

# BEING STALKED



MARY BLACK ROSE  
*A Short Story*

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A SHORT STORY

BY

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# **SYNOPSIS**

Daniella, barely turned twelve, was looking forward to her first hunting trip with her father and uncle, but when they find something strange in the woods – something that shouldn't be there - the trip turns deadly. It becomes obvious something is hunting them, and they aren't sure they'll survive the night.

# BEING STALKED

Sure, I was a girl, but I was the only one of five siblings that wanted to take up learning how to hunt. Whether it was with a bow or a gun, I didn't care; I wanted to be just like my Dad. Not just hunt, but camp, fish, trek, I wanted to do it all.

I longed for summer to arrive every year because that was when Dad and I were able to spend the most time together. Dad had grown up with his father and brother learning to hunt, fish, camp, forage - you name it. He was the biggest nature enthusiast and outdoorsman you'd ever meet.

My other four sisters were closer to Mom. All of them were more like her too— the cliché girly-girls. Mom felt disconnected and a little off balance trying to raise me.

I think Dad secretly relished my tom-boy nature. I was the 'son' he never had. Even his nickname for me, Danny – short for Daniella – was a term of endearment only Dad and Uncle Eddie used.

She saw how these activities strengthened our bond. And even though she hated letting one of her daughters indulge in activities that were only for "the guys" she tolerated it. I think she saw that it made us both happy.

Dad was adamant that he would only take me on an overnight hunting trip once I was 12. There was a small remote cabin way up in the mountains that Grandpa owned. Grandpa was too old to hunt and fish now, so our trip would be Dad and I, and Uncle Eddie.

We'd been planning it since March. I could not wait for school to get out. We scheduled the trip to take place at the end of summer. We'd do a little small game hunting with a bow. Dad could hunt larger game with a rifle, but he didn't feel I was quite big enough to learn how to use the 270 Winchester yet. Besides, Dad actually preferred the bow over a gun, and he had started me on a little compound when I was only 7.

Of course, I disagreed. I was ready to level up. Dad was patient and kind, but once he made up his mind about something, he was also very stern.

Dad had bought me my first real compound hunting bow and fatigues for my birthday in February. I'd been begging him for years to let me go with him and my uncle. You can't imagine how excited I was when I opened those two gifts at my party. It was better than all my previous birthdays combined!

We spent the entire summer practicing and planning.

Finally, the day arrived. Uncle Eddie helped Dad load up the truck; it was Grandpa's old F-100 with a bench seat. I sat in between the two of them, and off we went.

The switchbacks up the mountain were terrifying. I'd never been on a road like this. Dad took it nice and slow. He knew every dip and pothole. He'd been coming here since he was my age.

Dad and Uncle Eddie set up the generator when we got to the cabin.

I heard him grumbling about it when they managed to get it out. "I really need to buy another one of these."

I heard Uncle Eddie say with a smile in his voice, "You been saying that for years man."

They didn't leave it at the cabin because if the power went out at home, we relied on it. Our house was a little rural. Dad said it was inconvenient to haul it back and forth, and he'd been meaning to replace the one that had died at the cabin years ago.

Next, they began to unload the firewood. I was expected to help with this. We set it up in the wood stiles on the side of the house, just to the left, past the little boardwalk porch. I was so excited to be there I ran back and forth across the 30-foot area, loving how the boards sounded beneath my feet.

"Danny, stop fooling around if you want to get out and do some tracking."

"Sorry, Dad."

Next were the coolers, food, and odds and ends.

I loved the scent of the cabin. It was a combination of pine and earthiness, must and mold. It was dusty inside but cozy. I supposed the whole place wasn't more than 600 square feet and it was all one room.

There was a single double bed in the corner. A very minimal kitchen in another corner with a big black pot belly stove. An old green couch and some shelves were positioned near the stove. It was set up like a living room slash kitchen.

The place didn't have indoor plumbing, but they'd managed electrical wiring for the lamp that could run on a generator.

The plan was to get settled, and if there was time, Dad would take me out, and we'd practice finding tracks. Uncle Eddie would start dinner on the old potbelly stove while we were out.

After everything was set up, Dad took me out to test my tracking knowledge. We took some water jugs because we were going to hit up the fresh mountain spring and fill them up.

While Dad was filling the jugs, I squatted down and began to look for tracks. I wasn't having much luck so I notched my bow for practice and aimed it at a tree in front of me. I took aim, held steady, then let the arrow go. It hit the tree trunk spot on.

Suddenly, the forest went quiet. An unsettling discomfort squeezed at my chest. I was just about to turn and ask Dad why the forest had suddenly gone quiet when I could smell the faintest odor of something rank.

I looked to Dad who was done filling up water jugs. He was crouched on the ground studying something.

He looked up at me and I could see his expression was pensive. "What's wrong, Dad?"

