

# Masked

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FREAK.

“How cliched and frankly, it’s been done before,” a young woman yawned, staring at the word spray painted across her locker.

Her name was Katrina, though she preferred to be called Kat. She was 18-year-old senior at an elite, private high school. Only the best [or richest] were allowed and she was one of them. However, there was one thing that set her apart from everyone else.

She was a goth and the only one there. While she wore her uniform at school like everyone else, she dyed her hair black, her nails night black, and wore heavy makeup of the same color. Amongst all the preps and the other cliques, she stood out like a sore thumb.

And such a trait only made her more visible and more of a target to the less-than-nice individuals that attended the school. She didn’t care too much, just seeing the school as place full of ready-made, uniformed elitist conformists, but it did get quite annoying after some time. Looking at the locker, she had been called that plenty before in the past, but this was the first time it was painted right onto her locker.

As Kat prepared to open her locker, planning on ignoring it and letting the janitors deal with it, one of the biggest elites in the school strolled right up, along with her group of toadies. “Hiya Kat,” Michelle, a light-skin, bottle-blond girl; spoke in a rather cocky, mean-spirited tone, “I like what you did with the locker. It really helps to identify where yours is at, especially for everyone else.”

“Ah-huh,” the goth girl mumbled, doing her best to ignore the alpha bitch looming right behind her, “whatever you say.”

Michelle’s lips curled into a subtle frown for a half-a-second, before continuing on, “Anyways, I do hope you are coming to tonight’s pep rally.”

“Oh I wouldn’t dream of missing it,” Kat flatly stated, taking out what books she needed, “but you never know. I might be busying... doing almost anything else, you know... watching paint dry or getting a root canal.”

“I wouldn’t miss it personally,” Michelle continued, “We got something super special planned that I’m sure you’ll find interesting. If you did happen to miss it though... well, then I’m sure you won’t complain about what happens tomorrow!”

Kat continued doing her thing as the pest rambled on. She said nothing as she left, Michelle and her flunkies sniggering and chuckling as she did. *I really don’t care*, Kat thought as she headed for her class, *but... sigh... who knows what those preps are planning...*

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“See ya freak!”

“Hope you’re at pep rally tonight Miss Freak!”

“Yeah-yeah...” Kat mumbled as she walked down the driveway from her school, the sounds her classmates jeering and hollering goodbye ringing in the background. It was pretty much like that for most of the day, despite the janitor making quick work of the locker graffiti once he was informed.

While such words didn’t hurt or offend her, they had grown more than a tad annoying after repeated all day at her. Sometimes though, she wondered if they actually knew what her name was.

There was only one period left on her schedule and that was study hall. She had no homework and since she doubted the librarian who ran study hall would even notice that she wasn’t there, Kat decided to leave an hour early and head home; get an early start on the weekend by catching up with Poe and Lovecraft.

Putting her earbuds in and playing a new Scandinavian black metal song she had just gotten on, Kat headed to the heavy doors that lead outside. She didn’t live too far from the school, so she just walked instead of driving. She heard the words of her father, echoing in her mind and asking, *honey, why did I give you that Lexus RC if you don’t show it off?* She often responded with ‘want to save money on gas’ or, in her words, avoid leaving a bigger carbon footprint on the Earth.

She made it a block from campus when she noticed that up ahead were several students from school at a bus stop. They too had the idea of skipping the last hour of school. She stopped in her tracks and frowned, noticing the five of them and the boys wearing their letterman jackets.

*Just great, she thought, just what I need right about now. More quality time with the elite conformists...better just find another way around...*

Glancing about the area, she looked at the woods on her right curiously. If she remembered correctly, her home’s backyard was a heavily wooded area as well. She judged the distance and direction, figuring that cutting through here would take her directly home, at least in theory.

Taking one last look at the students several yards away, Kat sighed and left the sidewalk, disappearing into the woods. *Better here than running into them*, she grumpily thought. She had this theory that the preps had to stick together because they all shared a common backbone.

