

Pueblo City-County Library District

31ST ANNUAL SCARY STORY CONTEST



WINNING STORIES 2023



 PUEBLO CITY-COUNTY
Library District

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2023 Scary Story Contest

Pueblo City-County Library District, in cooperation with the Friends of the Library, is pleased to announce the winners of the 31st Annual Scary Story Contest. Budding writers, from second grade to adult, were invited to enter the creative writing contest. Mysterious, suspenseful or humorous scary tales of a non-violent nature were judged by the Friends of the Library. Entries were judged for characterization, plot, description, dialog, setting, theme and originality. Winners received a certificate of achievement, a booklet with all of the winning stories, and a \$10 gift certificate to Books Again, the Friends of the Library's used book store. All participants received a certificate of recognition.

The judges were Friends of the Library board members Jeffrey DeHerrera, Randi Mohar, Melanie Phelps, Erik Segall, Marisa Stoller, Teresa Therriault, and Adina Vega. There were 938 entries.

The library wishes to thank the many teachers who supported the creative writing experience by having their students enter the contest. We look forward to receiving your work again next year!

WINNERS

2nd Grade

Sophia Fuller
Levi Longmire
Amzie Montoya

South Park Elementary School
Mrs. Dani - Pueblo Christian Academy
Mr. Martinez - Pueblo Charter School for the Arts & Sciences

3rd Grade

Mitch Brorby
William Robinson
Devyn Sanchez

Mrs. Brorby - Homeschool
Ms. Weaver - Villa Bella Expeditionary School
Mrs. Kolosso - Heritage Elementary School

4th Grade

Mahderia Herrera Lopez
Vivianajane Marquez
Aubrielle Torres

Ms. Arrell - Franklin Elementary School
Mrs. Mancilla - Baca Elementary School
Mrs. Tafoya - Goodnight School

5th Grade

Piper Brorby
Naomi Gordley
Kimber Powers

Mrs. Brorby - Homeschool
Ms. Montoya - Goodnight School
Mr. Harris - Swallows Charter Academy

6th Grade

Elyanna Boazos
Vivianna Hanes
Rhyan Moore

Ms. Hurley - Pueblo Charter School for the Arts & Sciences
Mrs. Sandstrom - Goodnight School
Mr. Moore - Goodnight School

WINNERS

7th Grade

Daisy Frausto	Ms. Kelly - Liberty Point International
Amelia Jones	Mrs. See - St. John Neumann Catholic School
Hayden Lucero-Mihelich	Mrs. See - St. John Neumann Catholic School

8th Grade

Jamie Heavrin	Ms. Bryant - Liberty Point International
Isabella Melster	Ms. Bryant - Liberty Point International
Olivia Weaver	Mr. Preston - Connect Charter School

High School

Cheyenne Ainsworth	Mr. Grossen - Pueblo County High School
Christopher Estrada-Aguilar	Ms. Kristan - Pueblo West High School
Abigail Medved	Mr. Grossen - Pueblo County High School

Adult

Alexis Kristan
Lizzy Lauritzen
Timothy Venator

Graveyard

Sophia Fuller

It all started that night. She went to the grave of her grandma. Her mom was at work. Her sister was at her friend's house. She was going to visit the grave. She was walking when she heard a little tiny growl. She thought she was just hearing something, so she went to the grave. When she was walking, she heard the noise again. It was a little voice. The voice said, "Help me." She looked behind a bush. There was nothing. So she kept walking. They heard a different voice. She looked again, but nothing. Until she heard someone walking behind her. She thought she was just hearing things until she looked behind her. She saw a tiny goblin. The goblin was chasing her, and she was crying. She ran to her sister's friend's house. Her sister said, "There are no such things as goblins, but sure you can come in." Their mom came and said, "Come on girls, let's go." That night she heard it again and screamed! She was having a goblin nightmare. Her mom said, "Try to go to sleep." That morning there was a knock on the door. It was the neighbor. He said, "Why was your daughter in the yard last night." Her mom said, "No. My daughter was in bed." It was a goblin after all.

Untitled

Levi Longmire

One day a man was driving in a bus, and he heard a bang at the back, and he stopped the bus to go check, but there was nothing there. So, he started to drive again, and he heard another bang and pulled over and hopped out of the bus and saw nothing again. So, he got back in the bus and before he started driving again, he looked out the window and still nothing. When he finally got home, he checked through all the windows and still saw nothing! He then went inside and went to sleep and in the middle of the night he heard a loud slam in the kitchen, so he went into the kitchen and there he saw a wolf. Then he realized something must have let it in, so he went downstairs in the dark. All of a sudden, he saw a shadow, but couldn't tell what it was so he decided to go back to bed hoping it would be gone in the morning. The next day he went on another drive in his bus and then he heard that bang again. He found a tall skeleton in the back, and he was shocked at what he saw and so then he stepped on the gas and drove off really, really fast.



Halloween Circus

Amzie Montoya

There were three seven-year-olds that were always good friends. Their names are Kylee, Lilly, and Jake. They lived in a town called Halloweentown. And, Halloween was their favorite holiday of all.

One Halloween day, Jake dares the girls to walk down Pumpkin Lane.

Pumpkin Lane is full of the grumpiest people in all of Halloweentown. But there was one house with bright purple lights on. There was also a hum of music coming from the area.

The girls always said yes to a dare. So they adventured down the lane until they came to a sign that said, “No Trick-or-Treaters.” As they turned to leave, a burst of wind knocked them over. When they got up off the ground, the whole street looked different than it did before. The sign was even gone.

