun still up. Today was no different. He could hear babies crying next door, dogs fighting in a dark alley, and those

fucking three doors down. By god, James had had enough, and almost three straight years of thinking had proven too much to remain still.

James had always wanted more. Ever since he graduated from the police academy. That was something he'd always wanted to do mainly for the excitement. A simple life wasn't something James wanted. He wanted lavishness, a big house, his own security firm. He wanted his life to be better. Sure, James was only 25 years old... but he was tired, and he shouldn't be. All he does is watch security cameras all day, in and out, hours and hours, five days a week.

He didn't want that anymore.

"It's no use, Cat," James spoke, voice firm. "I'm shackled here. This dump. No. I need more." He paused, looked down at his black shoes, noticed several mud splatters. "I want more."

There was a sound behind him, and suddenly his hand was grabbed, and there was Cat. Her soft face looked up at him, tears smearing her makeup, brown eyes red and puffy. "Please, don't." She begged.

Looking at her was a mistake, and James inhaled sharply, quickly looked to anything else. "Get off," he whispered, his entire body trembling. But Cat didn't move, her grip only tightening. Then she began to cry aloud, her face now buried into his arm. That hurt. Jesus, all he wanted to do was look at her, to pick her up, to hug her, to kiss her, to cherish her, to stroke her black hair the way she liked...

"Catalina, get off!" James boomed as he swatted her away, that feeling of sorrow momentarily swallowed by a vicious anger. Was it at her? James didn't know. He'd like to think it was, and before he could dwell on the emotion, he moved for the door.

He pulled it back, felt the knob jiggle, the thing loose again. James had just fixed it a week ago, and now it was like...

Who cares. This wasn't his problem anymore. The thoughts of Cody weren't his problem anymore. Cat wasn't his problem anymore. This apartment with its leaking roof and faulty power circuits wasn't his problem anymore. Good riddance to them all. Good riddance to this stupid life. Hello to starting anew in a place far away from here. Perhaps in the city? That'd cost money.

Yet before he could slam the door shut, he was forced to turn, and he caught only a glimpse of Cat laying on the apartment floor. She was in a heap, crying, begging

for James to stay, her hair completely covering her face. But before he could fully take in the pitiful sight, the door was shut, and there was no turning back.

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“Stop!” a woman cried. “Help! Please!”

James heard the cries, ran around the corner of the nearest building, caught a glimpse of someone dressed all in black running with a purse. He charged, felt his lungs come alive, his leg muscles screaming with joy, and he tackled the masked assailant. Throwing his fist back, he landed three good punches to the man’s jaw, and the man spat some blood onto the ground. But the purse was secured, and by the look of it, the owner had a lot of money.

The man got up and ran away as fast as he could, leaving James alone. He can file a report later. Now all he wondered was where the girl was.

“Hey!” shouted a woman’s voice, and James turned. She was running up to him, kneeled down, and grabbed his arm. “Are you okay? Oh... you got my purse. Thank you! Thank you!” She was suddenly hugging him, and for a while James had no clue what to do. “Here,” she said as she fumbled into her purse, and only then did James get a good look at this girl.

She was the definition of beauty with blue eyes, blond hair, perfectly red lips, and curves in all the right places. James almost wanted to whistle, but resisted, and was glad he did when she handed him a one hundred dollar bill.

“Jesus,” he muttered.

The girl pulled away. “Is it not enough? I’ll give you more. You just saved me a lot of trouble.” She reached out and offered a hand. “I’m Scarlet.”

“James.” He hesitated, but then took her hand and felt how soft it was. They were so unlike he calloused ones. “And... that’s... this is fine, ma’am. More than fine... actually... pretty damned generous.”

She was looking him over, which made James want to blush. Was this bad? James had paid so much attention to what he was wearing and how he presented himself. He needed to look the part of a professional. What others thought of

him was key. But when James noticed Scarlet bite her lower lip, he had his answer.

They went to the nearest hotel, got a room, and fucked the rest of the night away. And then it happened again. And again. And again. They'd screw, rest for a bit, then go their separate directions time and time again. James had learned that her last name was Blackford, learned her father was CEO of the Blackford Credit Union, and he used her to possibly gain a connection. Though it helped that Scarlet certainly knew how to fuck.

And then James got what he wanted.