The woods were quiet, not even the sound of an animal or bird could be heard as she walked along. Her body eased up and she started to relax. Enjoying the silence, she thought, *you know what? This isn’t too bad. I should cut through here more of...*

Her train of thought was interrupted when she found herself stumbling forward. Her foot had gotten caught on something, causing her to almost stumble head first into the ground. She grumbled and cursed under her breath after the tumble, pushing herself up and brushing some fallen leaves out of her hair. Getting up and looking at what she had tripped over, there was a half-buried metal chest sticking out of the Earth.

Curiosity getting the better of her as she went to work unearthing it. After several minutes of digging with her hands, chipping her black fingernail polish in the process, she yanked out the box, seeing a rather strange image engraved on the top of the chest. It was a demonic-looking face. *Well isn't this ominous, she thought, still... I wonder who buried this here?*

It was a rubbery mask that went over the head and part of the neck. The color was a sickly olive green, like it had jaundice and the mouth was grinning of sorts, showing rows of clenched yellow fangs. The cheekbones were raised significantly, while the cheeks were hollow and gaunt. The neck veins and brow were popping out, while the head was bald and the nose was broad with a slight flat look to it.

It was a hideous, ugly, and rather creepy as hell mask. Staring into its eyeholes, which gave a menacing look due to the deeply furrowed brow, a small smile couldn't help but form on Kat's face. There was something about it that really grabbed her in the right way.

*This thing is freaky as hell but it's great! She thought happily, I wonder why someone would ditch this thing in a metal box out in the woods? It's so well-made! I could probably scare someone good with this thing.*

She pulled the mask out of the box, its outside had a kind of rubbery texture, strangely warm to the touch. It was extremely well made. She could not see any kind of seam or mark of imperfection, save for the ragged looking edges around the bottom neck of the mask, making it look like a head that had been violently ripped off.

She gave it another look, turning it around and looking inside of it. Nothing about it seemed out of the ordinary, although the mask itself was truly extraordinary. Despite being abandoned in the woods, it was in perfect condition. It was almost as if it was made an hour ago and just dumped. Well sucks for the person who left it, because it was hers now.

"I wonder if I put it..." Kat started, but her phone suddenly buzzed in her pocket. Checking it, it was her alarm, reminding her to be home with her little sister after she came home from school herself.

"Crap," she muttered, pocketing the phone, "I don't need to hear mom complaining about me slacking off again." The mask still in hand, Kat hurried off for her home as fast as she could.

Thankfully, her guess about where her home was turned out for the best. Not five minutes later, she was darting out onto her backyard. She unlocked and entered through the backdoor, stepping into the kitchen.

Off in the living room, she could hear the sounds of the TV playing some stupid, popular kiddie show that Sarah was no doubt watching. Her little sister was what she called a 'junior-prep' or a 'prep in-training'. Only 12 years old she was already taking ballet, gymnastics, and had already made plans to try out for the cheerleading squad next year.

It made Kat shudder just to imagine it.

Taped to the fridge, Kat spotted a new note on it, difficult considering there were usually two dozen sticky-notes on it at once. Yanking it off, it read: 'Hey my little princess of darkness, mom's going to be busy tonight with a big meeting. If it goes well, we may be able to go to Hawaii for Christmas! So, I need you to stick around tonight and watch Sarah for me. Use the card to order whatever pizza you want for dinner! See you later tonight! Love you!'

Kat sighed and leaned against the countertop. *Of course I have to watch the mini conformist tonight, she thought, maybe she'll leave me alone for once...*

She had lost track of the amount of times her sister tried to convince her to have a 'make over' and how many different ways she had found of saying no.

She trudged off for her room on the second floor, sneaking past the back of Sarah's fuzzy brown head as she moved towards the stairs. After reaching her room uninterrupted, Kat relaxed in her dreary, dark room and locked the door in peace. It was full of the typical goth memorabilia and color scheme, even with a bunch of candles on her desk to give the room more "atmosphere".

She fell onto the bed and let out a long, exhausted sigh, reflecting and cursing upon the events of the day. Glancing at her right hand, she remembered it was still gripped to the mask that she had found back in the woods. "Oh right," she mumbled, "let's try this on..."

Carefully removing her school jacket and undoing a few top buttons for her blouse, Kat slowly put the mask to her face, opening the folds in the back and stuffing her hair in. Inside the mask was a thick odor that hit her hard, like mixture of old newspaper and moldy dirt.