There were bright lights everywhere, and lions and tigers could be seen roaming the street. They noticed people in colorful outfits. “This feels like a circus,” Lilly said. Kylee looked her way, and said, “this is the circus, we are at the circus!” A monkey walked over to them and started saying, “you shouldn’t be here, you shouldn’t be here-close your eyes, count to ten, draw a heart on your chin.”

Before they even knew what they were doing, they were doing as the monkey said. As soon as they got to number ten, they were back on the ground outside the house with purple lights. Jake was screaming, “it is time to go to our street to finish trick or treating.” The girls looked a bit weird at each other and started walking.

They weren’t sure what had just happened? Was it real, or was it just a dream...

The Scary Shadow

Mitch Brorby

One night there was a family going camping for the first time. The children shared one tent, and the parents shared the other one. The children were named Tom, Alice, and Mike. When they had all had some gooey, delicious s’mores, they decided to tell scary stories in their tent. When Tom had just started telling his story, a huge, winged shadow flew past their tent!

“A monster!” they cried in unison. They immediately hid in their sleeping bags. “Is it gone?” asked Mike, wriggling deeper into his hiding spot.

“I think so,” said Tom uncertainly.

Mike stuck his head out of his sleeping bag. “All clear,” he said while he carefully examined the walls of the tent.

“Do you think it’s coming back?” asked Alice in a small voice. “I don’t know,” said Tom.

“Same here,” said Mike. “H-how big do you think its teeth are?” he stammered.

“Probably pretty big,” said Tom.

“It was huge!” exclaimed Alice.

“Yeah,” said Tom slowly crawling out of his sleeping bag. “It probably wants to eat us!” shouted Mike.

“I’m going outside to see what it is!” said Tom bravely. So, he unzipped the tent and stepped out.

“It’s just a little brown bat!” he laughed.

Although many people are afraid of bats, they are just harmless, sometimes misunderstood creatures which reduce the bug population every time they come out to hunt. It is common to hear about vampires that can turn into bats or bats that attack people and tangle themselves up in their hair. However, bats do none of these things and prefer not to encounter humans. The bat from this story is a little brown bat. Little brown bats are very common in the United States. They have yellowish or gray-brown fur with a paler underside. Bats can be seen either getting rid of bugs like mosquitoes or pollinating plants like sacred datura and saguaro blooms. Although bats might seem scary, they are actually an important part of our planet.

The Trip

William Robinson

This story is about me and my brother. I had one younger brother. He was not scared of anything. At the time, I was scared of a lot of stuff. My brother wanted to go into the woods, so I decided to do it. I do a lot of things for my younger brother. We were camping, no one else was there. When we first got into the woods we saw a lot of pine trees. All the trees made it dark. Birds sat in the trees and flew around. They chirped sometimes. We walked into the woods kicking pinecones. I set up the tent with my younger brother. We crawled into the tent and fell asleep to the sounds of birds chirping. We woke up in the middle of the night to the sound of a woman screaming.

I was kind of worried about the woman. We ran outside into the part of the woods where we thought we heard the screaming. My little brother was grabbed by something. One minute I was next to him, the next second he was gone. I was alone. I walked through a mist and there was a woman there. She was wearing a white dress with tears and stains. She had glowing yellow eyes. Her face looked like it was rotting. She screamed again and tried to snatch me. I jumped and ran the other way straight through the mist. I was frightened but my brother was trapped. I had to go save him somehow. Three or four days passed while I was looking for my brother. I heard snarls then quiet. Sometimes I heard the woman scream. Creatures kept on trying to grab me. I knew the creatures were helping the woman. I was so scared but I knew I had to overcome my fears. I decided that I had to go into the creature's lair to find my brother. I walked into the mist acting all big and bold, but I was scared. The creature was a face in the mist. It had black eyes and a crooked mouth. It said, "You're too scared of us!" I yelled at it, "I am not afraid of you any more! I get to choose what I am afraid of!" The creature screamed and disappeared. My brother was just standing there in shock. They had been trying to turn him into a creature. I saved him just in time.

I am not as scared as I used to be.

The Haunted Mask

Devyn Sanchez

One spooky night on All Hallow's Eve, Julie and her two best friends were having a sleepover. Let's do a mask making contest!" said Cali. "That would be an amazing idea!" said Julie. "My dad will be the judge!" Julie exclaimed. They went on to make the masks. Jessie made a vampire mask, Cali made a zombie mask. While making her mask, Julie used a special material to make her silver shiny skeleton mask. "Live glitter?" Julie imagined. "It says here that it turns things to life, hah! I don't believe that. Julie was thinking, "might as well use it!" At 1 a.m. after the girls were done with the masks, they all put on their masks and went down the treehouse ladder, all the way inside the house. "Dad, dad! Tell us whose mask is the best?" exclaimed Julie. "Hmm. I think I like them all!" Daniel said while eating some spaghetti. "You girls finish up what you're doing then come for dinner!" Dad said.

The girls rushed back up to the treehouse and they all took all their masks off except Julie. Her mask had a problem. It wouldn't come off! "guys, help me! My mask won't come off!" Julie said. The girls thought it was a joke but then it wouldn't come off! "Oh my gosh!" said Jessie. "What are we going to do?" said Cali. The girls panicked, trying to come up with a solution to taking off Julie's mask. "I'll go get her dad!" said Jessie. "I'll look after her!" said Cali. So Jessie rushed down the treehouse and went inside. "Daniel! Daniel!" Jessie exclaimed. "Yes?" Daniel said while finishing up his spaghetti. "Julie can't take her mask off!" said Jessie. Daniel and Jessie rushed into the treehouse. When they got in there they heard something terrifying! "Hello, I am Draco the mask!" the mask said in a creepy voice. The girls were scared and worried for Julie. "What do you want from me!?" said Daniel. "I have a proposal for you," yelled the mask. "I will give your daughter her body back but you have to give me 2 gallons of blood by Halloween's sunset!" exclaimed the mask. So Daniel rushed and yelled. "This is for Julie!" Trying to trick Draco, he got two gallons of fake blood and went back to the treehouse. "Here," Daniel said shakily. He was acting lightheaded to trick the mask. "Okay I will leave your daughter alone," the mask said. The mask had vanished and the moon turned red. Julie had woken up. "W-what happened?" Julie said while her head was pounding. "Thank goodness, you're okay!" said Daniel relieved. Jess, Cali, and Daniel hugged her.