Her back was to him as they laid on the bed, James' arms up and hands tucked under the back of his head. Both were still panting, but Scarlet clearly had to get moving. No time for post coital bliss with her, and there never was.

"I was wondering," she said. "You do odd jobs all over this area right?" she asked as she pulled up her scant underwear, then moved for her jeans. "How'd you like to come work for us?"

And James smiled.

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The ceremony was lavish, just as Scarlett wanted. They said their vows, she cried, then they kissed, and off they went in a huge black limo to Mexico.

Taking her to bed that night was easy, and she seemed to enjoy him too. They moved together in perfect synchronization, hands groping, mouths biting and sucking, bodies building to a glorious climax. Yes, things were good for James, and almost immediately he started investing to build his own company under the wing of Scarlet's father.

James and Kaitlyn were lying next to each other breathing heavily and covered in sweat. This brief reprisal allowed James to think about how young he was, and how finally after years of searching within himself he had found his chance. At just 27 years old, James was now close to being a millionaire. Hell, he had to hire people to help protect the Blackford Credit Union. Being in control of others had always appealed to James, and Mr. Blackford was all too accommodating.

A few months later, Scarlet had picked out a house. It was more like a mansion with greek pillars lining the front, walls made of brick, and as they were handed the keys, James moved in to try and coax his new wife upstairs to their bedroom. But she hesitated, her phone ringing, and without a word she moved towards the main dining area. Successfully cock blocked, James decided to investigate the house, and he came to the firm conclusion that it was perfect.

When Blackford Credit Union decided it was time to expand into the neighboring states, a swift promotion came for James, and when the first bonus came through he immediately thought of buying something for Scarlet. It had to be something nice. And suddenly he realised something that stopped him in his tracks.

He didn't know what to get her.

Did she like flowers? Did he like necklaces? Ear rings? What was even her favorite color?

And immediately he thought of Catalina, a name he had not thought of in years, and for some reason he could envision her black hair. He remembered the feeling of it, every strand so soft.

No.

Did Scarlet know about Cat? Or Cody? He never spoke of them. She never asked. Granted, James never asked much about Scarlet either. Everything was mostly related to sex with them, or business. To James, neither really required any emotion, nor personal connection. Yet they were married now.

Those thoughts disappeared though as he drove into his new driveway and took another glance at his new lavish house.

Mr. Blackford died the day James turned 35. But Scarlet was not upset by the loss, and James felt little too. This was not a lack of empathy, but more of a statement of fact. Mr. Blackford was old. He had cancer. He was going to die, and now he did. Now what? The funeral was arranged by Scarlet, who wore black. Her mother had died well before James came into the picture, so she was the only one there that was direct family. James just stood on the outskirts of the main room where a priest spoke of how wonderful of a man Mr. Blackford was.

**While many wept, some genuine, some not, James felt nothing. He only thought that Scarlet would be given the reins of Blackford Credit Union and what that would mean for them.**

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**She had bought a lot. Things like dresses, pearl earrings and necklaces, purple gowns were all hers now. Meanwhile James spent too. He bought big TVs, refurbished the basement to be a small private bar, stuffed trophy animals like a Tiger and two Kodiak Bears which he mounted in the living room.**

**“So barbaric,” said Scarlet as she wandered through the gargantuan living room and into the kitchen where she poured coffee into a china glass. Maybe it was barbaric to have these trophies inside their house. But James didn’t care for one reason. This reason was why James made most of his spending decisions.**

**Because he can.**

**He couldn’t before.**

**But now he can.**

**He wanted to express himself at dinner, the table laughably long as husband and wife sat on either side of each other. “I’ve always wanted a full mount of a bear. I mean it. Saw my pop have one he shot back home. He was so proud of that thing, I tell you. And now I got one. I mean... I didn’t shoot it... but-” He suddenly found himself stopping mid sentence, noticed Scarlet was on her tablet typing away about something. “Are you... listening?” he asked carefully.**

**“I am. You wanted a bear like your dad,” she replied never once looking up at him.**

**She heard him alright. But did she understand the words? Did she ever understand what he’d say. The only place she seemed to give a damn about James’ personal life was his body.**

**He thought for a long moment about Cody. His baby boy who had given him so much hope. Said hope was dashed the moment the drunk driver killed him. Biting his inner cheek, James imagined the sound of the tires, the cries of anguish**

escaping Cody's mouth, and the screams of Cat when they drove him to the nearest hospital.

