



# SKETCH

WHAT LURKS  
INSIDE THE SKETCH?

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To all the things that go bump in the night...

# 1

There is something about the feeling of a pencil dragging across the paper, leaving its mark, leaving part of itself as it goes, all in the name of creation. What starts as a swirl or line soon becomes part of a greater whole, whether a landscape, a portrait, an abstract, or something more. Sarah sat staring at the drawing, taking a paper towel and absently smudging the varying shades of lines until it became a perfect shadow, becoming less of a sketch and more taking on a life of its own. She had been working on these landscapes for months, and the show was coming up way quicker than she had hoped. Still, Sarah couldn't think about that now. Drawing was a way of relaxing for her, and she couldn't forget that. She had thrown herself entirely into the work of sketching out the old castles she had visited while traveling, and now her body of work was nearly complete. Tracy had managed to secure a showing during the art gala was unbelievable to her. She was so lucky to have such a good friend. Tracy supported Sarah throughout her breakup and all the ugly proceedings that came after, and Sarah didn't know what she would do without her.

Sarah stretched and sat back to get some perspective on the work she had been hunched over for the last couple of hours. It was a beautiful sketch of a medieval archway draped in shadows and moss. Her way of smudging and blending the lines gave it a surreal quality, with deep shades accenting the lighter parts of the drawing so that it almost seemed illuminated. Sarah took a sip of her coffee as she gazed deep into the sketch. She could stare at it for hours, exploring all the lines and shading, losing herself in it completely, almost as if she was beckoned into another world. As she was looking at it, though, something bothered her. She couldn't shake a nagging feeling that

something was not right. As she stared at the picture, she figured out what it was. Deep in the darkest section of the drawing, deep in the corridor under the arch, she could almost make out the vague silhouette of a figure. It was almost unnoticeable due to the varying shades of darkness but the more she stared at it, the more she saw it. It was such a strange coincidence that she had been so close and intensely working on the shading that she didn't realize she had caused the peculiar shape to appear. She would have to remember to work on that section, in particular, to blend out the abnormality. Just then, she heard the door behind her banging against the wall as Tracy pushed her way through with an armload of supplies and lunch from the smell of it.

"Have you eaten? I picked up some soup from the deli downstairs and a couple grilled cheese sandwiches." said her friend as she unloaded the supplies and two piping hot containers of broccoli cheese soup.

Sarah smiled as the smell of the soup reminded her that, while she had been working since the early morning hours, she had neglected to eat, and her stomach gurgled with anticipation of the hot nourishment. "Thanks, you're so good to me! I am actually starving."

"How's work going?" Tracy asked as she tore into the sandwich. Sarah laughed to herself at her friend's enthusiasm for, well, everything. Tracy never attacked anything without seemingly putting her entire being into it, and she wished she had half the energy and drive that her friend did. She nodded as she pulled off a strip of her grilled cheese and dipped it into the piping-hot soup.

"It's going okay, I hit a snag right before you got here, but once I get a full stomach, it'll be easy enough to tackle."

Her friend looked around at the sketches, "Which one is giving you trouble? It's so rare to see you hung up on anything."

Sarah felt a warmth in her cheeks, Tracy always made her feel so incredible, yet she couldn't help but feel as if she didn't deserve it. Throughout the last few years, Tracy had always been the one, sometimes the only one, to believe in her.

\* \* \*

"Hey! Are you going to keep me in suspense or what?" Tracy poked Sarah with the back of her spoon. "Lost in thought, or is it the early stages of starvation?"

Sarah laughed, "I'm good. There's just this weird spot on the sketch of the archway. I was hunching down over it, and when I backed off, there was this weird smudge that almost looked like a person."

"This archway? I don't see it?" said Tracy as Sarah turned to see her staring at the sketch she had been working on all morning. When she looked over her friend's shoulder, the figure was gone. Only the deep shading that Sarah had been working on all morning.

"I swear, it was just there..." said Sarah as she stared at the archway where moments earlier she swore she saw a figure.