After a few hours they went shopping for the costumes they would wear for trick-or-treating. When they got home, they saw that their dog, Coco, had opened the live glitter and scattered it all over the floor...when he turned around he had the mask on.

Untitled

Mahderia Herrera Lopez

One dark night there was a boy called Mike. Mike loved to paint clowns. One night he painted a clown and Mike's mom hung the big picture on the wall, until Mike started to notice the clown's eyes following him. One night Mike heard a loud crash. Mike was nervous. He went to check downstairs. He was even more nervous when he saw the clown standing in front of him. He ran to his mom and told her. They both went to check downstairs but nothing was there. Mike's mom was upset so she went back to sleep. The next day Mike threw away the big picture of the clown. He was so scared. One year later Mike heard the ice cream truck. He was so excited he asked his mom for money and she said yes. He ran to the ice cream truck until he saw the clown in the ice cream truck the clown grabbed the boy and ate him up.

Untitled

Vivianajane Marquez

Zoey, Jessica and Jake were at a haunted house. It was totally lame and they decided to bail.

It was not scary so they went trick or treating. Jessica was running full speed and grabbing handfuls of candy from the neighbors that left their candy bowls outside on their porch and trusted the kids to just take one piece of candy. Not Jessica.

Once Zoey and Jake finally make it to the candy bowls behind Jessica, they notice there was no candy left for them. Jessica had taken it all. Jake said, "Hold your horses" and save some candy for us. Jessica tossed them her giant bag of candy saying, "here babies I didn't want all of this candy but, who leaves a whole bowl full of candy outside anyways?"

Then they all started to head home, they noticed it was taking a while to get back because they had gone too far chasing blindly behind Jessica. While they were walking Zoey saw a baby pumpkin in the bushes in someone's yard before she said or did anything, Jessica tried to kick it and smash it but Jake stopped her, saying "hey leave it alone". All of a sudden Jake and Jessica started to argue amongst themselves while continuing to walk, sorta leaving Zoey a bit behind. Making sure neither Jake or Jessica wasn't looking, Zoey grabbed the baby pumpkin and put it in her bag.

They were almost home when they saw signs about the haunted house and hayrides at the pumpkin patch. Jake and Zoey decided they didn't want to go, until Jessica started to cry and whine about wanting to go. Once they got there Jessica wanted to go through the corn maze, the others didn't want to. But since Jessica was younger they had to go with her. They went inside and got lost. Scared and confused they started tripping over fallen corn stalks, Jessica fell and hurt her ankle pretty bad. Jake and Zoey had to carry Jessica out of the maze.

By the time they all got home it was super super late, almost 10pm... Thankfully their parents aren't home yet. On the way home since Jessica couldn't carry her own candy bag, so Zoey little by little put candy back into neighbors empty bowls so others could get what they maybe couldn't when Jessica had taken it all. Once home and Jessica had noticed she said "hey where did all my candy go? I had tons of candy" Zoey said "sorry I put it back when Jake was carrying you, because it wasn't all yours to take."

While taking off their costumes Jessica said "I wish I still had tons of candy still. Poof! Tons of candy filled the house, from the closet they noticed Zoey's backpack glowing. It was the baby pumpkin! Jake had to swim through the candy to open the window to get some candy out of their way. He then had to make his way to the closet to get the baby pumpkin from Zoey's bag. He asked her, "when did you get this, where was I?" Zoey said "I got it while you and Jessica were arguing, it was just too cute and tiny to leave behind, and it would have gotten smashed."

The doorbell rings. They thought it was their mom, but it was a trick or treat. So they started to give away all the candy. They got rid of almost all of it, and still had enough to give their sister back her candy. Shortly after 11pm their mom arrived. Once inside she exclaimed "it's so hot I wish the air conditioner still worked". Poof! It worked. The mom was weirded out and thought, something magical is going on, and started saying a bunch of wishes. Like, "I wish the stove worked better" "I wish we had a new microwave" She made tons of wishes while looking for where the "poof" noise came from, and finally found the pumpkin in the room with her three kids. The kids had made tons of wishes too, for new phones, clothes, money.. Jake and Zoey even wished for cars.

While making wishes they all started to fight with each other. They didn't know the pumpkin made them angry. They started being mean and breaking each other's things.. They didn't notice the little pumpkin grew smaller with every wish. Then out of nowhere BAM! All of their things turned to tons of pumpkin seeds. (It happened at the stroke of midnight) Everyone was sad. But year after year they learned new rules with the pumpkin. Maybe one year all their wishes will actually come true and be theirs to keep.

Bloody Mary

Aubrielle Torres

Once upon a time before Halloween, two friends were walking to a store. Josh was the smart one and Selena of course is the funny one. In the Kwik-E-Mart, they argued about which squishy was the best flavor. They finally agreed on which squishy flavor was the king, blue raspberry. While paying at the register the cashier told the two kids “yall be careful because bloody Mary comes to visit this time of year.” The two friends looked at each other and began to laugh. “Later weirdo” said Josh. Selena looked back at the cashier before stepping through the doors, he was smiling. Selena felt goose bumps on her arms and up her spine. She shook off the chill that crept up her back. On the walk home they talked about which movie they would watch tonight.