"Nothing munchkin. It's all good." He smiled and tussled my hair playfully, but something didn't feel right. Dad's demeanor, the silence of the woods. I felt irrationally scared.

Just then a twig snapped. As if something were moving out in the trees a little ways off.

Dad looked at me and said, "It's getting dark, and dinner will probably be ready soon. Don't want it to get cold, do you?"

Dad was trying to keep his tone light, but I could hear the edge in it.

"No, but I need to get my arrow back really quick."



“Just leave it. We can get it tomorrow.”

I wanted to say something more but couldn't quite describe the drastic shift in the vibe I was getting from him or the forest. I was perfectly fine heading back early. Something was amiss but Dad was obviously trying not to alert me to the danger. I couldn't place what it was. I was too young, but I was aware that something wasn't right.

We walked back in silence, only the dead leaves making a crunching noise under foot. I wasn't sure if I was imagining it, but it seemed as if Dad was walking at a more clipped pace.

When we returned to the cabin, we sat and ate a dinner of canned chili and saltine crackers. I was a weird kid, but it was my favorite meal. I could easily keep pace with the adults and pack away two cans. Uncle Eddie knew this and probably made it just for me.

When I had my second bowl, he looked at me seriously and said, "I suppose you're going to stink up the cabin with all those bean farts tonight."

I smacked him on the arm and said, “No... You're bigger, so your farts will be way worse!”

Dad just smiled as I glanced over at him. He still seemed troubled. I felt he was on edge, but I couldn't fathom why.

There was a little room in the back with the septic tank toilet and a small basin where you had to brush your teeth with water from a bottle.

Dad told me to go brush my teeth. While I was gone, I could hear my Dad and Uncle talking. I quietly opened the door and listened. From their hushed and urgent tones, they obviously didn't want me to hear them.

“I've never seen tracks like that before Ed. I'm not sure what to make of it.” Dad scratched the back of his neck. A gesture he often did when he encountered a problem he couldn't solve.

“What did they look like?”

“Kind of human. Barefoot, but very elongated.”

Eddie was quiet, then asked, "How fresh do you think they were?"

“Recent. It hasn't rained up here in a few days, but still.”

“What do you want to do?”

“Well, we’re here for the night. I can’t lie. I’m spooked. Those aren’t from any creature I’ve ever seen. I guess we’ll hunker down. Figure out what to do in the morning. It will break Danny’s heart if we have to leave early, but I’m really rattled, Ed.”

“I can see that. You thinking what I’m thinking, John?”

“Yeah, maybe Dad’s stories weren’t crazy tall tales afterall.”

I waited, but they fell silent, staring into the flames of the fire. I snuck back into the washroom and finished up.

As I came back out, the two of them immediately perked up, forcing smiles.

“Everything, okay?” I asked.

“Yeah, why wouldn’t it be?”

“You guys are acting weird,” I said. I was getting a little scared too.

The men exchanged a look. “It’s probably nothing. Let’s get you to bed, munchkin.”

“I don’t want to go to bed, Dad. Can’t we do marshmallows?”

“Not tonight, sweetie. Old Dad is tired and needs to think.”

“Are you sure everything is okay?”

He only smiled and shuffled me to the double bed. It was too short for Dad and Ed, who were quite tall. The guys had set up their cots, with Dad's only a few feet from mine and Ed's on the other side of Dad's.

I noticed that Dad and Ed had strategically placed their rifles near the wall closest to our beds. I thought this was odd and wondered why but didn't ask. At this point, if Dad knew something he wasn’t sharing, I was old enough to know he was trying not to upset me.

I lay in bed, tossing and turning for what felt like a long time. I was staring at the red embers inside the little opening on the stove, blinking my eyes open and closed.

I guess I fell asleep. I was dreaming that our dog Beans was scratching at my bedroom door. Slowly my eyes opened, and I realized where I was – in the cabin, and there was something outside scratching on the walls.

I sat up quickly. Dad was already perched at the edge of my bed. He quickly placed a hand over my mouth and lifted a finger to his lips with his other hand that I needed to be quiet.

Fear coursed through my chest, and my eyes widened with shock as I heard long scratching noises like someone or something raking claws across the boards of the cabin outside. Dad slowly removed his hand from my mouth, and I nodded obediently that I understood his silent command.

The second Dad removed his hand, I inhaled the scent of something like rot and decay. It was reminiscent of when we'd found the dead rat in the basement a few years ago. It was the stench of death, and I was petrified, trying to wrap my young mind around what was happening.

Uncle Ed was standing in the middle of the cabin, rifle in hand, following the slow, steady clawing sound as it circled slowly around the four walls.

The creature outside made its way to the porch. Ed was facing the front, trembling as he slowly raised the gun barrel toward the front door. The sound across the planks was heavy. Whatever was out there was large enough to make the porch planks creak.