She pulled and tugged at the mask hard until her eyes stared out of the eye holes. She then stuffed the neck of the mask down so that the ragged edges were touching her shoulders.

After all of it was touching her skin, Kat noticed that the mask had a strange vacuum-like effect to it, pulling her face quicker into it and pressing tightly against her skin. Her body shivered, the cold inside touch and pull chilling her insides.

The feeling of it against her skin felt clammy and rubbery, not too unexpected for what she figured. Though after a while, the feeling seemed to vanish and with how big the eyeholes were, she got a good look of herself in her large full-length mirror in the corner. Kat could no longer feel the mask against her skin. It almost felt a part of her, her body tingling as a powerful, surge of raw energy coursed through her veins.

She slowly panted, her breath against the inside of the mask making it feel warmer and sticky. Her cheeks blushed and her mind felt hazy as the tingling and surge grew strong. She clenched her fists together and her legs twitched.

*What... She thought, what's happening? I feel weird... but soo strong... I feel... I feel like I can flip a car or punch through a wall. This... this is amazing.*

Her hand trailed down her body, and through her outfit she could feel...muscles. Firm and strong muscles that had not been there earlier. She let her eyes close and felt a pleasurable growl escape through the sealed, fanged lips of the mask's mouth as she trailed her left hand down her abdomen and her right hand over the bald head of the mask, relishing the tightness of it.

"Hey sis?" a familiar, bratty voice called out from behind the door, "Are you there? I'm hungry. Can you order food like mom said? I want pizza! I'm really, REALLY hun..."

Her peace broken, Kat's eyes snapped open and narrowed behind the mask's slits. "Shut the hell up Sarah!" Kat snapped, her voice sounding deeper with the mask on. She snarled, feeling a bubbling rage building within her, "I'm busy doing something! I'll feed you later!"

"But I'm hungry now," Sarah whined.

With a bestial growl Kat took a menacing step to the closed door, her fingers flexing, "Just be quiet or I'll rip the heads off all of your Barbies and shave your head while you sleep!" There was silence, followed by the light sounds of crying and fleeing footsteps.

Kat's mind suddenly snapped back to reality and her eyes grew wide inside the sunken sockets of the mask. It felt too tight on her, like she couldn't breathe and the rancid smell was overpowering. With some frantic movement, she gripped the back of the mask, feeling around desperately for where the folds were. After running her hands all over the back of the mask, she managed to finally find the folds and started pulling. They felt stuck together like they're being held together by some powerful glue, refusing to open or budge.

She dug her fingers in, worming them in and started prying. She muttered, "Cooome ooon...get offff..."

Eventually, success shined upon her and the folds opened, her hair tumbling out. She yanked the mask off, the air on her face cool and refreshing. Taking in a deep breath and tossing the mask onto the bed, Kat placed a cool hand on her hot face. "Holy crap," she panted, "what... what the hell was that? Why did I do that? I don't like her, but..."

She shook her head rapidly, trying to get the thoughts out of her mind. She looked back at the mask, which looked back at her with its empty eye sockets. There was something about it... something that made her feel off when wearing it. Just a bit different; just a bit angrier; just a bit stronger; just a bit... scarier.

But it also made her feel... good.

She laid down on her bed for a bit and just stroked the mask with the tip of her finger, still warm despite the cool temperature of her room. She stared at it with her ivy green eyes and then suddenly a thought popped into Kat's mind and a Cheshire-like smile formed across her lips. "I do have that pep rally that I 'have' to attend," she mumbled. Eyeing the mask, she continued, "I think I have an idea on how to get those assholes before they get me."

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Two hours later, the sun was starting to set upon the neighborhood. Kat had ordered a pizza for dinner as she formulated a plan in her mind. Her younger sister was completely scarce, the 'conversation' earlier having put fear in her. The only time Kat saw her again was when she popped her head into the kitchen to see if the coast was clear to get some grub for herself.

Kat didn't care, just wanting to focus on her big plan.