They chose *Scream 2* to watch that night. Selena made popcorn while Josh made piles of candy they bought in the store on the table so they could share. When Selena sat down next to Josh the lights flickered. Josh tried to turn on the TV but it wouldn’t turn on. Josh wanted to call his parents to see how to fix it, but they were out for date night and he didn’t want to bother them. It was just the TV, the lights were okay now so he unplugged it before walking away. He suggested they play a game of uno in the kitchen. Selena was happy for the distraction the game would give them, she had a creepy feeling. While they were playing, she wanted to show Josh a new playlist on spotify she made. She knew he would like it because they had similar tastes in music. Selena didn’t realize her battery was so low, after the second game her phone died. She was about to ask for a charger when a noise came from the living room. The tv turned on with a loud static noise. Selena remembered that Josh unplugged it, she looked to see if the plug was still on the floor. It was totally unplugged. She turned and grabbed Josh’s hand and ran up the stairs.

She was so scared that she just ran without thinking where she was going. Once inside the dark room she slammed the door and locked it. Josh fumbled finding the lightswitch. When he did the light turned on and they realized they were in the bathroom. Josh’s heart was thumping inside his chest. He turned to Selena and was about to squeeze her hand out of fear when a huge gust of wind broke the window out. Before he could react Selena was flying in the air being pulled out the window. Her scream was short and sharp, knocking Josh on his back. The faucet turned on, steaming up the mirror. The lights flickered again while Josh crawled to the sink. Josh looked up when he heard a squeaking noise. On the mirror words appeared in the steam. “If you play the game of bloody Mary you can have your friend back, if you don’t your parents are next.”

He finally agreed to play bloody mary. But he said on one condition, if I win and don’t run away from the mirror scared then you will be locked in the mirror FOREVER. Shampoo bottles went flying and hit the wall. The light flickered on and off. The mirror shook, it cracked then was whole again, he heard a scream right before everything went calm. In the steam the word agreed appeared. Josh said the words three times. He was shaking when he saw a figure behind the shower curtain. Josh knew he couldn’t take it back or run. Josh had no choice but to stand there looking at the mirror. If he looked away from the mirror she would win and he would never see Selena again or his parents. Suddenly a hideous womens face appeared behind him. Josh screamed like he never screamed before, he couldn’t move. He just kept looking in the mirror, she laughed and went to grab his neck. Josh grabbed the sides of the mirror, he was so angry now. He couldn’t let her win, if she could touch him she would have already. He yelled at the mirror in anger, “I will win, I am not leaving, YOU don’t scare me!!” The toilet overflowed, the bathtub spilled over on to the floor. Everything stopped, the lights came on. Selena appeared in the bathtub shivering. Josh hugged her as tight as he could, he knew he won and it was over.

Selena said “look, at the mirror.” It looked like it was trying to jump off the wall, bloody mary was trapped inside. Her fist would crack the mirror but it would fix itself and never break. Josh grabbed a towel off the rack wrapped his hand in it then handed one to Selena to do the same. They both punched the mirror as hard as they could. Both of them watched as it shattered and fell to the ground.

Josh swept up the pieces as Selena held the dust pan. When they took out the garbage Josh’s parents came home. They all walked to the door to go inside, they heard a noise. Josh and Selena looked back by the trashcan to see the cashier standing there smiling.

Mama Javelino to the Rescue

Piper Brorby

Hurry up Finn! I can't wait forever, you know," Chloe said in an exasperated voice.

"Oh my gosh, Chloe! I'm going as fast as I can!" Finn exclaimed as he rolled his eyes.

It was Halloween in Green Valley, Arizona, and for the first time Mom and Dad were finally letting Chloe and Finn trick or treat on their own. As they waved the kids off, they cautioned them not to stay out too late and to watch the skies for dangerous weather. Chloe and Finn scoffed at their parents. Of course they wouldn't stay out too late! Everyone knows that the Monsoon season ends in September, so a downpour would be most unlikely. Did their parents think they were babies? They skipped off to the first house and rang the doorbell. Perfect! They have Starbursts!

As the evening progressed, the clouds got darker and darker. The wind got faster and faster. But Chloe and Finn did not notice, reveling as they were in freedom and candy. Well, they didn't notice until the rain started pouring. Chloe looked up. She knew what this sudden storm meant.

"Flash flood!" she screamed. "Run, Finn! Follow me!" A flash flood is caused by a storm or "monsoon" that happens in the desert. Because the ground is so dry in Southern Arizona, the water won't soak in, thus creating a puddle, then a pool, then a flood!

"Where are we going?" he yelled.

"We're taking a shortcut!" Chloe answered frantically.

Soon Finn saw they were going to the floodplain near their home, a wide hole in the ground that contains water during and after flash floods. As Chloe vaulted over the fence, Finn hesitated. But then lightning flashed, and he followed his sister over the bars. However, when Chloe reached the other side, she couldn't make it up the other fence.

"It's too tall!" she panted. "Maybe I can boost you."

After many attempts to escape had failed, they considered going over the way they had come but discovered that they were trapped in the floodplain! They looked down and noticed that the ground beneath their feet had begun to be flooded.

"Quick! Let's climb a tree!" cried Chloe. They scampered up the branches, all the while keeping their eyes on the slowly rising water below them. Soon after they reached the top, they heard a sound, looked down in the semi-darkness, and saw a bristly snout poking out of a large hole in the ground!

"Aah!" they screamed simultaneously. "A monster!" However, as the "monster" emerged from the hole, Chloe and Finn realized it was not a monster. It was a...

