

Someone's under my bed

By

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In a not so small, but not that big either town near the black forest lived a tiny little family of 3 members. The mother, her husband and their young child. Though little, the three of them would spend their days as happy as any family could ever hope to be. The father worked at a toothpick factory, which usually took him 12 hours of the day at least. That meant he would always come home late at night, just before dinner if he was lucky, and after that, every time before bedtime, he would read his son a new story. This way, he could at least share that short moment of the day with his son. The mother took care of taking her son to school in the morning and picking him up in the afternoon. In the time in between she would stay at home preparing the meals of the day, cleaning up the house, doing the laundry and taking on some of her hobbies, like gardening or playing the guitar because her son loved hearing her play so much. The little boy had just finished preschool and was about to enter a new school to study the next bunch of years of ground school. Their names were John Kaufman, Lisa Schludern and Michael Schludern. They had decided that the boy should have her mother's last name.

On a Sunday afternoon, one day before Michael's first day of school, the family was having their favourite dish, Schnitzel with potato salad, to celebrate and wish him all the luck in the world. It was mainly the family's favourite dish because it was Michael's favourite dish, but they were okay with that. Lisa pours served some potato salad to Michael.

- Here you go my love, enjoy it, you've earned it -said the mother -. Are you excited about tomorrow?
- Well -answered Michael -, I'm not sure. I was already used to my old school and I miss my friends.
- Oh, I know sweetie, but hey, give this new school a chance -said Lisa while she caressed her son's hair -, I'm sure you're going to do just fine and that you'll make a lot of new friends.
- Yeah, come on son, let's face this new challenge with a smile a lot of good attitude - added John.
- Mmm... okay I guess -replied Michael with an expression of doubt.
- That's the spirit.

And so the evening continued to be as lovely as always. The two parents and the little one enjoyed a delicious Schnitzel while talking about whatever came to their minds and fooling around in the process. The family was having so much fun that their laughter could be heard outside their humble house. After they finished eating, the three of them together sang a couple of their favourite songs to the sound of Lisa's guitar. When the time to go to bed came, Michael took a bath with some of his Lego figures, brushed his teeth, put on his pyjamas and got ready for the story time with his father. This was probably Michael's most expected moment of the day. He loved hearing his father's stories. Eager to hear the story, the little boy went under his bed sheets and waited for his father to come.

- Are you ready? -said John as he entered the room with the book in his hand.
- Hm, hm, yes -answered Michael filled with excitement
- Okay, here we go.

John opened the book and started reading.

- Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess who lived in the biggest and most luxurious castle you could ever imagine... -narrated the father.

The little boy listened carefully to the story his father was telling him, and as the story developed, his curiosity and excitement increased, but so did his sleepiness. By the time John finished the story, Michael could barely keep his eyes open. Before they turned off the lights to let Michael sleep, Lisa came into the room to say goodnight to his son. Both Lisa and John then leaned on to give their son a good night kiss. As they leaned on, Michael could hear the sweet voice of his mother whisper.

- Good night, baby.

Both of them then got up, turned off the lights and closed the door while Michael was already starting to fall into deep sleep. This would be the last time the family would get to enjoy such a calm night.

The next morning, the father woke up the earliest to go to work, as usual. Not so long after, Lisa would stand up to wake up Michael and help him get ready for school. After a small breakfast that included some toast and orange juice, Lisa walked Michael to school. Once they arrived, they stopped for a moment at the entrance. Lisa kneeled and looked at his son. She could tell he was nervous.

- Hey.

Said Lisa, as she gently turned her son's face with her fingertips. She then looked at him straight and smiled in the most reassuring manner. Michael couldn't help but smile too.

- Have a great day, baby.
- Thanks mommy.

Lisa playfully slapped Michael in the butt and off he went to his first day at school. Lisa stood outside for a while, as she waited for her son to enter. Just before the door, Michael turned around to wave a last goodbye to his mother and she waved back. After that, Lisa just headed back home.