"Lack of nutrition, my friend!" said Tracy as she shoved a cup of soup into Sarah's hand. "Told you going this long without eating was bad for you. Now it's got you seeing things!"

Sarah gripped the soup and stared at the paper, "I don't know," she said, shaking her head. "Maybe you're right, I have been working awfully hard, but still, it was so real."

"Yeah, yeah, that does it. No more work for you! Finish your sandwich, and I'm going to take you to the park so we can get some fresh air. All this time alone with these gloomy castle pictures is bad for your health."

Sarah grinned at her friend and nodded. She was ahead of schedule, so what was the harm in some fresh air? Moments later, as she was about to leave, she glanced at the drawing and the empty space where no figure stood, only blackness.

## 2

Tracy was out of town visiting her mother. While she was gone, Sarah had disappeared almost totally into her work. Late one night, she cleaned the studio, sweeping up bits of eraser and graphite off the floor. Sarah was glad her friend wasn't there to see how disheveled the studio had become. She bent down to sweep the debris of her creative endeavors into a dustpan, like so much collateral damage, when she felt it. It was a strange feeling, as if she was being watched. She raised up and dumped the contents of the pan into the trashcan as she scanned the dimly lit room.

Shadows filled the usually brightly lit room. Sarah had turned off most of the lights to rest her eyes which had grown tired from constantly staring at the paper and lack of sleep. She clutched the broom to protect herself with it if she had to and slowly made her way toward the light switch. Just then, she thought she heard a rustling, like sheets of paper brushing against one another. She froze, "Who's there?" she asked in as brave a voice as she could muster. She waited, but there was no response, just the silence of her studio. Just then, she saw it. In the dim light, she could barely make it out. In one of her sketches, she saw a figure partially obscured by an old column. It was misshapen, with a strange profile that was only partly visible, but the one thing she could make out in the darkness was a single eye staring straight at her. How had it gotten there? Who had added it to her sketch? Her mind raced, thinking this was a strange joke and that Tracy would jump out and belly laugh at her any minute. But nothing happened. She stood in the dark, frozen in the intense stare of the figure in the drawing, straining to make out any other detail, frozen by this strange spectacle.



\* \* \*

Slowly she reached out her hand for the light switch, fumbling slightly as her fingers felt across the wall for it. Her heart pounded in her chest, and she was mystified as to why she was so worked up. It was just a sketch. Someone had vandalized her art. She continued feeling for the light switch, afraid to take her eyes off it. She felt that exposing it in the bright light would remove the strange, almost claustrophobic, constricting feeling that its stare was causing deep inside her. Where was the light switch? She paused, knowing the light switch was nearby, but unable to take her eyes off the figure in the drawing. As she had moved sideways to find the light, she swore the eye had followed her. That was crazy, though; it's just a sketch. Why was she so freaked out? Finally summoning her courage as much as possible, she broke the figure's gaze for an instant, turned, and flipped on the light. The studio was instantly flooded with bright neon light, and she had to close her eyes momentarily against the brightness. When she opened them, she turned to face the figure in the drawing, only to find it was gone. The sketch was there with the column and everything intact, but the figure had vanished.

Sarah stood in the studio, her heart beating nearly out of her chest and her head dizzy. Had she imagined it all? Was the figure ever there? She felt as though she was losing her mind. She leaned against the wall, afraid to move, more afraid to turn the light back out.

### 3

The sun shone through the windows as Sarah touched up a sketch of a castle she had visited in France the summer before. After the incident several nights ago, she had decided to only work during the day; if she had to work at night, she did it only with all the lights on. Her sleep had yet to improve, though, as she refused to turn the lights off. She felt safe during the day, and the sun's warmth felt good on her skin. After looking the sketch over, she stretched and decided that a walk in the fresh air would do her good, as Tracy was so fond of reminding her. She put away her supplies, and while washing her hands, she studied her face in the mirror above the sink. She was sad to see the bags under her eyes. The lack of sleep and normal eating wrecked her health, and Tracy would kill her when she returned. She determined that she was going to try to get some rest. Sarah was almost finished, and the show was coming up in just a few weeks. Once the show was over, she would take a break, maybe even travel for a week or two. She smiled, thinking of the wind in her hair and the smell of an ocean breeze.

