

BAD THINGS HAPPENED IN QUARANTINE

Flashfiction horror: Blade and Rasper.

My brother did not believe the urban legend. Story goes that if you break the rules of quarantine, if you go out without a breath mask to protect others, if you get too close to people, if you go to parties and travel around, if you do any of these things twice--the rumor said twice was key--then you would be visited.

Seems natural a boogeymen would be invented for the Covid years. Boredom, human nature. So he blew it all off.

He defied the world. Twice.

And as far as I know, there were two competing legends. One was you would be visited by this terrifying doctor in dark blue tatters with devil's horns, bladelike claws, and a mask over his mouth that hid gnarled fangs. You want to be with people so bad? He would throw you into a pit overfilled with a crowd of writhing bodies and you'd be crushed to death. The other urban myth was, you'd be attacked by a mistlike presence within which you could hear these painful rasping breaths. Then your lungs would vanish from inside your chest and reappear before you, and you would suffocate to death.

So people argued if Doctor Blade would get you, or if Rasper would.

Then... and my brother and I studied up on this, being anthropology students... there came a variation in the folklore.

You could stop the visitations before your death.

If. You gave away every single penny you had to a hospital or medical charity. All. Your. Money. Charity would set you free.

So when I got the call from him in the middle of the night, presumably drunk, telling me about these hauntings on his riverside house he lived in, I gave him the advice everyone says: *give away your money*.

I was joking. But he put up the house. He got rid of everything. Moved into a rental with a promise of paying double rent when his next check came in.

He had searched the house for every stray dollar and dime and got rid of it in a frenzy, just crazed to get rid of every scrap of wealth.

They found him dead in that place, he had been crushed as if from a thousand bodies piled upon him, but his lungs were thrown atop his body, a light mist enveloping the room, and in the hidden, forgotten tiny pouch of his jeans, they found a single penny in his pocket.

Now people argue if there is a Rasper, a Dr. Blade, or both.