Meanwhile, Michael was heading to his classroom, not really knowing where it was and overwhelmed by all the new kids that run through the halls. Eventually, after stepping into the wrong classroom a few times, he managed to find the right place. He timidly entered the room and shortly evaluated the situation. He could see a group of girlfriends on the front row having an indistinct conversation and a bunch of other kids playing on their desks, but what really caught his attention, was a little group of three kids that hung out at the back of the room. It seemed like they knew each other for a while. Suddenly the teacher came in with a fast pace and hurriedly placed her things on the desk.

- Good morning kids! -she yelled.
- Good morning miss! -answered most of the children.

The whole class then rushed to their places. Michael sat on the nearest available seat he could find.

- Welcome to the Wolfgang Baumgratz Ground School, my name is Miss Liebing, I'll be your math's teacher and today we'll start to learn the multiplication tables. Now who's heard about them? Anyone can tell me what they are? Yes please...

Although it was his first day and he didn't even know how things worked around here, there were very few things that could matter as little to Michael as maths. In fact, all he could think about was the break. After a very long and exhausting 45 minutes of maths, it was finally time for the first break. All the kids then grabbed their lunch boxes and headed to the playground. Michael found a nice place to sit and eat his lunch near the handrails game. He was about to take a bite of the sandwich his mother had sent him, when he noticed the group of boys he had seen at the back of the classroom, sitting in a circle in the sandpit. He reflected and thought to himself, that he might as well take up on his parent's advice and make some new friends. So, he decided he would head where the group was and introduce himself. When he got there, the ongoing conversation was so intense he didn't even get a chance to introduce himself.

- No, it's not true! -yelled one of them.
- Yes, it is! Wilbur my friend from football even told me there's stories from werewolves that go to howl at the moon in the black forest! -firmly replied another one.
- No way, and do you think it's true? -asked the third one.
- Obviously, if not, why would there be so many stories about them. And if there's werewolves there's obviously draculas as well.
- No that's not true! If there were draculas and werewolves then the werewolves would eat the draculas.
- But if we're home, they can't get to us, right? -intervened Michael.
- Well, don't be so sure, my other friend, Niklas, told me that there are ghosts that can escape from the black forest and then they go to your house and they hide under your bed because it's always dark under your bed.
- Don't listen to him, he's just trying to scare you, he doesn't know -said one of the kids while punching his friend on the closest leg he had to reach.
- What's your name.
- I'm Michael
- Well hello Michael, I'm Aaron, this is Ulrich and he's Hans.
- Hello everyone -greeted Michael.
- Did you bring your lunch? -asked Ulrich.
- My mommy sent me a sandwich.
- I got some chocolate chips cookies. -said Hans - Do you want some?
- Sure! -answered Michael.

Michael took one of the cookies Hans had offered him and sat next to Aaron and Ulrich. After that, they continued their conversation about the horrific creatures that allegedly wandered the black forest. Once the break was over, the group of boys returned to the classroom and remained together for the rest of the day. When school was over and the time to go home came, Michael

said goodbye to his new friends and headed to the entrance to greet his mom, who was already waiting for him at the sidewalk. He ran into his mother's arms and hugged her.

- Hello mommy!
- Oh, hello my baby, how was your first day at school?
- It was great mommy, I made new friends!
- Oh, I'm so happy to hear that sweetie. Come on, let's go home and you can tell me all about your first day on the way.

While they walked, Michael told his mother everything about his new friends and about what he had learned in school. When they got home, they sat down to eat the delicious meal Lisa had cooked for the day, did together Michael's first math homework, practiced the guitar and singing for an hour or so and there was even some time left for gardening. Then they waited for dad to come home. After just a few hours, dad arrived just in time for dinner. As usual, they had a lovely dinner and when finished, played the guitar and sang for a while. When it was time to sleep, Michael had a bath with his Lego figures, brushed his teeth, put on his pyjamas and, like every night, got ready for the story time with his father. John tucked Michael in and proceeded to go to the chair he usually used when he read the stories.