My father stood up slowly and raised his rifle too.

Slowly the footsteps fell as the creature moved back and forth.

Then it stopped, and the distinct sound, like that of a large apex predator, was sniffing the front door. It wasn't exactly an animal, though. It was raspy as it inhaled and exhaled. It snuffled out a harsh breath, and the putrid scent intensified.

Then silence. It was still there, but it had stopped. It was waiting, but for what?

It felt like an eternity before the beast continued its prowl around the cabin.

*Thump, thump, thump, thump.*

It was passing by the kitchen window, and despite the dark, I caught a glimpse of a creature lumbering past. It was enormous, standing at the same height, if not taller than my father and uncle. Its face was elongated with a

muzzle of some sort. The most terrifying part of the outline was the large wrack of antlers on its head.

I tried to be silent, but I could not staunch the hot tears streaming down my face. I sniffled and pulled the blanket up around my face using it to help stifle my sobs.

The creature had moved off the porch and continued its prowling to the west-facing wall. It was dragging its claws along the side of the wood again. Dad and Ed followed the sound, pointing their weapons toward the scratching.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash. It sounded like something taking a hammer to metal and then metal twisting. It was a high-pitched terrible sound, then silence.

The silence stretched on, but Dad and Ed stood firm in their vigil.

Then suddenly, *smack!*

Something had been thrown at the window. I was bawling now. I couldn't be quiet anymore.

"Dad," I whimpered.

Dad took a slow and careful step to stand right by my bed.

"It's okay, baby girl," Dad whispered. "Shhh. Just be quiet. It's going to be alright." He slowly made his way by Ed's side, and the two of them stood back-to-back, their heads darting this way and that, looking for any indication of the creature's next move.

The scent of rotting flesh permeated the entire cabin. The creature began to pace around the perimeter again. Claws raking at the cabin side boards. Each time it passed over the porch - *thump, thump, thump*.

This went on all night. My father and uncle kept watch as each tense hour passed slowly, ready to attack should the need arise. Just as the sky started to lighten into the early morning shades of periwinkle blue, casting an eerie grayness on the cabin's interior, the scent of decay began to wane.

It was silent again, but there was a shift in the air. Finally, as the sun rose, the scent was gone, and the creature seemed to have left for good.

My father and uncle looked out the windows first, making sure that it was truly gone. My father continued to stand watch near the windows as my uncle

packed up all our belongings. My father pointed his rifle at the door, opened it up, and when it was it seemed safe, my uncle carefully slipped out with my father close behind covering him.

After a moment, they came back for me. I had been frozen in place on the bed. I didn't even change out of my pajamas. As we left, I noticed a bloodied and mangled rabbit lying on the porch just below the kitchen window where the loud '*smacking*' sound had occurred.

We didn't even pack up the wood or the generator. We just took our food and personal items and left. As we were headed down the dirt road near the west-facing wall, Dad stopped the truck, and we all stared in disbelief at the smashed and twisted remains of Dad's generator.

I'd never seen him so pale before. We trekked down the mountain switchbacks as quickly and safely as we could. The drive home was silent for the entire two hours back. At some point I fell asleep and didn't wake until we pulled into the driveway.

When we finally got home, Mom was understandably flustered. Dad pulled her into the den; this time, my young ears were not spared the details.

"You can come in, Danny," my father said as I hesitated at the door. "What I'm about to tell you does not leave this room, though. Understood?"

I nodded as Uncle Eddie pulled the doors shut.

Uncle Eddie paced as Dad did most of the recounting of the previous night's events.

Mom's face drained of color, and she clasped a hand over her mouth. "I guess your father's stories were all true?" she whispered slowly.

"What stories?" I asked.

"Grandpa had a bunch of stories when we were growing up. We always thought he told them to scare us in good fun – campfire tales for his boys, if ya will. Stories that talked about a creature stalking him when he was hunting, and just barely making it back to the cabin alive." Dad blew out a long breath.

"Grandpa knew about it?"

“Yeah, but nothing ever happened to us boys when we went camping with Dad up at the cabin. His incidents with the creature was supposedly way back before we were born.” Dad said.

“What was it?” I pressed.

“He believed it to be a Wendigo.”

Mom and I gasped. I knew about these creatures. I loved ghost and horror video games. One of the best video games I’d ever played featured a Wendigo as the primary villain.

The creature I saw in the window looked different than the game but far more terrifying than any imagined fictional nightmare.

The four of us were silent for a bit, and finally, Ed asked, "So, do you think you'll ever go back to the cabin?"

“Not anytime soon. Maybe not anytime ever.”

I guess Dad told his father about his encounter. Up until then, the men had been adamant about keeping that property in the family.

I found out later that they sold the whole parcel that same year.

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