After finally doing all the planning in her head, Kat was ready. She felt confident and sure of herself, donning a black leather jacket, black leather pants, and thick boots (unlike her mom, her dad was more than willing to indulge her goth lifestyle and help buy her what she wanted). The outfit hugged her body, showing off the generous curves that put her in league with those preppy barbies, not that she ever cared about the 'three measurements'.

Alone in her room and just finishing zipping up her boots, she stuffed the mask under her jacket and took one last look at herself in the mirror. Satisfied with the image before her, she left with an eager spring in her step.

Kat ignored Sarah as she left, barely hearing her whimper out a threat about telling their mom about her leaving. The older sister didn't care, leaving for pep rally as fast as she could. Given Michelle and her cronies early bird nature, Kat needed to get there as quick as she could to stop any plans they had.

And give them the biggest scare of their preppy lives.

It took her no time at all with her new shortcut through the woods, nearly tripping over the metal box as she hurried towards her school though. She quickly found herself out in the parking lot of the school, several cars already parked or driving in. *Looks like they're setting up now*, she thought, hiding behind one of the farthest in the back cars, *time to make my move!*

She pulled out the mask out and carefully pulled it over her head. It reeked even more than before, but she didn't care. She instead focused on putting it back into place, carefully sticking her hair in and pressing the bottom of the mask against her shoulders. She pressed her hands against the face and head of the mask eager for the transformation to begin

Like before, the material shrunk down and pressed tightly against her skin until the mask was firmly in place. It became weightless and almost unnoticeable, as if it wasn't there at all. Just another part of her... a part that made her body twinge and shiver as the powerful surge of hot energy came rushing through her again.

Her muscles tightened and then, started to swell. Her arms and legs expanded just slightly underneath her leathery outfit, her skin slightly pressing against the clothing. Her stomach flattened and tone as well, a slight touch of firmness being shown. It wasn't much, but the changes provided her body with some slight definition.

Her panting grew deeper, the inside of her mask growing hotter and sticking harder to her skin. She reached up and touched the cheek of the mask, and she was amazed to find that it felt

like it was her own cheek. *Okay that was freaky*, she thought, then shaking her head, *focus here... let's get this show going... who should be my first victim to start things off with?*

Her first target made itself known to her very quickly. A van pulled up a row ahead of her and out popped Brian Quarterman, one of the elitist of the elite students in the school. The star quarterback, super arrogant, and disgustingly rich all rolled into one. He made her skin crawl as she watched him open the back of his van up. In it, she spotted some heavy audio equipment that he mostly likely “volunteered” for the event in order to show off.

“That stuff looks expensive... be a shame if he were to drop it,” she chuckled.

A minute later, after he had picked up a large stereo and started heaving it over to the school, Kat struck. She weaved in and out of cars, staying out of eyesight from anyone as she rushed Brian. She jumped out from behind the guy, snarling wildly at him.

Brian let out a horrified scream and the expensive stereo dropped from his hands, echoing across the lot with a loud crash. He was petrified for a second, only his eyes moving upon hearing the crash he had made. Satisfied and wishing not to stick around, Kat hauled ass away from him, sprinting out of the lot and behind a neighboring building nearby.

She only managed to catch a small glance of the aftermath when she dove for safety. Peering around the building's corner, she saw Brian freaking out over the dropped equipment and several people rushing to his side. A dark, gleeful chuckle escaped her throat, the sound of it less deafened than it should be given the mask on her.

*That was perfect! She thought, just a perfect way to start! Now, let's see who else I can give to f\*\*k with next. Hopefully, it'll be Michelle and her goon squad...*

She softly chuckled at the thought, thinking of all the great, messed up ways she can screw with the real freaks at the school. Unbeknownst to her, the energy from the mask was starting to grow. Around the shoulder area where her mask touched, the line between where the mask ended and her skin began appeared utterly seamless. Her eyes glowed a dark, nasty, and sickly yellow.

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Kat had the best and worst time of her life that night. It was the worst because her target, the whole reason she came her initially, was nowhere to be seen despite usually being early birds. She so wanted to utterly humiliate Michelle and stop whatever she was planning from happening. Neither she nor her flunkies were around though and it was really pissing her off.

