



Face the Night

Alan Lastufka

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In the supernatural thriller Face the Night, a determined mother battles paranormal and mundane criminals, all to protect her son.

In Alan Lastufka's taut horror novel *Face the Night*, a single mother fights for custody of her son while a mysterious figure haunts her dreams.

Adriana, who takes pride in her stunning drawing skills, ekes out a living in a small town as a tattoo artist, supplementing this with handouts from her father when necessary. She provides for her son, Dylan, too. But then she starts drawing the same mangled face of an unknown man. He has been a constant presence in her dreams since childhood, leading to horrifying nightmares and violent awakenings. Now, he's bleeding into her waking world, too, and she has to decide what to do about the sinister threat that he may represent.

Meanwhile, Adriana's father, who is also the town's mayor, manipulates the local courts in an attempt to obtain custody over Dylan. The judge stipulates that if Adriana can find and hold a traditional job, he'll deny her father's request. She finds another ally in the newest member of the town's police force, Matt, who discovers an unassuming cold case that might have connections to her past.

The book's supernatural elements unfurl in an unsettling, creeping manner. Adriana's dreams come to seem unreliable: she may be haunted by an eerie entity, or she may be processing a trauma. The resultant uncertainty is disquieting, and the book proceeds with a sense of dread.

There are violent outbursts throughout the book, from sources including Adriana, a mugger, and those connected to her father's political dealings. They result in a sense that the ostensibly polished town is rotting from within. Each instance of violence builds tension; eventually, the story careens toward revealing hidden truths.

But amid the violence and horror, there are oases of warmth. Adriana's relationship with Matt, and the tender bond she shares with her neighbor, a single mother, are emotional and deep. But Adriana and Matt's romance is stifled by repeated traumas, even as their respect and admiration for each other grows. A final, revelatory, and emotional confrontation carries the possibility of catharsis while holding the audience in thrall.

A decades-old mystery leads the supernatural thriller *Face the Night*, in which a determined mother battles paranormal and mundane criminals, all to protect her son.

JOHN M. MURRAY (December 14, 2021)

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