

Jamal Cornell
jamal.cornell@gmail.com

about 500 words

The Box

by Jamal Rashad

Who the hell is at the door this time of night?

Rashad stumbled through the dimly moonlit room as he searched for the light switch. "Uh! Yeah! J-just a sec! I'll be there in a minute!" As he moved briskly across the cold, wood-paneled floors, he found himself regretting the decision not to put on the pair of house-shoes he bought specifically for such situations. "Alright! I'm coming! I'm coming! Stop ringing the damned -"

Huh. No one's here.

He peered into the darkness of his suburban neighborhood, looking for the person that dared to disturb his sleep.

Dissatisfied with finding no one, he turned to head back to his comfortable bed after closing the door to his upscale home. There, waiting two feet away from him, was a box decorated with ribbons, glitter, and familiar handwriting. Bewildered by the box's sudden appearance, Rashad exclaimed, "Alright! This isn't funny anymore! Who put this box right here?" His breaths were laced with fear as he crouched to pick up the box. "Hello?" echoed through the empty home as its owner made his way to the kitchen; the box emitted a warm aura as he carried it.

He sat the box on the counter of the kitchen's island, slowly tugged at both ends of the velvet ribbon, and placed it neatly to the side of the box. Inside the box was a photograph of an 11-year old Rashad hung upside-down from a set of monkey bars; written on the back were the words, *Remember me?* Confused, he flipped the photo back over and behind him, in the picture, stood a figure that was not there before; it peered directly at the camera as if to be staring **through** the picture and into his soul.

"What the -" exclaimed Rashad as he stumbled back, almost tripping over the chair that he then realized was horribly placed. He caught himself on the dining table as the picture floated to the floor. Afraid to look at the picture, he

inspected the box to see who sent it. Inside was a note with his name on it that read,

*No matter how much you try to forget,
Your life will always be filled with regret,
For my existence, you dared to neglect,
My presence will be your sanity's unrest.*

Upon reading the last word, the box started to rumble atop the counter. Rashad backed away in fear, unable to pull his eyes from the box. He finally gathered his nerves and made a run for the door. A dark, shadow-like figure flew from the box and stood in front of him at the door. The figure's eyes glowed a deep blue as it took form. Rashad carefully backed away as the figure stepped towards him. With each graceful step, the figure's definition solidified, revealing its identity. It flashed a sly grin his direction, and Rashad gasped as he spoke her name: "Pandora."