But on the other hand, she had a delightfully lovely time harassing people and causing mayhem at the pep rally. She spent some time spoking and horrifying people as they walked through the parking lot or were setting up out on the football field, vanishing back into the shadows before they could regain their composure. And in the shadows of the parking lot, she had decided to introduce these Prep's cars to a new form of chop shop. From her backpack she withdrew her supplies, bags of sugar poured into gas tanks, a sharp garden hand rake dragged across the paint job, and a cork screw stabbed into two tires of each car.

The strength the mask gave her let her to wrench open one of the school's windows, allowing her inside. Once in, she tore down decorations in deserted hallways and with two spray cans in each hand, she 'decorated' locker after locker.

"As great as this is," Kat mumbled, glancing out from her hiding spot, a classroom of one of her English teacher that had called her poetry 'macabre trash'. She had kicked down the door with her booted foot and trashed the place. "I need to scale back for a bit until those prep-holes get here. Don't want to risk any cops being called until the "main event" happens."

There was a part of her, deep within her power surged body, it was primal, bestial, and it wanted her to keep causing mayhem and chaos, not stopping because of a bunch of trigger-happy idiots with badges may show up. It whispered to her, telling her that nothing could stop her, that she was invincible. And in truth, she truly did feel invincible.

However, her inner desire did not have to wait long. A convertible with its top down soon pulled in, parking in the last and farthest spot away from the rally. Out popped four preppy elite girls, their leader with a smug, self-satisfied look on her face. Kat left her spot and hurried over to the scene, hearing a chuckle, "alright girls, these photos are amazing. We'll stick them on every car here and then hand them out. Hope Kat likes the fun position we put her in."

Michelle's cronies chuckled and giggled, Kat's hands clenching into tight fists. The sound of cracking bones in her fingers and wrists were barely audible as the goth's rage burned hotter within. "I'm going to destroy these bitches," she growled, slowly moving from her position towards them, "We'll see how they'll handled me now..."

While Michelle sat in the seat of her car, checking her makeup the other three girls started unloading a stack of paper from the car, dividing it up into smaller stacks for each of them. However, before they even realized they weren't alone, Kat leapt out and hollered at them, her voice far more inhuman and vile than it once was now. Her teeth opened wide and her mask moved almost naturally with how her own face moved.

One of the girls instantly fainted, collapsing onto the concrete with a thud. Michelle's face froze into horror and she sat petrified in her vehicle. The other two girls tried to scream, but before they could, Kat smacked them so hard across the face that it left a visible imprint.

The masked girl eyed up a flyer they had, the image was of her face, and it had been Photoshopped well onto the body of another person in a provocative position. The very sight of it was burning in her mind and only fueling her inner hatred more. "You think that is funny?" She growled. She grabbed several of the flyers, ripping them up and shoving them down both girls' throats, tears streaming down their faces. She inched closer and growled lower, "I'll show you what I think of your humor." She picked them both up by their shirts and heaved them away, ripping their outfits in the process. And as they landed on the cold concrete, she roared at them.

Not wasting another second, both girls fled out of the parking lot, running away from the pep rally and leaving Michelle behind. Their leader could only whisper softly as she watched her two friends ditch her, "no... don't... don't leave me all alone..."



“All alone now?” asked Kat, pure, utter coldness in her tone as she leaned over Michelle, “That’s so sad... and too **bad for you. I’ve been waiting all night to do this.**” She clenched her right hand together tightly, the veins in her inhuman face bulging, and swung harder than she ever had in her entire life. All her rage, anger, and passion was placed into the swing.

THUD. CRACK.

Her fist collided sharply with Michelle’s face, right around her eye and nose. The force of the blow actually knocked the seat back, breaking the mechanism that held it upright. Kat drew her hand back, her body shivering and her breathing growing heavier. She never felt more satisfied and happy in her entire life.

But then, it all changed. Michelle weakly sat up, holding her face in her hand. Tears were running down her cheek, a nasty bruise was forming, and blood was dripping out one of her nostrils. She never looked more pathetic and weak in her entire life, looking up at her puncher with horrified, scared eyes. Those were the eyes of a terrified and beaten girl.