Just then, she was jolted from her thoughts as she noticed the sketch behind her in the mirror. A face leered back at her in the window of the castle she had just been working on. She could see more detail now, and in the light, she saw the misshapen head, what seemed to be a tangled mess of... tentacles? Worms? She couldn't tell but saw those eyes staring a hole in her through the mirror. She screamed and reflexively lashed out at the mirror. It hit the sink and smashed into a million pieces. She spun around, and the figure was gone from the sketch. The window was empty, with no sign of the grotesque figure

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there moments before. Sarah collapsed onto the floor in the corner between the cabinets and sobbed uncontrollably.

## 4

Tracy chewed her lip pensively as they drove in silence, her brow knotted with worry as she tried to work through the past few days' events. She was listed as Sarah's emergency contact and had rushed back from what had been a glorious beach trip. Now she drove in silence as Sarah sat beside her, staring at the floorboard, her hands folded in her lap. She looked like a wreck; her hair hung in knotted strands, her skin was pale and pasty, and she had dark rings under her eyes. The doctor told Tracy that someone had heard a crash, and when they went upstairs, they found Sarah sobbing hysterically in the corner. It had taken two days of anti-anxiety medicine before Sarah had finally calmed down.

"You want to talk about it?" Tracy finally asked as she continued to gaze at the road ahead.

Silence.

"Look, I'm sorry about all of this. If I've been putting too much pressure on you to get everything ready for the show, we can cancel it. I didn't mean to put all this pressure on you.."

"No." Sarah suddenly interjected. "it's not that."

The silence hung in the car. Sarah looked as though she was as surprised as Tracy that the words came out.

Tracy glanced over at her friend, "The doctor told me. She said when

they brought you in, you kept raving about some figure in your drawings."

When Sarah didn't respond, Tracy looked over to see her friend's hands trembling in her lap. Sarah nervously tugged at the bandage wrapped around her hand where she had cut it on the mirror.

"Look, it's okay; take a few days off. You said it yourself; you're almost finished. I just think the pressure got to you. Maybe you had some issues that were unresolved from... you know..."

Sarah glanced at her friend, who continued to look at the road ahead. "it's not that; it's... it's something else. There is something in the drawings. I've seen it three times now. I don't know how to explain it, but it follows me."

Tracy drove in silence, letting her friend's words soak in. "Look, I don't know what you think you saw, but this sounds nuts. The doctor threatened to keep you for observation, but I explained you had been under a lot of stress and promised to keep a close eye on you. That's the only reason you're sitting here right now."

"You don't believe me?"

Tracy sighed, "it's not that, I believe you think you saw it, but I just can't wrap my head around it. Look, no matter what, we will get through it." Tracy smiled at her friend and thought she saw a slight upturn in Sarah's lips.

"Okay, so first, we're getting you out, away from the studio for a few and making sure you get plenty of food and sleep."

Sarah sighed, "Good luck with that. I may be able to eat, but I definitely can't sleep."

Tracy grinned and held up a prescription bag, "Luckily, the doc thought of that. I guarantee you'll sleep like a baby tonight."

## 5

That evening had been glorious. Tracy was a great cook, and she had made a magnificent meal of sautéed asparagus, pasta with olive oil and parmesan, and the most delicate dill salmon Sarah had ever tasted. It had taken a while, but Tracy had finally gotten Sarah to warm up and break out of her shell a little, and they had spent the next several hours talking and laughing. Then, Tracy drew her a warm bath and afterward helped brush the kinks out of her hair. After Sarah had taken her medicine, Tracy took her to a cozy bedroom with the covers already turned back.

"But Tracy, this is your room?" Sarah protested.

"Nah, this bed is comfier, and you need more sleep than I do. I don't mind the guest room for a night or two."

Sarah blushed, "I don't know what I would do without a friend like you."

Just then, she noticed a small tablet and pencil on the nightstand. "What's that?"