- Ok! We ready?
- Hm, hm -nodded Michael.
- Today I'm going to read you one of my favourite stories from when I was... more or less your age.
- What is it about -asked Michael.
- It's called The Gruffalo, it's about a mouse and a monster that he...
- No! -interrupted Michael yelling - No, no, no, please no monsters.
- What? Why? He's a harmless monster.
- Mhh no, still, please, no monsters -begged Michael.
- Why? Did something happen at school today? -asked John.
- No, it's just that... I'm scared of the monsters from the black forest.
- What monsters from the forest?
- The ones Aaron was talking about.
- Who's Aaron? -questioned John with curiosity.
- One of my new friends.
- I see. -said John while slightly raising his head in a reaffirming manner – And what did Aaron say?
- He said that... there were werewolves and draculas fighting and that there were even ghosts that escaped the black forest and got under your bed.
- Is that so? -replied John.
- Yes -said Michael firmly.
- Well, I think you've got nothing to worry about, because there are no such things as werewolves or draculas, and least of all, ghost under your bed.
- Are you sure dad? -asked Michael with a shaky voice.

John stood up from his chair, grabbed his son's face as he stared at him and said:

- I'm sure! There are no werewolves, there are no draculas and there are no ghosts under your bed. Ok?
- Ok? -answered Michael very quietly as he looked away
- Ok? -asked John again while searching for Michael's look.

John then started tickling Michael to try and cheer him up a bit while he asked the same thing over and over again. Michael was laughing so hard he almost peed himself.

- Ok! Ok! -screamed Michael so his father would stop tickling him.
- Ok then. -said John leaning back again on the chair -In that case, let us start with our story. The Gruffalo, by Julia Donaldson...A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark wood...-narrated John.

After the story had ended, mommy came in the room to kiss his baby good night. The parents leaned on to kiss Michael and dad stopped for a moment to say:

- Don't be afraid, there are no monsters here to worry about.

Lisa and John then headed to the door to turn off the lights and close the door. In the darkness of his room, reduced only by the small amount of moonlight that came through his curtains, Michael overwhelmed his mind with frightening thoughts about nightmarish beasts. But after a few moments, Michael thought about what his father had told him and decided that he was right, there was nothing to worry about. After all, Michael always believed what his father told him. So, he convinces himself.

- I have nothing to worry about.
- Are you sure? -asked a putrid scratchy voice out of the darkness.
- Ahhhhhhhhh! -screamed Michael like he had never screamed in his whole life.

He then stood up and headed to his bedroom's door as quickly as he could. The fear of being grabbed by the feet by whatever was under his bed made Michael shiver so bad that he could barely run, but the fear of staying in the room with a ghost was even greater. As he ran to the door, Michael could hear the putrid scratchy voice of the strange being burst out laughing.

- HA, HA, HA, HA, HA.

Laughed the voice out loud until it got lost in the sound of the screams for help of Michael.

- Mommy!! Mommy!! Mommy!! -kept screaming Michael as he headed for his parent's bedroom.
- What?! What is it baby? What's happening? -asked Lisa.
- There is a ghost under my bed! -said Michael while pointing to his room.

John immediately rushed for Michael's room, taking a broom that stood in the hall by chance in the process. When he got to the entrance, he grabbed the doorknob and cautiously began to open the door expecting the worst. Once he completely opened the door, he entered the room. He walked right into complete darkness, for only a few lamps that lit up the hallway allowed to see a few steps into Michael's room, but not much more. Lisa and Michael stood hugged to each

other, expecting John to come out of the room. Only a few seconds had passed and Michael began to fear the worst. Suddenly, a dark silhouette could be seen emerging from the obscure room.

- There's no one here -said John.

Lisa and Michael sighed in relief to see that it wasn't a ghost.

- Baby, what happened? Did you have a bad dream? -asked Lisa while she caressed her son's chest.
- No! It wasn't a bad dream, there was a man in my room! -expressed loudly Michael with great fear.
- But... There is no one there, sweetie.
- No! I heard him, he was there! It wasn't a dream! -cried Michael inconsolable in his mother's shoulder.