That look was so different for her. Kat had never seen it before. And it scared her. Her eyes shifted slightly she saw her reflection in the side mirror. What she saw wasn’t her, not even close. She did not see a bullied teen getting justice and retribution. She saw an ugly, disgusting monster out for vengeance and to cause pain. And that terrified her even more than the look on Michelle’s face. It finally clicked with her and Kat ran.

She ran as fast as she could away from the school and the light of the pep rally. She ran back to the calm, tranquil darkness of the woods. She ran until it felt like her lungs were going to burst before eventually stopping. She took deep, ragged breaths of air through the fanged mouth of the mask as sweat glistened on its bulbous forehead.

**“CRAP CRAP CRAP!”** She screamed out loud in her deep, monstrous voice, **“what the hell did I just do!? I... I didn’t want that! I just wanted to humiliate her, not hurt her!”**

But dark thoughts in the back of her mind whispered that deep down, she did want to hurt Melissa. And Kat shook her head roughly, trying to chase them away. *What’s wrong with me?!* She thought, dropping to her knees and holding her hands against her head, trying to figure out where everything went wrong.

However, the dark thoughts quickly returned. They whispered in a gentle, but forceful tone, *no, go back, it told her. Finish that bitch off. She hasn’t learned a thing yet.*

Kat shivered and continued to grip her head. **“Stop it... stop talking... I don’t want to listen to you anymore!”** She cried, feeling tears well up in her eyes.

**Don’t be a weakling anymore. You have the power. Destroy her. Destroy them all.** The voice... it sounded like her own, only huskier and deeper.

**“I... I don’t want to,”** Kat mumbled, **“She’s beaten as it is. I’m fine. I’m not going to do anything el...”** Her knees and legs wobbled, her body shivered. And then, as if on autopilot, it began moving on its own, standing her up straight and trudging slowly towards the school.

**“W-wh-what?!”** She yelled, **“S-s-stop that! I... I don’t want to go back there!”**

But her body continued to move and voice spoke with a dark glee, *if you won’t act then I will. I will finish this for us.*

Kat tried to stop her body, but it kept moving forward step her best efforts. She may have hated those preps, but she was not a freak or monster. This wasn’t her at all. Why was this happening? What was making her body move? Why was she just tonight acting like...?

It then dawned on her, her eyes growing wide. She cried out, **“it’s this mask... it’s all because of it! I... I need to take it off!”**

In the back of her mind, the voice seemed surprised by her announcement. *What is the problem? You wanted this. You wanted the power to hurt your enemies. I’ve given you all that you want and you deny me?*

**“Because you’re evil... I don’t want to be like you.”**

The voice merely whispered, *but you are me. I know you better than anyone.*

Within her mind, images and memories flashed rapidly. It showed all the times that Kat had been mocked, harassed, mercilessly been picked up, and more by Michelle, her cronies, and the school itself. It showed that despite her strong front, within Kat... she felt sad and empty... hurt and all alone.

*Why defend them and why do you wish to stop? I’m giving you what you want, whether you like it or not.*

**“I’m not defending them,”** Kat spoked with a low growl, her feet still trudging forward, **“They’re all preppy, elitist, conformist assholes that deserve humiliation... but they don’t deserve what I did or what you truly want. This is over! This... this is done! I want you gone from me right now!”**

Suddenly, drawing on every last bit of willpower she could, Kat willed her arms to reached up to the top of her head. It was like swimming through cement, especially when the darkness within fought back. However, Kat would not be so easily defeated.

She reached around to the back of her...no, the mask’s head and started feeling round for the fold. However, her hands and arms started to go numb, it was the same kind of icy feeling that had spread through her legs before she lost control of them.

*No.* The voice whispered as it tried to force Kat’s hands away from her masked head. *We are one, of body and heart... you will not deny us.*

Somehow finding the strength, the kind that is born out of sheer desperation, like if one was about to drown, Kat fought back against the numb feeling spreading through her arms and hands. She dug around with her fingers until she finally found what she was looking for. The fold was there, but only just barely, most of her body consumed by the horrible mask skin. She drove her fingers into the small opening and began to yank.

***STOP THAT! You can't get rid of me that easily!*** The voice roared, her head ringing after if she was stricken by a headache. As she continued to yank, her entire body ached with pain and her muscles groaned, as if a heavy weight was trying to pull them down to the ground.