Death was a mercy for Cody then. James' baby boy.

And through the next several months, James would cradle Cat in his arms, stroking her black hair as she cried into his chest.

And he had left her high and dry.

"Do you want kids?" James asked suddenly, though he immediately regretted it.

But to his surprise, Scarlet stopped what she was doing for a single moment, and then she was back to work. "No," she answered coldly.

And things went back into silence, and only then did James notice that Scarlet's hair was no longer as blond.

By the time James had turned 40, their marriage was at an utter stand still. His hair had begun to gray around the temples despite being too young for that, and Scarlet had grown so quiet that James swore he could hear a pin drop in the house. Though now it felt more like a prison, one he hated going to every night.

So he spent more money and decided to pick up skeet shooting.

"Pull!" he yelled, and a hispanic assistant fired the small disk into the air. James aimed his 20 gauge shotgun, pulled the trigger, and felt the recoil on his shoulder. He loved the feeling, missed holding a gun like he used to. It had been years since he last carried one, now having others carry one for him. Sure enough, James hit the target.

"Good shot, sir," spoke one of his officers. They were currently tied for how many they've hit, and before he knew it, the officer was loading another shot, putting the gun to his shoulder, then yelling, "Pull!"

Away went another disk, followed by two seconds of silence, then came a loud pop, and the disk exploded. James was impressed, and a bit jealous. He had a hard time seeing that particular disk, the distance greater now. Did he need glasses? Maybe. No. He'd get contacts. People can't see him with glasses. They'd think he was too old. But he pushed those thoughts away as he loaded two more shells into his shotgun, slammed the barrels up, and took off the safety.

Then he put the butt to his shoulder, carefully grasped the stock. Holding it too tightly would result in it flying out of his hands, or even messing up his aim in general. James couldn't have that. "Pull!" he ordered, and away went another disk. But this time something was different.

Everything went quiet now, but not like before. He held his breath to improve his steadiness, but instead of that sound of his heart beating all he could hear was the sound of a woman's laughter, a particular kind he had heard before. And within an instant he knew who it was.

Catalina.

The skeet continued to fly up into the air.

Her smile was so infectious to the point he wanted to now despite being in the old apartment. They were in their old bed, both naked and exposed to each other yet neither caring, James' hands gently combing through Cat's black hair.

He closed his left eye.

Now something was different. Cat was alone, sitting where he'd left her. Her back was straight, eyes looking towards the door as if expecting him to return.

He put his finger on the trigger.

In her hands was a single comb, the same one she always used to keep her black hair so straight and perfect.

Bang!

But the skeet kept flying.

Then came the chuckle from the officer, and James felt a surge of rage build within him. "Another one."

"Sir," said the officer with a laugh, "It's my turn."

"Another!" James yelled, his voice echoing, and all went silent for a tense moment. But another skeet was loaded, and James put the butt to his shoulder again. "Pull!" He sounded so angry. But why? And he could feel the officer's gaze on him, not on the skeet. Yet James didn't care. He watched the skeet, aimed his shotgun, and fired.

**James had missed again.**

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**A recession had hit, and the Blackford Credit Union wasn't doing well. Two branches had already closed meaning less money for Scarlet which meant less money for James. Already he sold one of his three cars, of course keeping the best one for himself. But that only gave them temporary relief.**

**Despite words of assurances, James could see which way the wind was blowing. Blackford Credit Union wasn't going to last much longer. He gave it another year. Maybe two if they were lucky. Once they closed their doors, what would James do? He wasn't sure yet. Getting a divorce was out of the question now. Most of his stuff was tied up with Scarlet so tightly the legal battle over who owned what wouldn't be worth the time or money.**

**Time continued to pass however, and as James predicted, things got worse. This included Scarlet who had lost a significant amount of weight. Her once perfectly shaped face was now boney, breasts sunken, the signs of wrinkles present under her eyes. James had just turned 45, and now his wife's blond hair was only a memory. Now it was almost white, despite trying to dye it. She no longer attracted him. Scarlet was usually so distant and cold that the feeling of attraction had probably left several years ago. But only now did James really feel it.**

**And now all he could think of was Catalina.**

**As he lay in his bed, resting on his side, hands below his head, he heard the door creek open, and the shadow of his wife hovered over him. Suddenly he felt her grasp his shoulder forcing him to face her, and she kissed him. Though there was no love in the act. Kissing is just what two married people should do. And despite not feeling an attraction to Scarlet, James gave in and they fucked. Yet when they finished, both laying with their back to each other, James felt nothing. They had done an act which married couples should perform. That was it.**

**Then there was Catalina, and she was all James could picture. Her breasts. Her pure face. Her laugh. Her moans of pleasure.**

Though now what he saw was a face staring at the door, eyes blank, as she combed her black hair.

