

*EVIL BATHTUB*

by laura hawbaker

Evil always presents itself as that innocent thing you take for granted until the day it turns evil on you. Stephen King understands this. He takes the most innocuous, warm-fuzzy-feel-good thing and scares the shit out of you with it. A clown. A dog. A prom queen. A pie.

My bathtub is evil.

My whole apartment is renovated... except the bathtub. Why? Why did my landlord put in new floors, a new stove, a new fridge, a new bathroom sink and new bathroom cabinets, but he left the claw-footed old evil bathtub?

I scrape that tub with scouring bleach, toiling for hours with sponges and bristle pads and metal grated sandpaper. It doesn't matter; those tiles are forever brownish-yellow, the caulking between an old, diseased gray kind of color, like dead zombie flesh. My pitiful, victimized shower curtain is stained putrid pink where it touches the edges, the color of watered-down blood. A smear of deep brown rust races down the middle of the tub and pools around the drain like a nasty scar.

Naturally, I get the heeby jeebies being naked in there. Under normal circumstances, I love—LOVE—taking showers. I'm that terrible roommate who takes the hour-long showers and uses up all the hot water.

But my bathtub... I don't want to be in there more than five minutes.

What murky, sub-human levels of existence populate the subterranean labyrinth beneath my tub? Once, in a display of immense courage, I shined a flashlight down the drain. At first I saw only darkness and a few clumps of webbed out hair... but I swear, the longer I stared down that drain, the more the sides of the plumbing began to undulate like a sentient monster trying to hold its breath.

My bathtub is going to kill me one day. Maybe one day soon.

Drowning is possible, but unlikely (my bathtub is more sadistic than that). Acid is more likely. It would shoot out of the shower head and peel away my skin, gnawing me until I'm nothing but desiccated flesh.

Or a tongue—purple and corpulent—could slither out from the drain. It would creep slowly. I wouldn't notice it—I'd be distracted, looking up at the shower head, keeping an eye out for the acid.

Meanwhile the tongue, down below, hooks me by the ankles and snaps my legs out from beneath me. My head cracks against the tiles, but not enough to kill me. Just enough to render me senseless, limp as a doll, while the drain widens into a large maw. The tongue drags me down... down into that tight, undulating underbelly, until the last shred of me is consumed and nobody hears from me ever again.