"Oh, that? It's a dream journal. I keep it at my bedside, and when I've had a dream or occasional nightmare, I jot down as much of it as I can remember once I wake up. I've found it's a great tool for understanding your dreams."

"Oh, that's really cool," said Sarah as she yawned. She was feeling the

effects of the sleeping pills. It felt like sinking into a thick fog.

"Get some rest. You need it. I'll stay here and watch over you for a little while." said Tracy as she tucked her friend into bed.

Sarah thought she might have said thank you but wasn't sure as she seemed to sink into blackness.

Tracy sat reading a book and listening to her friend snore. It was the most peaceful she had seen her in some time. Sarah wondered what was going on in her head and still fretted that part of it was her fault for pushing her too hard. She meant well; her friend had been through enough bad times and wanted to see her win for a change. Tracy wondered who the show meant more to, her or Sarah? She shook her head and quickly squashed that thought. It meant more to Sarah, and Sarah meant more to her than anything, so that made this show and helping Sarah reclaim her life the most important thing, period.

Eventually, Tracy slipped out and back to the guest bedroom and tucked in for the night. She left her door open in case Sarah screamed out, but she doubted she would. The dosage of the pills was high, and no matter what Sarah had been through, they should allow her to get a long night's sleep. Tracy rolled over and turned off the light, soon snoring away herself.

The following day she had slipped downstairs and made coffee, checked her emails, and was preparing to fix breakfast for the two of them when she heard a blood-curdling scream from upstairs. She ran up to find Sarah out of bed, pressing herself into the far corner of the room.

"Sarah, what the hell? What's wrong?"

Sarah responded by pointing at the nightstand. On the open page of the dream journal was a drawing of a grotesque figure with a misshapen head, wriggling tentacles around its mouth, and eyes that seemed to burn a hole in whomever they viewed.

## 6

"So what? You woke up and drew this?" Tracy asked as they sat at the breakfast nook. Sarah's hands trembled around her coffee mug. The closed journal sat between them on the tabletop.

"No." Sarah shook her head, still staring at the journal. "I never woke up. I slept the whole night. I don't even think I dreamed, or I don't remember anything. When I woke up, I remember thinking what a great night's sleep it was, then I rolled over and saw that.

"But, you must have drawn it. Surely, you must have drawn it during the night and don't remember it because of the drugs." Sketches don't just appear on paper." it was Tracy's turn to shake her head.

"That's just it. I've never drawn this figure. Every time, it has just appeared in one of my drawings. Actually, this is the first time someone else has actually seen it. Normally it appears, and then it's gone."

Tracy didn't know what to think. Clearly, her friend had drawn this figure. What other explanation could there be? She was determined to help Sarah but didn't know what to do. She reached for the dream journal.

"No!" Sarah pleaded with her, "don't open it. I don't want to see it again."

Tracy placed her hand on the journal and slowly slid it toward her.



"Take it easy. I won't show it to you. I just want to get another look at it. I know your drawing style. If you drew it, I'd be able to tell."

Sarah watched with a worried look as her friend opened the journal.

"What the hell?" Tracy got a confused look as she flipped through page after page.

"What is it?" asked Sarah, her heart racing as she watched her friend frantically flip back and forth in the book.

Tracy flipped back to the front page and tossed the open journal onto the table. "It's gone!"

Sarah looked in horror at the blank page of the journal. It was as if it was never there. There was no sign of anything being erased, no paper torn out.

"What in the serious fuck is going on?" exclaimed Tracy as she felt her skin crawl.

The silence stretched on for several minutes, with neither girl moving.

"You believe me now?" asked Sarah quietly. Her friend continued staring at the book.

"I believe either you're telling the truth, or we're both losing our minds."

# 7

"For the record, I think this is a bad idea," Sarah complained as they both stood in front of an easel affixed with a blank sheet of paper.

"Look, I told you, it's like cognitive dreaming; you must take control of your situation. You said yourself that this thing keeps showing up randomly. Instead of letting it choose the time and place, you need to take control and own it. Who knows? It might end the whole thing if you purposefully sketch it into a drawing."