"Javelina!" yelled Chloe. "Oh no!"

Javelinas are hairy desert creatures that look kind of like pigs, but are in no way related to them. These wild animals are known to be aggressive only when threatened.

"Don't worry! I won't hurt you," they heard a gentle voice say.

"Who said that?" asked Chloe. Then she yelled, "No, Finn!"

For Finn was climbing down the tree wading through the water right to the javelina! To Chloe's surprise, the javelin did not attack Finn when he reached her. In fact, it nuzzled him and said, "My name is Mama Javelina. I will bring you to my safe cave so you can weather out the storm. My reds will be happy to have playmates!" (Reds are baby Javelinas.)

So Chloe climbed down, and both children followed Mama Javelina through the tunnel and into her cozy earthen home where three reds were waiting.

"Oh joy!" the reds cried. "Other kids!"

After heartily thanking Mama Javelina, Chloe and Finn gleefully dived into the writhing Mass of reds. When about an hour passed, Mama Javelina said to the kids, "Children, the storm has let up, and your parents will be worrying. I'm afraid it's time for you to go."

As the javelina family escorted the kids home, Mama Javelina took Chloe and Finn aside and said, "Chloe, Finn, I have something very important to tell you. When I saw you out there cold and afraid, it wasn't only kindness that led me to rescue you. As you yelled, I imagined you were my own children, alone and distressed, and that is what urged me to save you. Remember to help others in need even if they are a different species! Good-bye, children."

While they crawled through a second tunnel that the javelina family had excavated out of the floodplain, Chloe and Finn quietly pondered this thoughtful advice from an unlikely source. After they had said good-bye to the reds and began

to walk home, they resolved to tell their parents the whole truth. When they walked through the door, they were mobbed by hugs and kisses.

“Where have you been? Are you all right? Why do you have dirt on your costumes?” their parents asked in a frenzy.

To this, they answered by explaining exactly what had happened. There was a long silence.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Dad. “Good one! Mama Javelina! Reds! You kids crack me up.”

“But tell us the truth, children.” Mom implored. “We need to know!” To this, the kids replied that they were telling the truth and would say nothing different. Their parents rolled their eyes and put Chloe and Finn to bed, glad their children were home safe, but lamenting that it seemed that kids these days were always letting their imagination run away with them. But Chloe and Finn never forgot the special Javelina who saved their lives and the lesson she had taught them about empathy towards others.

The Sinister Sketches

Naomi Gordley

Shiloh is a 17-year-old with questionable fashion; she often wears a baggy gray sweatshirt and has her hair down giving off an air of mystery. The school whispers about her behavior but no one truly knows her secrets. Shiloh always carries a notebook with her filled with countless sketches all hidden away from prying eyes.

As Shiloh walks down the dimly lit hallways she clutches her notebook close to her chest guarding it like a precious treasure. Her steps echoed with silence created in an eerie atmosphere little does she know lurking in the shadows is a bully named Kayla, notorious for her cruel antics.

Without warning Kayla sprints towards Shiloh snatching the notebook from her grip. Shilo gasps frozen in shock as her most private thoughts and drawings fall into the wrong hands. In a moment of vulnerability Shilo watches as Kayla flips through the pages her eyes glowing lighter with each passing second.

To Shiloh’s horror. The sketches are not just ordinary drawings. They depict grotesque and sinister scenes. Filled with dark creatures lurking in a world beyond imagination. But these sketches are not mere figments of Shilo’s imagination. They hold a deep, haunting truth.

This is Nana’s, this is a definite. Does Kayla continue to leave through the disturbing illustrations? A chill spreads throughout the hallway when still walls seem to come alive. The Shadows stretching and dancing ominously. The macabre energy within the notebook has been unleashed seeping into every fabric of reality.

A faint whisper fills the air. Growing louder with each passing second, it is a voice that speaks of doom and despair, a voice that can drive one to madness. Shilo realized in horror that her sketches have become portals to a world she should never have discovered. Taylor’s face converts. Her eyes reflecting your picture of Fascination and unable to tear her gaze away she is unwittingly drawn into the nightmarish Realm that the SketchBook has brought to life. The things she sees in that Twisted Dimension consume her mind, her very being.

As The Echoes of Screams and Whispers fill the corridor. Shilo must summon her courage and find a way to close the Gateway she has unwittingly opened. With each passing moment the Sinister sketches gain power, threatening to plunge the reality into Everlasting Darkness. Will Shiloh be able to save those around her from the horrors she has unleashed or will she succumb to the malevolent forces lurking within her sketches, forever trapped in the world of nightmares?

To be continued...

The Camping Trip

Kimber Powers

“Luke!” “It is time to go to the campsite!” “Coming... “

It was a dark foggy night. Luke and his stepmom were going camping in a forest. They got ready and off they went onto the road. The car ride was silent leaving Luke to his thoughts. He loved how Regina took the time to take him on an adventure that he didn’t want to go on. As they drove through the twisted roads he kept thinking how he would much rather be at his house playing Call of Duty with his friends. After what seemed like forever they finally arrived at the campsite.

“Regina, I really don’t get why we have to be camping right now,” Luke stated.

“Why are you in such a bad mood? We are only going to be here for three days.” Regina replied.

“It’s just dumb how we have to do this right now. Its summer, we should be swimming, not camping in a forest.”

“Remember your father’s last dying wish? He wanted us to bond and spend time together.”