Kat gritted her yellow fangs and twitched with pain, her veins throbbing as she tugged at the folds. ***"I just..."***, she groaned, ***"I just need to pull..."***

With a mighty tug, the fold opened up once more and her pain decreased just slightly. Her fangs wobbled and shook, clenching back together and her face stiffening.

***No you bitch! You...need to stop doing that! You need me!*** The voice was hollering, this time filled with desperation.

*You know what?* Kat thought right back. Her tone was spiteful and angry, but it was her own now and that only encouraged her. From deep within her gut, she bellowed, ***"SCREW YOU!"***

Driven by a new feeling of hope, she used all of her might. She pulled more and more at the mask, peeling it open. The ugly green flesh started to lose its realistic look and changed to become more like rubber and latex. Her athletic build decreased back to normal, as if a balloon was deflating, and her eyes lost their yellow tint, turning back into a simple ivy green. As the seam ripped even further, open strands of her natural hair started to poke out.

***Nooo...noo...please! You'll regret...*** The dark voice begged as it grew smaller and more pitiful, but Kat happily ignored it. Then, with one final tug that felt like peeling dead skin away after a sunburn, Kat wrenched the mask off from her face.

She let out a large gasp as the cool fresh night air touched her flushed, sweaty face. She breathed in and out very quickly before being able to breathe again normally. Dropping the mask to the ground, she reached up and touched her head. A genuine smile formed when she knew for 100% certainty that this was indeed her face, her real face.

Then, she turned her gaze down towards the ground. When she had worn the mask and looked through its eyes, she had been able to see as clearly in the dark as if it was the day. But now, she had to squint and use the little moonlight that there was.

She picked up the mask and held it in her hands, it had lost its warmth from when she first found it. Now, it looked like a normal mask again instead of a real face. But the look of perpetual anger was still on its monstrous features. In its empty eye sockets, Kat could almost see pleading in it, as if it was begging Kat to put it back on, to become the creature again.

“Never...I will never put you on again,” she declared with utter resolve.

She heard sirens off in the distance, no doubt headed to school after all the chaos that she... *No*, she thought, shaking her head, *it was that damn mask...* Kat turned and ran in what she hoped was the direction of her home, shoving the mask underneath her jacket.

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After stumbling around in the dark for a while, Kat finally saw the lights of her own backyard. Never had she been so happy to be back home. She walked through the back door and into a comforting, familiar kitchen, closing the door softly behind her.

“There you are!” Sarah stated, poking her head into the kitchen, “Where have you been?!” She had clearly regained her nerves since last Kat saw her and despite her going back to being annoying, Kat felt happy.

“Where did you go?” Complained Sarah, “I was all alone and scared! Mommy is going to be so mad at you and why are you all dirty and...” She was abruptly cut off by Kat doing something she hadn’t done in years: hugging her.

It was a warm and genuine sisterly hug, the kind that she had not given since well...ever.

The hug lasted for a good 30 seconds, then without another word spoken, Kat walked away and headed back for her room. She had no doubt that Sarah was completely baffled by what she just did, but she didn’t care. She just felt so happy for once... but also exhausted. She suspected that she had used all of her energy, both physical and emotional to remove that thing from her face.

Wandering into her room, Kat tossed the mask onto the bed. It landed with a plop and rested there on the comforter, now staring up at the ceiling. She watched it closely, as if expecting it to suddenly levitate off the ground. But after a few moments, she felt satisfied and with a sigh of relief, trudged off into her private bathroom.

As she flipped on the light she was thinking, *I’ll apologize to Sarah later... right now though... right now I just need to relax and get some this crud off of me...* She was filthy, covered in sweat and dirt with her outfit clinging to her like a wet sock.

The door slammed and locked. Aside from the sounds of running water soon and some classical music, Kat’s room was quiet otherwise and there was nothing out of the ordinary. Even the mask that laid on her bed was still and showed no indications of life.

But then the peace was broken when the bedroom door opened very slowly.

Sarah poked her little head in and glanced around, her eyes falling the longest on the bathroom door. After several seconds of making sure her big sister would be in the shower for a while, Sarah felt confident to enter the room. Creaking the door opened more, the little sister tiptoed in and started looking around.