Sarah looked at Tracy with an odd look on her face. "What do you mean?"

"Well, I was doing some research, and Native Americans used to believe that when you took a photograph, you trapped a person's soul in the picture. Maybe if you draw this thing onto a picture and seal it, it will also be trapped."

Sarah rolled the whole thing around in her head before nodding. "Okay, fine. I'll give it a shot."

Tracy beamed, "Awesome! Now, do you remember what it looks like?"

"Are you kidding? At this point, it's burned in my memory. I couldn't forget if I tried." with that, Sarah picked up her pencil and started sketching.

Hours later, it was finished. Tracy and Sarah stood staring at the horror

she had created.

"So this is it? Any details you left out?" said Tracy, staring at the monstrosity.

"No, that's it. My skin is practically crawling having to look at it," replied Sarah, her arms folded nervously.

Tracy had to admit, it was a horrifying vision of terror, but it was also some of Sarah's best work. The detail was almost unreal. Its head was a misshapen lump, bits of hair flicking out of the scalp, a beard, if you could call it that, of what appeared to be either tentacles or some small type of worms and the eyes, more reptilian in nature. They seemed to burn with an intensity that was both unnerving and yet, almost strangely hypnotic. It wore a robe, and you could barely see the tips of inhuman fingers hanging past the sleeves. The bottom of the sketch was more shadowy, and you couldn't determine if it had feet below the robe.

"Okay, well, if that's it, let's set it," said Tracy as she picked up the aerosol can.

They sprayed the sketch, waited on it to dry, and resprayed it, just for good measure.

"Now what?" asked Sarah when they were finally done.

"Now we get you back to preparing for the show and hope that this worked," said Tracy with a smile that felt nervous as she looked at the thing in the picture looking back at her.

## 8

The next few weeks went by in a blur of activity. Tracy's plan had apparently worked as the thing hadn't appeared anywhere except the portrait that Sarah had sketched of him. They kept the sketch in the studio where they could keep an eye on it, but although its eyes still seemed to follow them, the thing never showed up anywhere else, and after a while, even Sarah got to where she could block out the feeling that those large eyes were following her.

She couldn't believe her first art show was the next day. Tracy had run out to grab a few last-minute things, and Sarah was busy sealing and doing last-minute touchups on the drawings. At last, she finished the final touchup. Her work was finally completed. She turned the lights down, except for the spotlights, to soak in the ambiance. Her hand paused on the switch, and she looked around wearily at the thing. She had positioned it off to the side of the gallery pieces, and its large, unearthly eyes stared back at her intensely. When she assured herself that all was good, she flipped the switch and plunged most of the studio into darkness with just the sketches illuminated. She walked from piece to piece, admiring her work. She felt so accomplished and so satisfied that she had come so far. A few years ago, she would never have been able to complete such a task as putting together an entire art show. She couldn't wait for Tracy to get back and see it all.

She heard a low sound, almost like papers rustling against each other. She turned to glance around the room, and suddenly she saw it. The thing had disappeared from the sketch. Suddenly her heart was beating out of control, and her throat tightened as she stared at the

empty canvas. She heard the rustling sound again, seemingly coming from every direction. The sound grew in intensity, and Sarah screamed and covered her ears. Abruptly, it stopped, and the studio was completely silent. Sarah slowly looked around the studio and, in the darkest shadow in the corner of the studio, she saw it, its unnatural eyes fixed on her. It slowly started to shuffle forth, its movements sounding like rustling papers. As it moved closer to the light, Sarah could see that the thing still appeared to be drawn with pencil and its shading, which changed with the light, also appeared to be sketched. It was as if a drawing had come off the paper and stood before her. The sheer horror of it threatened to overpower her, she felt her legs growing weak and her head growing dizzy as the thing shuffled slowly toward her. Finally finding her courage, she sprang off to the side toward the backroom of the studio. She ran through the main room and into the supply room knocking supplies over as she crashed through the room. She hid in the supply room and shut the door, locking it and backing against the far wall.