Lisa and John looked at each other. Their worry for their son was so great just by the looks one could tell. Whilst completely bewildered by the unexpected event they had just witnessed, John decided to take another look into Michael's room and Lisa took his still shivering son to their bedroom. Eventually, after hours of trying to calm down Michael, Lisa managed to talk him into sleep with her sweet, calm voice. Lisa then looked at John.

- What the hell happened? What did you read to him? -whispered Lisa so she wouldn't wake Michael.
- It wasn't the book I read him, it must have been the stories his new friends told him at school.
- Which stories?
- Something about werewolves and ghosts under the bed.
- Oh those kids, I don't know if Michael should be hanging out with them. -mumbled Lisa trying to hide his raise of tone.
- Relax, that's just kids, there's nothing we can do. It doesn't mean they're bad kids, they're just playing.
- Alright.
- We'll talk to him tomorrow after school. He just got really scared, we have to make him understand that those things aren't real.
- I don't know John, I had never seen him so scared. Ever.
- Don't worry honey, he's going to be ok. -said John reassuring Lisa -Let's go to bed, we'll talk about it tomorrow.

John then turned to turn off the lights and turned back again to hug his wife and son to finally end that restless night.

The next morning, the family followed his routine as usual. John got up earlier to get ready and head to work. When it was time for Michael to start getting ready for school, Lisa began to wake him up as gently as she could.

- Hey... hey baby. How did you sleep? -asked Lisa.

- Hmm...

Michael could barely hum as an answer, he was still half asleep.

- Are you ok?
- Hmm... better -mumbled Michael.
- Good. Are you ready to go to school?
- Hmmm... No.
- No? -asked Lisa in playful and sarcastic manner – Well how about?

Lisa then started to tickle Michael to cheer him up while asking him if he was ready. As it is normally the case, Michael couldn't resist to the immediate joy boost that came with the tickling. After that, Lisa and Michael went through the next tasks as they would have done any other day. Once they finished breakfast, they walked to school, stopped for a moment at the entrance to say goodbye and off he went to another day at school.

Even though Michael was a lot more calm than last night, all he could think about was that ghastly voice. It was like he could almost smell the rotting scent from wherever the voice came from. When he got to his classroom, he immediately started looking for his new friends. He couldn't wait any longer to tell them what had happened. He rushed to the spot at the back of the classroom where they normally were. Michael slammed both hands on the desk where the boys were sitting and with a worried voice:

- Guys, I have to tell you something.

In that exact moment, the teacher appeared in the room and picked up a piece of chalk right away to start with the subjects of the day. The four friends just looked at each other and went to their respective places. They sat down and listened to the teacher.

- What is it? -asked Hans whispering.
- A ghost under my bed talked to me yesterday.
- No way! -exclaimed Ulrich
- Shhh! -shushed the teacher.

The boys kept silent for a second and then went on with the paranormal interview about Michael's experience with a ghost.

- Did it really happen? -asked Aaron.
- Yes.
- How do you know it was a ghost? Obviously, you were dreaming. -affirmed Hans
- No! I wasn't dreaming! -said Michael with a clearly upset tone.
- The next one who talks gets a visit to the principal's office -yelled the teacher while slamming the chalk against the board.

Michael and the others then decided it would probably be best to wait for the break. When the class ended, the four friends all rushed straight to the sandbox. Once there, they discussed Michael's phantasmagoric experience. After a long debate about the veracity of the events, they decided something had to be done about this situation, so they all agreed on going after school















Michael was starting to recover from the hard hit.