Looking over, Luke was clearly disturbed, but what came out was “fine,” as he rudely rolled his eyes. When Luke and Regina slept in her van, Luke had a vivid dream about his mom and dad taking him to the park, but then the dream had to end because Luke woke up startled. He raised his head just to see everything was normal, “I could have sworn that I heard something.... I-it’s probably just in my head.” Luke said. Then he slowly put his head down and tried to go to sleep. The next morning slowly came around, Luke woke up and he could not stop thinking about the dream he had about his parents.

“Good morning sleepyhead, it’s time to set up the tent” Regina said with a smile. “Okay, whatever.” Luke said with an attitude, turning away from her.

“Okay, I know that I’m not your real mom, but please give me a chance. I’m not trying to replace her, I just want you to feel better.” Trying to comfort him.

“I know you’re trying your hardest, but you are just not my mom.” Trying his best not to make a scene.

“Okay.” Regina said with sadness in her voice. When night fell Regina wondered if they would ever act like mom and son. “Goodnight Luke.”

Luke trying his best not to freak out, but also appreciating the fact that she was trying her best, “Okay, goodnight.”

That night Luke couldn’t stop thinking about that dream. Maybe it was a sign that he was being mean and he needed to treat Regina just how he would treat his real mom. So from that day on he promised he would be nice to Regina to fulfill his dad’s last wish. The next morning Luke woke up to Regina making food from the little stove they brought. He took a breath and went up to Regina and said, “Good morning mom.”

Regina looked like she saw a ghost. “Did he just call me mom?” she said in her head.

“Yeah! Good morning son. Only if you are okay with me calling you son?” He smiled. “Yep, I am fine with it.”

In the evening Luke realized that Regina was actually very nice, and was very excited and ready for what the future had in place. Around lunch time, Regina had set the tent up and parked the car in a different spot that was a bit safer. After she set the tent up, Luke offered to set up cameras because they are in a dark forest. As the night came by, things started to get weird.

Random stuff in the camp went missing, random noises were everywhere, even the beds were moved around in the tents.

Luke and Regina heard a huge crash to the left of their camp. They decided they had enough and went to go check it out. They had flashlights and yet it was still dark, so he couldn’t really see anything. Then all the sudden Luke had realized he had a dream about this. He never really believed that type of stuff, but it seemed awfully weird considering he had never been there before. They then, yet again heard a loud crash to their left. They looked over there and saw all of their things had gone missing... But the only thing that stayed was the cameras and the computer so that they could watch the footage.

“Why is it that the only thing left is the cameras mom?”

“Luke, I don’t know. I will start the van and we can go home and forget about the whole thing.”

“Okay...” “Luke went to see if the van was still there. When he went to get the van, he heard Regina scream. Luke ran back to Regina as fast as he could. “Please Regina, be okay please!” Luke said in his head.

He finally got to where Regina was, but there was no sign of her. Then suddenly he remembered the cameras. He walked over to the cameras and watched the video footage. He saw a blurry figure with soul-piercing eyes dragging Regina away...But in the distance he hears Regina, “Luke come eat, Luke... LUUUUUKE.” Luke turns to run towards her voice, but suddenly finds himself falling towards the ground and everything turning black.

Luke breathes heavily as he wakes up in his room and he thinks to himself, “It was just a dream, thank goodness.” “Coming.” Luke walks downstairs and sees Regina. “Regina you would not believe what dream I had.”

“Well then, what was it about?”

“You went missing while we were camping.”

“That sounds awful, well come get some food son.”

As Luke walked over to get food, he looked at Regina and his body froze. The same soul-piercing eyes he dreamt about were staring right through him.

The End for Now...

Untitled

Elyanna Boazos

Do you ever feel that your parents never listen to you? Well, on Halloween night, my mother made a grave mistake. My father and mother were fighting in the kitchen. Probably about something stupid. Being the nosy kid I was, I watched them while sitting in the living room. My mother noticed me watching and yelled obliviously, “Marlene, why are you so annoying! Just mind your own business stupid girl!” Those words completely broke me. I burst into tears, and then rage.

“You’re the worst mother in the world! I hate you!” I ran upstairs to my room sobbing. When I looked back at my mother, she looked mortified. Neither my mother, nor I knew what this fight would do to our mother and daughter relationship.

Years later and I’m lying in my bed after my mother and my second fight that day. I was talking to her about my mental health and it escalated. I won’t get into details but, my own mother said I was either a curse, or a hoax. Why would she say that to her own daughter? That was the moment I decided that after five years of dealing with her issues I was going to finally make a move. I grabbed my duffle bag I use for camping off of the ground and started packing. If you couldn’t tell, I’m running away from her. I paced back and forth, deciding if I was going to go through with it. Then I snuck down the stairs into the kitchen, I sighed when I saw my mother’s sprawled out body, Sleeping - drunk.

I hate how she just drinks her problems away. She needs therapy. I grab some food from the kitchen, I’m going to take Charlie, my golden retriever with me for protection. I guide him out the door and we’re off. I’m going to live in the woods where the neighborhood watch or the police could never find me. As I’m walking through the woods I see an abandoned mansion. “That’s the perfect place to stay!” I excitedly say to Charlie as we walk towards the building. A couple minutes later and we’re at the door of the large mansion. “This is it buddy, our new home. Since we can’t live with mom anymore” Charlie looks excited even though he probably doesn’t know what I’m talking about. I push open the double doors and step inside. It’s pretty clean for an abandoned mansion. Before I can tell Charlie to follow me again; the doors slam. WHOOSH! I tried to open them again but they were stuck! My stomach sinks when I think about what I’m going to do if I get attacked. Or if someone finds Charlie and takes him! Then I hear a noise, it sounds like... a little girl laughing? I’m going crazy. There’s no way someone else is in here! “Hello?” I sheepishly say. I’m shaking now, I really hope there’s no response.

“Hello girl.” I see a short girl as thin as a twig in front of me.