Before James knew it, he felt a sharp pain in his face, and standing over him was Scarlet. She had hit him, yet James did not even flinch. She hit him again, still nothing. There was that dull ache, a hotness, but it wasn't enough to warrant a response. Scarlet looked neither angry, upset, happy, or anything. Her blue eyes were cold and empty. Perhaps James' were the same way. She then left the room leaving James alone. There wasn't even enough of an emotion for her to slam the door.

Looking to the bedroom's balcony, James got up, put on some clothing, put on his shoes, and walked into the main living room with all its lavish glory. He looked for Scarlet, saw her buried in her tablets and phones working on something. James no longer cared to find out. He just grabbed his car keys off the rack, and left.

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The drive was quiet and long, though James expected it as such. He was not in the mood to listen to the radio or stuff from his phone. He wanted silence. What was James going to say to her? Would he abandon the Blackfords? Would he even go see Cat? It's been so long. Was she still there? Probably not.

Though the clock registered that two hours had passed, James hadn't felt it. One second he was leaving the city, and the next he was in the old parking lot to a beat up apartment. To his surprise, it looked the same. The grass was at least mowed, but the chipping paint and missing tiles were still there. Taking a deep breath, James then walked out of the car, his movements slow as his eyes continued to fixate on the building.

To his surprise, the only light that was on had been his old suite. Was Cat really there? James only hoped, and soon he was locking his car and moving up the paved walkway. There was no front light. There was no receptionist or light in the main hallway, but he was able to enter the building with no problem. This made James check his phone, saw it was 2:00am. What if Cat wasn't in that room? He would be waking a stranger from a slumber most likely. Whoever was there just happened to leave a light on.

But James had to try.

As if some strange unworldly force drove him onward, James moved up the stairs to the second floor. His eyes focused on the suite numbers. 102, 103, 104...

...Then 105.

That was his.

James had no sense of time now, standing still and glancing at the bronze 105. Something screamed at him to just knock. Another more rational part screamed to just walk away. But that strange presence, that heaviness that almost overwhelmed him, ultimately won out.

Reaching his hand up to the door, James knocked.

A light shined between the door cracks, and almost instantly he heard movement on the other end. Before he could even react, perhaps run and pretend this never happened, that door was opening. It creaked loudly, the handle jiggling just like he remembered it, and standing in the doorway stood the woman he yearned for.

Brown eyes met with his green ones, and his emotions almost overtook him. James wanted to lunge forward and hug her, but rationality kept him at bay. Yet what surprised him more was how youthful Cat remained. All the time that had passed hadn't seemed to age her a day. Her hair was still pure black like he remembered, those eyes full of warmth, and her lips the same shade of pink.

"James?" she asked, her voice almost a whisper. She must have been as surprised as he was. James must've been like a ghost, or perhaps vice versa, something long thought lost.

James thought of something to say, even opened his mouth. Perhaps a "hi" would work. But somehow that was unfitting. So James said the only other thing to come to mind.

"Catalina."

Her full name.

Both stared at each other for what felt like an eternity, neither taking their eyes off the other's. To James, Cat seemed to be giving him life again. Just seeing her there, still as beautiful as remembered, instantly made a weight fall off his

shoulders. Would that be enough? No. He wanted more. But James was cognitive enough to know Cat had to make the first move.

And she did.

Stepping aside, Cat motioned for James to enter as if it wasn't 2:00am. To his surprise, everything looked about the same inside as it had years before. Things were still clean, especially the table and cooking area, but chips within the floor tile remained. This was a residence for sure, and to James' surprise... he missed it. Though he'd entered, he took a mere few steps before shutting the door behind himself, and he watched as Cat took a seat by the kitchen table. Almost immediately he noticed her eyes focusing on anything but his own.

