**Assignment 1: Horror Essay**

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In the short story titled “Sredni Vashtar” written by Saki, an ill child, named Conradin, is living a rather lonesome life and is completely dependent on his guardian and cousin, Mrs. De Ropp, for his basic needs. He lives in a constant state of disparity with only his imagination keeping him company. Due to Conradin’s isolation and loneliness, he begins to exhibit disturbing thoughts and demonic behavior that reveal his inner hatred towards his guardian and as a result, he begins to act on his most primitive of instincts to change his circumstances.

Conradin takes pride in hiding his hatred towards Mrs. De Ropp. He believes that he can conceal it from her extremely well and takes pride in that. Unfortunately, this isolating behavior sparks his need for an escape and leads him to find an old toolshed in his garden. At first glance, this may seem like an innocent way for a child to explore and escape from their reality, if only for a brief moment, but the situation takes a disturbing turn. Within this shed, he develops a fascination with a ferret, which he begins to think of as a god to be worshipped and feared. He eventually gives the ferret a name: Sredni Vashtar. Demonic behaviors shortly follow, as he begins to perform rituals and prayers that worship Sredni Vashtar. “Every Thursday, in the dim and musty silence of the toolshed, he worshipped with mystic and elaborate ceremonial before the wooden hutch where dwelt Sredni Vashtar, the great ferret” (VanderMeer & VanderMeer, 2011, p. 54). His hatred towards his confinement and towards Mrs. De Ropp pushes him to his limits and as a result, he goes down a disturbing path that involves demonic and sinister rituals.

Conradin’s behavior also illustrates how his primitive thoughts are driving him towards the unthinkable. In the story, he begins to pray religiously in hopes that Sredni will perhaps answer his prayer. He believes that if his prayers are answered, it will result in Mrs. De Ropp’s death. Consequently, he begins to chant, “Sredni Vashtar went forth, His thoughts were red thoughts and his teeth were white. His enemies called for peace, but he brought them death. Sredni Vashtar the Beautiful” (VanderMeer & VanderMeer, 2011, p. 55). This type of behavior exhibits a true primitive form of the demonic, as Conradin taps into his most bestial instincts (Coleman, Slide 8). He displays his most bestial instincts in an effort to change his circumstances, ultimately aiming for Mrs. De Ropp’s death.

Due to these circumstances and unfortunate conditions, Conradin becomes the demonic figure in the story. He does not hold back his pleasure in wishing death upon his guardian and by tapping into his most twisted thoughts and demonic instincts, he takes the initiative to change his situation for better or for worse.

**References**

VanderMeer, Jeff; VanderMeer, Ann. *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories*

Tor Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Coleman, G. (n.d.). *Horror: I curse of the demon: The vampire* [PowerPoint slide]. Slide 8.