The room was quiet and dark, except for the light of a full moon that poured in from a window high on the wall. Sarah crouched at the end of the counter, gripping it tightly. The soft, ominous sound of rustling paper slowly broke the silence. Sarah looked around the room, there were no exits, and the insulated windows didn't open. She was trapped. All she could hope was that the locked door would hold against the creature. But what would happen if Tracy came back and encountered the beast? She had to do something. Just then, the rustling grew louder as the thing approached the door. She prayed it would hold, but the creature passed through it to her terror and faded into view inside the room. It shuffled forward as Sarah fought to not faint from pure fear. Then, the creature stopped just before the shaft of moonlight.

"YOU FREED ME"

The hollow, otherworldly voice seemed to almost echo in her head. She shook her head, trying to comprehend what it was saying.

"Wh-what??" Sarah weakly asked as she stared at the apparition that stood before her, its tentacle/ worms wriggling in front of its mouth.

\* \* \*

"I WAS IMPRISONED IN THE WALLS OF THE CASTLE LONG AGO. DRUIDS SEALED ME THERE. YOUR IMAGINATION FREED ME."

Sarah's head reeled from the revelation. She had somehow accidentally freed this thing. She thought about what Sarah had said about Native Americans believing that souls were trapped by photographs. Could the photos she took of the castle have pulled this creature's soul out of it? But how did it make it into her drawings? It mentioned her imagination, but she couldn't believe she had somehow willed it into existence. Could all the effort and concentration to make the castle pictures as realistic as possible have subconsciously pulled this thing back into the world? She heard the rustling again and saw the creature passing through the moonlight across the room from her. She could see now that it appeared to be an actual sketch, somehow animated by forces beyond this world. She had to think; she was trapped. What could she do? Her imagination had created it, but how could she stop it. Suddenly she had an idea. She grabbed a sheet of paper from the table and grabbed a pencil, spilling the rest across the floor. In a frenzy, she drew a large circle on the paper and filled it in with furious strokes back and forth. The thing was within 6 feet of her and closing slowly when she finished. She quickly took the paper and tossed it at the figure's base. Sarah stared at the paper, willing it to be what she wanted it to be, and as the thing passed onto the dark circle, it suddenly fell into it as if falling into a great pit. The minute it fell entirely out of sight, Sarah grabbed a boxcutter, shredded the piece of paper, and scattered it about the room. The room was silent, and Sarah sat in the middle of the room, sobbing, turning in every direction with the boxcutter extended in front of her. Suddenly a thought dawned on her, and she rushed back into the studio.

The studio was still draped in shadows. The only thing illuminated was the sketches for the show. Sarah moved quickly across the room and saw that the figure had reappeared in the drawing as if it had never left. Sarah ran to the picture as if storming into battle and swung the boxcutter, slashing the image. She continued cutting in a frenzy until the picture was reduced to ribbons. She grabbed the ribbons and scattered them across the room. When the rustling sound started again, Sarah stood breathing heavily, looking at the pile of ribbons. Sarah turned, and to her horror, the thing was slowly fading into one of the

pictures for the show. Without hesitation, she attacked the picture ripping it to shreds. Again she heard rustling, and the figure started to fade into another image. Again, she attacked the picture, tearing it to shreds with the boxcutter. The rustling started again, louder this time, and the figure appeared in another drawing. To her horror, Sarah found that as she would start to shred a picture, it would almost instantly appear in the next drawing, the rustling became constant, and she threw herself into a frenzy, slashing and ripping the pictures to shreds. Just as she tore the last drawing to pieces, she felt a touch on her shoulder. In a panic, she turned and slashed blindly into the darkness with her boxcutter. She was startled to feel a warm spray across her face as Tracy stumbled forward into the light, blood gushing from a gaping wound where Sarah had slashed her throat. Sarah dropped the box cutter and screamed as her friend stumbled forward toward her. Her hands grasping numbly at her throat, a look of confusion on her face. She collapsed, and Sarah caught her as they sunk to the floor in a pool of sticky blood.