"H-how are you?" Cat asked, her tone quiet and nervous.

James didn't answer immediately, thought of what to say, then decided to ignore the question altogether. "I'm sorry," he said, his voice surprisingly firm.

To his relief, Cat looked up at him, the two being far apart from each other. Though James continued to stand, it was clear Cat held the power in the room, and he wouldn't have it any other way. This was his fault. He was the one that left.

"Oh," Cat responded.

"W-what have you been doing?" asked James.

"Why are you here?"

That's fair. James had to look away as Cat continued to stare. He couldn't face those eyes yet. "I... I've come to make amends."

"That's it? It's two in the morning, James."

He shook his head. "I know." He then kicked the floor tiles with his shoes haphazardly, an act like fiddling with his thumbs. "I'm... so sorry."

"James you shouldn't have come."

"I know," he answered. "But... I'm so sorry. I should've... should've never left you." Silence followed, the room tense, air suffocatingly thick. James had to break it, knew Cat wouldn't speak first. "I've... I've made a mistake..."

**“In coming here?”** Cat shot back, though her voice was not full of malice.

**“No.”** One word was enough for James, maybe not her. **“In ever thinking I needed more than... just you.”**

Silence again, and James wanted to scream this time. But to his shock, he found himself moving as if pulled by an unseen string, and he was down on his knees in front of her, hands on the floor, face pointed to the ground. **“Jesus, Cat,”** he cried, voice breaking. **“I abandoned you. I... I just fuckin’ left you. I’m... I’m so sorry. You’ve had so much time to move on, to start a new life, and I understand that and accept it, but Cat I’m begging you here. I’m... I want you to... I need you to know how fuckin’ sorry I am, Cat. Cat... I... I’m so sorry.”**

There were no tears, but they were just underneath the surface. Cat must’ve known this, her soft hands suddenly cupping James’ cheek, the other soothingly running through his graying hair. That made him look up at her, her eyes not full of pity or anger or sadness, but of compassion and love and life. He moved without thinking, standing up, cupping her face, and kissing her deeply, eyes closed. And she responded by letting him take over, stood with him, arms wrapped around his shoulders. Now both were simply with each other, nothing else mattered, time slipping away. Then they moved towards the bedroom, didn’t bother shutting the door, and let their bodies become one.

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James slept for a few hours, body tired and worn. The sun had yet to rise, the kitchen light now off. Perhaps Cat had gotten up to shut it off. So James absently reached his hand out, found the body of Cat laying beside him, and he stroked her black hair. He almost didn’t believe it. After all this time it remained the same, so beautiful, straight, clean, soft. He could run his hands through it for an eternity.

**“Cat,”** he whispered, turning to face her. She was laying away from him, sheets pulled up to her neckline. But something immediately caught his attention, a sudden smell of putrid must and mold. Even the glass in the window was cracked, shades drooping and covered in cobwebs that shined off of the moon’s light. **“Hey, Cat,”** he repeated, this time more awake. But there was still no response.

Something was wrong, though James' mind was still in a foggy haze. He lifted himself off the bed, crawled over to the sleeping Cat, and rolled her over to face him.

Now he was up, screaming, back to the bedroom wall, door slammed shut. James' eyes were full of utter terror, shock, confusion, his mind racing with disgust, anger, every emotion he'd ever experienced. That was Cat laying in the bed, her black hair the same as before, but her skin, her body... unrecognizable. Her face was a skull covered with melting and decaying flesh. Those bed sheets were awash in putrid slime as the fluids of a decaying body stained them, flies hovering over the corpse, eye sockets full of maggots.

**Was this Cat?**

**How?**

**Where had she gone?**

He crept along the wall, slowly moved his way for the bedroom door, hands splayed, touching, seeking the knob, his eyes focused on the rotting corpse and it's perfectly preserved black hair. Only then did the smell hit him, the reek of decay, the odor coating the darkened room, and himself. He wanted to vomit, his knees shaking, growing weaker and weaker as cold wind blew through the window cracks, the drapes blowing, shadows moving with them.

**Movement?**

He reached the door, but kept his eyes on the black hair, watched it, eyes burning, teeth aching, and suddenly he tasted blood. He reached up, looked on in horror as two teeth fell into his palm, both blood soaked, yellow, cores rotted. And he screamed again, looked up, saw the black hair now moving, almost dancing on the moldy sheets. How? What? No! He turned the knob, screamed again as he felt it break apart in his hands. So he pushed back, again and again, ramming the door to force it open as the black hair drew nearer and nearer, the wind getting worse and worse.

