

Scratch Scratch

By: Hanna Un

Chapter 1- Ralph

So there I was, standing above my family members and their motionless bodies. “Sissy,” I whimpered. “Mom, Dad?” But no one replied. I was about to come closer when I saw the shadow of a human approaching. “See, honey, I told you I solved the problem!” A loud voice announced as the man came nearer holding more poison. I wanted to go back to my family but I knew I would end up like them. “Ralph, that’s him... I will make him pay for this,” I screamed to myself before scampering away.

Chapter 2- Grace

“Scratch scratch,” a noise stirred Grace out of her deep sleep. Tossing and turning in her blankets, she rolled onto her side and was drifting back off into dreamland when she felt a sharp pang on her finger. Fluttering her eyes open, she sat up to glance at what had caused the pain. She screeched at what she saw, her voice wavering as she yelled loudly, racing around her room to run away.

As Grace finally walked into the kitchen after calming down and preparing for school, the strong smell of traditional Korean food hit her. She cringed as she sat down, her mom placing a plate of rice cakes down on the table. Grace’s mom asked, “You have your history final exam today right? Remember, no slippery foods or bread on exam day. That means a bad grade.” Inwardly rolling her eyes, Grace nodded. Her mom had always been particular about Korean superstitions. Breaking a mirror or stepping on the sidewalk cracks meant nothing to her, but if someone whistled at night or wore white ribbons in their hair, she would be there in a flash to reprimand them.

Grace and her mom both looked up as her dad entered the room, suit on and ready to go to work. Her dad ruffled her hair and Grace groaned in jealousy as her dad picked up a heaping plate of toast from her mom. “Well, good morning to you, Grace!” her dad joked, his blue eyes crinkling. “Good morning Dad,” Grace sighed, eyeing the steamy toast while forcefully chewing on the rice cakes. “What were you screaming about this morning?” he asked, nudging her. “Oh yeah, I was attacked by a rat in my room this morning. It bit my finger,” she pouted. “I thought we got rid of the rat problem a long time ago, when we found a family of them in our yard?” he replied, frowning. Shuddering at the flashback, Grace wrinkled her nose as she said, “Don’t mention that.”

Laughing, Grace's dad announced, "Okay, I'll make sure to check up on that later. But for now, I got to get to work. You know what we say! We destroy the mess of dirty pests!" Grace giggled in reply; she found the jingle of her dad's exterminating company to be quite cheesy but catchy. Blowing a kiss to her, her dad walked by her on the way to the door, making sure to slip a piece of toast on her plate. Grinning at her dad, Grace shoved the bread in her mouth as her mom was focused on waving goodbye.

Quickly swallowing the delectable toast, Grace arose from the table just as her little sister, Lauren, raced in. "Bye Lauren," Grace cooed, reaching down to pinch Lauren's chubby five year old cheeks. Scarfing down her food, Lauren waved goodbye to Grace as she stepped outside. "Bye mom!" Grace called out, waving as she stepped onto the lawn. "Goodbye Grace! Good luck on your test, and remember not to eat anything slippery beforehand!" her mom shouted, rushing to clean up Lauren's syrup stained face.

As Grace sat in the test room, a sense of dread filled her as she thought back to the toast she had ate. 'Nah, it's just a superstition,' she tried to convince herself. Two hours later, and she was feeling confident about the results as she exited the test room until she passed a poster on the bulletin board. It was a sign for the new nail art club in school, and seeing that made Grace extremely angry. The reason was because of another Korean superstition. Legend said that if someone clipped her nails at night time, mice would eat the clippings, transform into her and take her soul. Powerless, Grace wasn't allowed to do anything with her nails, although it had been a hobby of hers before her mom found out about it. Suddenly feeling determined, Grace declared to herself, 'Tonight is the night, I'm going to prove Mom that these Korean superstitions are dumb.'

Leaving the school, Grace skipped onto the bus to go back home, eager to put her slowly forming plan into action. She was sick and tired of having to alter her lifestyle to fit around these superstitions that didn't even have any consequences. After all, she was certain she had aced her history exam even after eating a slice of bread this morning. "I'll prove to Mom that these Korean superstitions don't have any meaning behind their words," Grace thought, leaning her head against the window.

Hours have passed, it is now near midnight and Grace's family was sound asleep. Even as she crouched down to sit next to the trashcan, she felt a tweak of uneasiness. She was finally prepared to do it, after finding the nail clippers tossed into a crumpled failed math exam from weeks ago. 'I'm being silly,' she thought, nervously laughing away her fears. "Do it, do it," cruel voices in the back of her head urged her on, and she made the first move. "Clip, clip," the clippers went, as the first nail tip diminished and then the next. A rush of adrenaline filled her as she realized that she was doing it. Doing it, and getting away with it. "Korean superstitions? What superstitions?" Grace snorted, giggling in glee. Clipping away the last of her nails, she stood up and chuckled, doing a victory dance as she checked the floors to make sure just in case

that there was no sight of a rat. “Transforming into me and taking my soul? Ha. You were wrong Mom,” Grace laughed out loud. Then she saw it. She lurched forward. And then she was gone.

Chapter 3 - Ralph

I watch, I wait, I wonder. Now the watching, waiting, and wondering are done and I win. In the end, I win, because I’m not foolish like Grace. “Obey your parents, isn’t that what the humans say?” I ask myself, and I smirk. Flinching, I stretch out my new arms and legs. Walking forward, I wobble, nearly stumbling as I get used to these new limbs. I look straight ahead, and almost jump at what I see. In the mirror, I see my new reflection. An Asian-American girl stares back at me, and then grins a twisted grin. “Hello Ralph, I mean Grace,” I say to myself, eyes flashing lava red. “You know, I would’ve gotten revenge on your dad by possessing him first, but since he did kill my entire family years ago, I’ll have to test you out first. I mean, you were the one who complained about the rodent problem in your backyard. Selfish humans. Well, don’t worry! I’ll make sure your whole family is well taken care of,” I pat my heart and leave the bathroom, grabbing the nail clippers with me and slipping them into my pants pocket.

The comfy bed beckons me forward, and settling underneath the feathery blankets, I snicker at how everything has changed. First it was me on the outside of the blankets, but now it’s me on the inside. ‘I can now do so much more than a mere finger bite. First you Grace, then the rest of your detestable family. You already know how your sister wants to become just like you,’ I chuckle and I can somewhat feel a wailing and heartbroken voice pounding in my gut. “This is just the beginning,” I sneer and slowly succumb to blissful human sleep.

Chapter 4- Grace

Grace hears these words, and she screams. She screams until her heart hurts and her throat is dry, but it’s no use. No one can hear her. Trapped inside her own body, and controlled by a rodent. She almost laughs at the irony, but she is gripped by a tight compressing feeling. It feels like her stomach drops to her toes and like her body is going to collapse underneath her. “What is this?” she asks aloud, but she already knows the answer.

“Hopelessness, obviously,” a voice surrounding her on all sides snickers.

Grace wishes she could stop it, stop that horrible booming voice, but she can’t. She can’t do anything. She clutches her ears and drops to her knees. Rocking back and forth, she shakes. Tears want to form and drip out, but they won’t. It’s not her body, not her life anymore. Grace is gone.