“Are you okay? Do you need something to eat?” I say as I pull a granola bar out of the duffle bag that’s pulled over my shoulder.

“Stop acting like you’re here to rescue me or something. You’re too late, I’m already dead silly.” Dead? I think really hard about what this girl just said.

“What do you mean...dead?”

“I mean, I died here a long time ago. Are you stupid?” she asks as her ghostly white face turns red with anger. “I will let you go under one condition.”

“And what’s that?” I say trying to sound like I’m not totally freaked out.

“Play a game with me.” Oh, that doesn’t sound too bad. Maybe I was overreacting “Okay deal. What game are we playing?”

“Hide and seek, I’ll count to 104 and you go hide. If I find you, you’ll play with me for all eternity!” before I can respond she’s already counting.”1,2,3,4-”

I ran off, into the basement. I see a big crate that I can fit into. I throw my duffle bag up the stairs so I don’t have to hide that too. I climb into the crate and sit inside, Knees tucked to my chest.

This is no game anymore, this is life or death!

“Come out, come out wherever you are girl!” Through a crack I see her bare feet and the bottom of her white, ripped dress walking past the stairs. She picks up my duffle bag and starts walking again, “I have your bag! Don’t you want it? Come here and I’ll give it back.” I can tell she’s lying, she sounds like a nice girl, really! But I don’t want to be here for eternity! About two more hours pass by and I don’t hear anything, footsteps, breathing, nothing. Then I hear the front two doors collapse.

“Marlene Haven! Are you here?” I hear a deep voice, like a man’s voice calling my name. He’s busting down more doors, then he busts down the basement door. I peek my head out, it’s a police officer! I jumped out of the box, visibly relieved. “Your mother was worried about you!” Before I could think I said,

“My mother? No, it couldn’t be.” The officer wears a confused expression on his pale slim face.

“Nevermind.” I quickly say as I pick up my duffle bag and shuffle it up the stairs, then myself. The nice police officer drove me home. When my mother opened the door she immediately burst into tears and pulled me into a big bear hug.

“Marlene!” I was expecting her to be angry, but she wasn’t,

“Marlene! I love you so much, please don’t scare me like that again!” My body loosens. “I’m so sorry I have been horrible! I’ll stop drinking, I’ll go to rehab, therapy, whatever you want! Just don’t leave me please!”

“I’ll never leave you again - I promise.”

Through thick and thin love remains.



The Houses on 4th Street

Vivianna Hanes

One day on a warm October night there were two girls. Their names were Eleanor and Charlotte. Charlotte and Eleanor were best friends. Eleanor was at Charlotte's house and they were playing on their phones until they heard a knock on Charlotte's room door.

Charlotte opened it and it was just her mom, she was asking what Eleanor and Charlotte wanted for lunch. Eleanor said that she didn't know what to get. So they both came up with an idea. They would ride bikes to the Wendy's down the street and get some food for Charlotte's family and the two. Charlotte's mom gave them some money and they went off.

Once they got to Wendy's they went inside and got the food. Charlotte put the food in her basket on her bike and started to ride. Charlotte and Eleanor weren't paying attention so they went to the wrong road, but they overlooked that. Eleanor looked at the street name and Charlotte stopped with her and asked her what was wrong. Then she noticed that Eleanor was looking at all the street signs. Charlotte read one of the signs and it said 4th Street.

She pointed at the sign and yelled, "I know that street." She then put her feet on the pedal and started going. Eleanor followed shortly after that. Once Charlotte was riding down the street she noticed that all the houses were exactly the same. She was kind of freaked out by it but she thought just to leave it. They kept riding and riding until they got to the end. When they got to the end it was very, very weird.

The street that they were walking on looked a little familiar. It was the same street that they were on before they were on 4th Street, but it looked different. The sky was a dark green, and all the trees were dead. Charlotte and Eleanor were scared but they didn't know what to do. Then suddenly Charlotte took off without even letting Eleanor know.

Charlotte yelled, "I see somebody!" Charlotte finally stopped and pointed to a hill where somebody was sitting. Then all of a sudden the person got up and started screaming, "No no go back you don't want to be here." Charlotte wondered why he was saying that.

He got to the girls and told them about the replica of the town. He told them that the reason the town looked different was because the girls went down 4th Street. He also said that he went down the road 40 years ago and got stuck in the town hall because the houses on 4th Street didn't let him leave. The girls were confused about how the houses would keep him in the town. Then he said that all the houses on 4th Street were all alive.

All the houses on the block were alive and if they didn't get out of the town fast enough they would get stuck in the town. The man said that his name was Phobos. His parents named him after the god of fear and panic, Phobos immediately asks how long they were in the town for. Charlotte answered, "About five minutes." Phobos had a sign of relief on his face. Phobos told them all the information that the girls needed to get out of the town. Phobos said that the girls had to ride their bikes as fast as they could go to the street and then stop. Then had two stops in front of every house and threw something at the houses for it to eat. Phobos gave them a bag of candy and told them that the candy was for the houses only.

After the girls rode as fast as they could to the street. Charlotte was scared but she knew she had to do it. They started riding again and they were throwing candy at the houses. The houses were eating the candy right after they threw it in the yard. After about two minutes they stopped to take a break and eat some sandwiches from Wendy's. After they ate they kept riding. After they got to the end of the street they noticed that they didn't have any more candy left and there was one more house. The girls began to panic. They didn't know what to do in this situation but they knew that they had burgers that they got from Wendy's so they threw one in the yard.

