

# Unremembered Loss

*For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss*

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## Binge Regret

I woke with a start. My heart was pounding. Sweat on my brow. The room was dark. That didn't keep me from looking into its blackness. There wasn't any thing there, at least not anything that wasn't supposed to be there.

However, in that blackness I saw things. Not things, but hidden threats waiting for me to look away. Not things, but conspiracies and ideas and unfortunate outcomes.

I realized I was holding my breath, trying to hear a misplaced sound – I only heard my own heart beat. I tried to let it out slowly – it had other ideas. Then I was gasping. I tried to control it, but I couldn't.

Somehow, through the quick jerk when one of the bed springs squeaked, the start when a drop of sweat rolled into my eye and stung me, the breathing that seemed to be speeding up when I was trying to slow it down, and the shaking that was moving through my body, I bumped it.

The room was suddenly filled with light. Not the light of morning or of a car that's about to run you down, or the flashlight of the detective who's about to find your lifeless body. It was the unnatural light of the almost black of a computer screen with white text that reads, "Are you still watching?"

My heart slowed. My breathing was suddenly normal. The light of the monitor was the light of the light bulb of recognition – I had fallen asleep binge watching.

As my head cleared, it came back to me. It was Sunday evening, no it was Monday morning.

Friday evening I started to watch a new show. It was good. Exciting. I cared about the characters. The first episode ended. There weren't any commercials to interrupt me. The next episode started playing automatically. I said, "It's only seven fifteen, I have time to watch another episode.

Then it was eight, eight forty-five, nine thirty. I paused it and made myself something to eat and said, "I might as well watch another episode while I eat." Ten thirty, eleven fifteen and midnight.

Episode seven started and I clicked the pause button. I brushed my teeth and fell into bed. I had dreams of car chases and defusing bombs. I pulled the sheets out and ended up with them in a bunch under my arms.

I managed to get up Saturday and go out for a run. I stopped and got some coffee and a bagel. I was checking my e-mail and sent a text to a friend wishing her a good morning. She asked me what I had done the night before. I told her about the show. That was the trigger.

When I got back home I took a shower and then dropped onto the couch. One simple click and there it was – just waiting to be unpaused. Of course I did.

I paused it for a late lunch and again for a late dinner. I finished season one and was well into season two when sleep took me in the early hours of Sunday. It took me a while to figure out where I had fallen asleep the next morning, but I found it quick enough and was finished with season two before lunch.

I pushed the "enter" key, saying "Yes, I'm still watching." I was amazed

that I had actually fallen asleep only ten minutes before my TV had. I also realized that this was the last episode of season three – the last season.

I felt a deep sadness – an emptiness. It felt like something I loved had been stolen – ripped away from me. I think I was angry. I had lost my weekend. I was going to be late for work. I was going to be dragging all day, maybe all week. I had invested myself into something bigger than myself, and now it was over. What should have been three years of building and anticipation, of water cooler conversations and internet speculation, of fan fiction and waiting for season four, was over.

One episode to go. One that I couldn't watch because I had to go to work. One that would finish up the arc. One that I would watch that evening and it would be over. One that would leave me saturated, that had caused me to wake in a sweat, to dream wild dreams, to become part of the story, but one that now I wouldn't long for. One that had not become part of the rhythm of my life, my "Tuesday evening," and now "taking a break for the summer."

No, I had watched the whole thing. Not as a series, but as a movie – a very very long movie. I sat there, trying to find the energy to get up, to start my day, to get over the binge regret, feeling the loss of a friend, of my self control, of my life – knowing that after the next episode I would have to find a new best friend, knowing that I would want it to last for weeks, but knowing another binge would soon follow – and another loss.

A story by Douglas Clarke