

# ***Monsters Are Real***

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Every Tuesday, I looked forward to going to ballet, not because I wanted to dance, but because I wanted to see my good friend, Rachel. Rachel does not go to my school, only to my ballet classes.

Rachel and I had many good conversations, but one really made me think. A conversation when Rachel told me monsters were real.

“What do you mean?” I asked. “My parents have always told me monsters are not real.” Have my parents been lying to me all these years? I thought to myself.

“I mean, the ones that made my mom go away,” she replied.

We stopped talking because it was time to go work on ballet. On the way home, I kept thinking. “Monsters? Why does she keep saying monsters are real?”

All throughout dinner, I was thinking, “Are monsters really real?” I couldn’t even eat my dessert. Later that night, when I went to bed, I couldn’t fall asleep. I kept having thoughts in my head, “Are monsters really real?” I was too scared to get out from under my covers and check my closet for monsters, so I remained tightly tucked under the blanket until I fell asleep.

A few weeks went by, then a few months, and still no Rachel at ballet. Then one day Rachel returned to ballet, but this time her grandparents drove her there instead of her mom. She didn’t act herself either. She was really quiet and seemed sad. She really didn’t talk much not even to me except for saying hi and asking me how I was doing, but not much more. I really wanted to ask her about what she

had said, “Monsters are real,” but I could tell it really wasn’t the right time, so I didn’t bring it up at all. I knew Rachel would talk to me when she felt up to it, but until then I remained silent.

A few weeks later my ballet class had dress rehearsal for our big play that was approaching. We had a little more extra time and more time to ourselves. That was when Rachel decided to share with me what she really meant. She explained to me how her mom started to get sick. She would sleep longer each day. She eventually stopped going places like the grocery store, work, even her best friend's house. She didn’t make breakfast, lunch, or dinner for Rachel. She didn’t even help Rachel with school. She stayed in her bedroom or the bathroom with the door locked. Then one day her mom just disappeared. Rachel came home from school that day and her mom wasn’t there, but her grandparents were. They were very upset and had been crying. They tried to be brave for Rachel, but Rachel could tell something was wrong. Rachel asked her grandparents where her mom was. They didn’t answer right away, but when they did, they told Rachel the same thing that Rachel had told me.

“Monsters are real.”

“I don’t understand,” Rachel told them.

Her grandparents had been telling her that the world is full of monsters that make people do things they never would have imagined doing and monsters took over her mom and everything changed her into one of them. The monster had taken over Rachel’s mom so bad that she went away forever and was never coming back. That’s why her grandparents had to take her to ballet class now. I left ballet that day a little confused. I still don’t understand everything Rachel had said or meant, and I don’t think Rachel did either, but that didn’t matter. I must say after that conversation I always had my eyes open for monsters in disguise.

Years passed and Rachel and I grew up and grew apart. We didn’t see each other as much, but Rachel’s story stuck with me for many years. I would hear my mom and dad’s conversations about

someone they knew that passed away from drugs. I saw television shows and movies about the drug problem in our area and people dying. Then, one day, I understood Rachel's story, Monsters Are Real so please make good choices and stay away from monsters.