*I'll show her!* She thought, puffing her cheeks out as she looked around, *I bet she has some super bad stuff in here! I'll get her into trouble with mom and dad so much that she'll be sorry!*

Granted that the hug had been nice, Kat had still left her home alone, had threatened to cut off her hair and the heads of her Barbie dolls, and even worse...she had ordered pizza with gross banana peppers. Sisterly justice demanded payback.

Searching around the room, she only found the usual weird stuff that she saw when she snuck into Kat's room. However, she eventually reached Kat's bed and her eyes fell upon the ugly, terrible mask that laid there.

*What's this?* The little girl thought, picking it up and staring at its face, *it definitely looks like something sis would have... it's just as creepy as her...*

Holding it in her hands, she noticed that the mask was starting to grow hot, like it had been left out in the sun all day. Sarah's brow furrowed, but she did not drop it. *It's all warm now*, she continued to think, flipping it over and looking at the backside and seeing the seam in the back. *This thing is weird... I bet sis is gonna try to scare me with this!*

Frowning and pouting her lips for a moment, a devious little grin formed on her face. She opened the back of the mask and started pulling it over her head. *I'll show her! I'll get her first!*

As she pulled the mask on over her face, she nearly gagged at the horrid smell on the inside. It was like sweat mixed with dead fish and also weirdly very sticky on the inside. But despite that, she continued to pull it downward.

After struggling to stuff her hair beneath the folds and stretching her shirt to place the ragged edges under her collar, Sarah eventually got the mask fully over her head. It was a tad big for her and hot on the inside, but she was fine with it. As long as she could see out the eyeholes and scared the pants off her sister, she was fine.

She then turned and walked over to the full-length mirror, gazing into her reflection. It was so different for her, since even on Halloween she preferred to dress up as something cute rather than terrifying. "Oh yeah!" she declared, her voice sounded different, deeper and throatier, "I look so scary! Sis is never gonna see this coming!" She grinned and rubbed her hands together in anticipation.

As she gazed into the mirror, she noticed something off. As she grinned and spoke, the mouth of the mask seemed to move with her. The mask itself seemed smaller now, more fitting for her head size. In fact, she could feel it growing tighter on her head, starting to make her feel rather strange and woozy. The smell inside the mask was overwhelming and the inside clinging so tightly to her, she swore could hear a voice...

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Wiping her face down with a towel, Kat had finished her shower and was drying off. She let out another sigh of relief, her body more at ease now than it was when she got home.

*First things first, she thought as she finished drying, tomorrow, I am going to the store and buy a lockbox with a big fat lock. I'll put the mask in it, fill it with rocks, and then chuck it into the damn lake!* She could not bury it again, she didn't want to risk someone else finding it.

Popping the towel back onto the racket, she pulled off the fuzzy pink robe that hung from the hook on the door. Her mom had gotten it for her last Christmas, saying it would help brighten up her day. While she absolutely detested it, right about now, light sounded a bit good for once.

Donning it, Kat looked in the bathroom mirror as she started to dry her hair with the blow dryer. Looking at her mug, it was the first time in a while she really studied her face without her piercings or heavy coats of makeup. She looked positively normal and conformist in her mind.

But after everything, the thought didn't really bother her that much. *Maybe...* She thought, *maybe I should just take a break from the darkness for a while. I'm not going to join any of those losers or anything... but getting away from that stuff might be nice until I can get past all of this crap...* She no doubt would need a ton of therapy after tonight.

Finishing with the blow dryer and turning her music off, Kat left her bathroom and went to get some clothes to change into. However, less than three steps into her room, she froze up. A chill ran through her spine and the hair on the back of her neck stood up.

The sight before her on her bed horrified her. Her little sister, from toe to shoulders, was dressed in her normal, pink and white outfit. But, from the neck up? Her face was a sickly green monstrous visage; a rather familiar one at that.

**“Hello sister,”** She spoke in a deep bestial voice, **“My new friend and I would like to have a word with you. I hope you don't mind. It'll be a nice, long, sisterly talk...”** A fanged, ugly smile crossed her sickly lips as Kat could only let out a scream.

***THE END...***