Sarah sobbed and held her friend. Tracy looked as though she was trying to speak but only gurgled as the blood pooled in her throat. With a slight jerk, she breathed her last breath, and the room was silent except for Sarah sobbing.

## 9

Sarah sat in her cell at the Ravenshearst Asylum. She had been here for several months now. Occasionally they had come and brought her out for her pre-trial, but she only had fleeting memories of that. When the police showed up, they found Sarah on the floor holding Tracy, both covered in her blood, sitting in a sea of shredded paper. She had been incoherent and babbling something about a drawing coming to life. Between her behavior and the talk they had with the doctor who had seen Sarah several weeks ago, the police quickly put together a picture of what must have most likely happened. In their minds, Sarah wasn't well, Tracy had overruled the doctor and checked her out, and Sarah had snapped and, in a frenzy, ended her friend's life. A court psychologist had testified, and they ruled that she could not be tried because of insanity, and she was confined at the asylum for the rest of her life. She barely spoke these days because no one would believe her anyway. She had settled into a regular routine. She was fed and medicated. A counselor would attempt to talk to her twice a week, generally without much luck. Finally, they had decided that she wasn't a suicide risk, so they thought it would be a good idea to try giving her some art supplies. She appreciated the gesture and thrilled them by almost smiling when they brought them to her. At first, she could only use the supplies with supervision, but eventually, they trusted her to not harm herself, and she was able to sketch to her heart's content. She had repaid them by softening up slightly and getting in the habit of answering at least some of the counselor's questions.

Late one night, Sarah was busy working on a landscape she had taped up on the wall of her cell when she heard a soft rustling, like the pages



of a book rubbing together. She knew that sound and snapped to attention when she heard it. She turned, and the figure was in the shadow of the corner of her dimly lit cell. Even in the darkness, she could see the creature's misshapen head, wriggling appendages, and menacing eyes. It made no attempt to move and just stared at her. Knowing what to do, Sarah instantly grabbed the top sheet of paper and flung it onto the floor. Quickly she used a pencil and a piece of charcoal and scribbled out a huge black circle on it. She then grabbed several more pieces of paper and repeated the process. As she worked, she would glance up at the creature, its eyes staring intensely at her. She continued drawing the circles on the pieces of paper and placing them around her. When she grabbed the last three pieces she would need to complete the circle, she heard the rustling and looked over her shoulder in a panic as the thing started shuffling forward. She worked furiously and hastily shoved the last three pieces into place. Then she realized she no longer heard the rustling. She had been working too hard to notice. Instantly she jumped to her feet and spun around only to find the figure inches from her face, inside her circle. Her eyes widened with terror as she beheld the creature in all its grotesque glory. The wriggling tentacles were now revealed to be small snakes that surrounded a gaping maw of a mouth filled with uneven rows of teeth. She looked up and saw the eyes staring down at her like two otherworldly orbs. The half-reptilian / half-human eyes seemed to glare at her with an intensity and intelligence that caused her mind to melt. It was as if it stared not at her but straight into her soul. She stumbled backward, overwhelmed by its presence, and stepped onto one of the black circles. Suddenly she felt the sensation of falling and was confused as she dropped into the pit of her own making. As she fell into the blackness, she looked up and saw the figure still staring at her from the cell, shrinking as she fell further into the darkness.

The following day the orderlies were stunned at what they found. Sarah was nowhere to be seen, but the cell was still locked, and there were no windows. The room's floor was covered with shredded paper like it had been ripped apart in a frenzy. But most puzzling of all was the terrifyingly realistic drawing that was taped to the wall. In it, a hulking, horrifying figure with an oddly shaped head was bent over a girl in his clutches, his intense unearthly eyes staring at the girl, the wriggling snakes on his face flicking dangerously close to her neck. Most unnerving was the girl, who looked astonishingly like the patient

## Sketch

once held in that same cell. Her eyes were so realistic that the orderlies couldn't look away. It was the helplessness, the look of sheer terror in them as if trapped for all eternity.