- Who are you? What do you want from me? -asked Michael with despair in his voice
- I'm your father idiot!
- What?
- I'm your real father.
- Are you freaking kidding me? -yelled Michael.
- No, I'm not.
- Where are you?
- I'm dead thanks to John.
- My father?
- He's not your father! -screamed angrily the voice.
- You want me to believe that the voice only I hear is really my dead father and that John is not really my father? Yeah, right. I must be losing my mind!
- Listen to me Michael, don't be stupid, think, think for just a second. Has it never crossed your mind the idea that you don't really look like John? Not even a little bit?
- Shut up.
- Or have you seen any photos of you from the day you were born? Hm? What about from when you were just a few months old?
- Shut it!
- And now the fact that you took your mother's last name doesn't seem like such a random decision, does it? Has your mother ever shown you your birth certificate? I'm sure she told everyone the right lies and that I was a bastard and I left her. Fucking bitch.
- Watch it! That's my mother you...
- Oh, tell me it doesn't all make sense to you somehow!

The more Michael thought about it, and the more the ghost that claimed to be his dad said things about his family, the more it made sense. He didn't want to believe it, but the fact is that he had thought about some of those things himself.

- I haven't said that I believe you -clarified Michael -, but why did John kill you?
- Because your mother was cheating on me with him and I caught them just a few weeks after you were born.
- What happened?
- That's not important. What's important is that you have to avenge me son, you have to kill John and turn your mom over to the police.
- You're out of your mind, or I am.

Michael walked to the door, set on leaving the room, when his father said to him:

- Keep in mind one thing my son. Do you know where your mother got her guitar?
- No -answered Michael.
- Have you never asked her?
- Where are you going with this?





Once he got to the cemetery, he thought to himself “no way, this is going to be impossible”. But somehow he could hear his father’s voice guiding him. When he got there it was just a bunch of ugly, ancient tombs next to a tree.

- It’s here! -thought Michael to himself, listening to his father’s voice.

Michael took a shovel that lied next to the tree and began to dig. He dug as fast as he could.

- Come on son, you can do this -said Viktor’s voice in Michael’s head.

He had already gotten a whole lot of earth out, when Michael was pulled and arrested by a group of policemen that took him by surprise.

- No! Please, my father’s in there! Please let me go! -screamed Michael.

He resisted and twisted and kept screaming to the police officers that his father was in that grave and that he himself had told him. They simply ignored him and took him straight to the police station. Michael was detained and processed. The jury simply decided he was a madman and that he should be sent to a psychiatric hospital due to his medical and psychological record.

Not so long after Michael got into the psychiatric, his mother came to visit him. They both sat down, facing each other through the protective glass. They grabbed the interphones.

- Hello baby -said Lisa.
- What did you do? -answered Michael.
- Michael...
- Is it true? -exclaimed angrily Michael – Is it true what my father told me?! -yelled uncontrollably.
- Please baby, you’re not well.
- Just tell me if it’s true, please, I just want that, the truth.
- You’re sick Michael.
- What...?
- You need help and you’re going to stay here...
- You’re, you’re going to leave me here! -screamed Michael again – Get me out of here! Get me out of here!

As Michael lost his mind trying to get to the other side of the protective glass, Lisa hung up the interphone and left the place.

After that, Lisa stopped to buy a beautiful bouquet of flowers. She then drove to the cemetery near the black forest. She parked, stepped out of the car and walked a bunch of meters until she reached a tomb that lied on the edge of a little hill. The tombstone read “Here lies John Kaufman, beloved husband and father. Rest in peace.” She stood still for a long time, praying for her husband’s soul and for her own peace. Once she finished praying, she gently placed the bouquet on top of the tomb and broke down in tears.

- I’m going to miss you, my darling.

Lisa wiped her tears, put a kiss on her fingertips and left it on the tombstone. She then walked another couple of meters until she came across a bunch of graves next to a tree. She stood right in front of one of the tombs. It read “Here lies Martha Balora, beloved mother and wife”. It was most likely someone that Lisa had never even seen in her entire life. The spot where Lisa was standing was the exact same spot where Michael was digging before he got caught. She looked down at the tomb, with her body rigid as a corpse and with an expression of absolute disgust and spat at it.

- May you rot in hell you bastard -said Lisa to the air.

She then turned around, walked all the way back to her car without a hurry in the world, drove back home to enjoy a lovely diner, sing some of her favourite songs while playing guitar, take a shower after a long day, and finally tuck herself into bed to have a good night sleep.