Suddenly he was jolted back, the door giving way, and he was on the floor, dust flying up all around him. Yet he heard nothing, the sounds as if delayed and his movements far ahead of them, like time no longer moved in sync. But now something was tickling his face, his own hair now long and gray. He ran his hands through it, pulled, some coming out, and he screamed, but nothing escaped his throat as the taste of blood continued to coat his tongue.

**Have to get out.**

**Have to get out.**

**Get out!**

He crawled towards the kitchen table, felt his hand slip on dust and cobwebs, but managed to pull himself up, but hesitated to move, his body feeling ill, joints aching, body protesting. But something was coming for him, creeping out from the bedroom, the darkness hiding whatever it was. So James backed away, hit the third wall of the kitchen, tried to scream again but failed. But now he could see it, the black hair, the strands on either side of the bedroom door coming out as if pulling itself forward. And other stands reached out for him, calling to him silently, beckoning him. But James was too afraid to hede, ran for the entrance doorway, and trembled into the apartment hallway.

Nothing was the same, could see dust, holes in the floor, doors hanging by one hinge. How did he not notice this? He was only here for a few hours? And the sounds still seemed so distant, time pulling them further and further away while he continued to move more and more forward. Frantically, he looked around, kept his legs moving, and reached for the side wall railing. Yet more of his hair was falling out now, his head mostly bare, the gray strands slipping away piece by piece. And his skin. It hurt to move, the shade gowing sickly gray, some places peeling away especially in his hands.

They were now scraped raw, but how? He'd done so little with them here? The sores were only growing with every touch, and he walked forward, almost to the stairway when suddenly the world was rising around him, a hole in the floor forming under his weight, and he hit the ground hard. Yet no sound. But the pain was there now, pure agony, and James looked to his legs, could see bone and blood and graying skin and pus.

He crawled now, moving for the entrance way, the ground floor mainly dirty with dust and webs and rat shit and rocks. Each movement felt like an eternity, but James had to escape, felt wind blowing against him from outside, his goal so close. Yet by the time he reached the outside world, all he could see was tall yellow grass, a rusty old car that was once his, and a sign which read "condemned" plastered on the main entryway.

That creeping, tickling feeling had returned too, and James swung onto his back, waved his arms, batted away at the black hair as it became tangled around his

neck and arms. His heart was beating faster and faster, his voice screaming as loud as it could but to no avail, the black hair now moving away giving him enough time to roll down the broken stairway and onto the pavement sidewalk.

Something so beautiful as Cat's black hair had now become James' assailant. It was corrupted, taken over by pure hatred and revenge. He could feel this terrible feeling all throughout him. Every time the black hair touched him, he felt a part of his body die, a bit of his mind gone, an emotion replaced with fear.

And now he looked up, was laying on his stomach, eyes burning, movements becoming harder and harder, everything slowing down as the sensation of something creeping up behind him continued to grow and grow. Even his clothing was now torn and shredded, dusty and moldy, bloody and decaying.

So James crawled, and crawled, and crawled until he reached his car, opened the door, and pulled himself into the seat. He grunted and groaned in agony, but still no sound, his crashes and screams from far away in the apartment.

He could see how everything that was his had been stolen, windows down, phone gone, seats covered in mold and grime. But James ignored this, reached up and grabbed the rear view mirror to help pull himself into a sitting position. Though all he saw was himself in it's reflection, and he immediately stopped, looked at himself with pure terror. His eyes had become yellow, teeth all gone, head bare void of a few strands of long gray hair, lips chapped and pale. Only then did he realize what had happened, and he slumped over, fell out of the car and onto the pavement in the process.

And he sat there, looked at the trail of blood and flesh and puss he left behind him, and accepted what was to happen. He wanted to fight it, to scream, to call for help, but by now he had no energy, and he just remained still, his body falling apart slowly, piece by piece until all that was left was mere scrapes of flesh attached to bone. Even then those fell apart, what remained of his clothing falling to the ground in a pile as the rammed of James' blew away in the wind.

And like everything else in James' life, nothing was left but dust, and everything beautiful corrupted.