The houses ate it and it seemed that they had done it but there was something wrong with all the other houses when they ate the food they turned green but this house turned red. They tried to leave the house but they could their bikes weren't working for some reason. Then all of a sudden Phobos appeared out of nowhere. He started to tell them that the houses only liked candy and they were in big trouble, but he had a solution, he had some extra candy in his pocket.

The girls threw the candy at the last house, the house ate it and the girls were let out and they made it home safely.

The Haunted Schoolhouse

Rhyan Moore

Once upon a time in a small, quiet town, there stood an old, creaky schoolhouse. It had been abandoned for years, and some kids said it was haunted. They called it “The Spooky Schoolhouse.” One stormy night, four friends, Sarah, Mark, Lily, and Tim, decided to find out if the stories were true.

They gathered in front of the schoolhouse, the wind howling and the rain pouring down. The schoolhouse looked eerie with its broken windows and peeling paint. Sarah, the bravest of them all, took a deep breath and said, “Let’s go inside and see if it’s haunted.”

They pushed the heavy door open, and it creaked loudly. Inside, it was pitch black, and the air was icy cold. The kids shivered and used their flashlights to explore. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling, and old desks were covered in dust. As they ventured further, they heard strange noises.

“Did you hear that?” Mark whispered, his eyes wide with fear.

“It’s probably just the wind,” Lily tried to reassure them, but she couldn’t hide her unease.

They continued through the dark hallways until they reached the basement. There, they found an old chalkboard covered in chalk dust and an eerie message scrawled on it: “Beware the ghostly teacher.” The message sent a chill down their spines.

Suddenly, a faint, ghostly voice echoed through the air. “Who dares enter my school?”

The kids turned to see a faint, shadowy figure of a teacher holding a piece of chalk. The ghostly teacher’s eyes glowed with an otherworldly light.

“Run!” Tim shouted, and they dashed up the stairs, their footsteps echoing through the empty halls.

But the ghostly teacher was relentless. She appeared at every turn, trying to catch them. The kids finally found themselves trapped in a small classroom. The ghostly teacher slowly approached, her voice echoing with an eerie whisper.

“Why are you here? Are you here to learn or to disturb my eternal classroom?”

Tears welled up in Lily’s eyes, and she stammered, “We didn’t mean to disturb you. We just wanted to see if the stories were true.”

The ghostly teacher’s expression softened, and she said, “I was once a teacher in this school. I loved my students dearly. But one day, something terrible happened, and I lost them. Now I am trapped here, teaching in an empty classroom for all eternity.”

The kids felt sorry for the ghostly teacher. Sarah, summoning her courage, said, “Is there any way we can help you?”

The ghostly teacher nodded, her form flickering. “There is a way. Find the lost book of knowledge hidden in this school. It holds the key to my release.”

The kids agreed to help. They searched the entire school, solving puzzles and overcoming their fears. After what felt like hours, they found an old, dusty book hidden in the library. The book glowed with an otherworldly light when they opened it, and the ghostly teacher appeared beside them.

“Thank you,” she said, her voice filled with gratitude. “Now, I can finally rest in peace.”

With that, the ghostly teacher slowly faded away, and the schoolhouse was no longer haunted. The kids left the school, feeling a sense of accomplishment and a newfound respect for the spirits of the past.

From that day on, the schoolhouse was no longer, “The Spooky Schoolhouse.” It became a place of mystery and wonder, a reminder of the kindness and bravery of four friends who had helped a lost soul find her way to the afterlife.

And the old schoolhouse, once filled with darkness and fear, was transformed into a place where the past and the present coexist in harmony, a place where the stories of the ghostly teacher were told to generations of students, and where her memory was kept alive.



My Precious Emily

Daisy Frausto

It had been years since we saw her...my precious Emily. I always told her to stay close but maybe, just maybe this time I should've been watching, listening, waiting, anything...I should've been paying attention. After all she was my little girl, my precious little girl. But that was years ago, we all miss her we really do...everyone blames me for what happened and I blame myself too. Maybe if I hadn't shoed her off and away from me maybe she wouldn't have gone to the playground with her friend...her imaginary friend...I always hated that old creepy playground. It always made me feel like someone or something was watching, but ever since she left us, I can't stop going there. I don't think things are right with that playground. Every time I go I see shadows and her voice whispers in the air, "Mommy please help! Mommy please help!" I can't help but feel regret for not watching her and just paying a little attention to her. I went there today and there she was just waiting for me. I didn't know how to react. I just felt all my emotions at once coming up. Although her feet and leg and arms had scratches and she was all dirty. I could still tell that it was my Emily. As soon as I went to go up to her to give her my biggest hug and say "Emily! Where have you been all these years!" I woke up and there she was a little girl again asking and begging for my attention. This time I decided to not ignore her and pay attention. Maybe this time will go differently...

Where is Everybody?

Amelia Jones

"Yawn," I groan as I wake up, tired from the activities of yesterday. I glance at the clock, which reads 6:00 AM. I assume it is still dark outside. It's very cold this October morning. I shed off my Halloween nightgown and put on a long sleeve skeleton shirt and sherpa leggings. I listen for the sound of Mum making breakfast, but instead, I hear silence.

I quietly creep down the stairs so as not to wake Mum and Dad. As I sneak into their quiet bedroom, there is not a person in sight. I wonder where they could be. I search the house up and down but there is no one to be found. Something is up. My parents never leave me alone at the house.

I try to remember what happened the day before. I recall being at the Halloween picnic hosted by my father's work. I was playing with my best friend named Chloe, who is the daughter of Dad's coworker, Sam. Chloe has been my best friend since preschool. We had so much fun at that picnic. "That's it! I will go find Chloe," I exclaimed. "She will know what to do."

Before I head out, I don my favorite vampire sweatshirt as I peer through a crack in the door. I am shocked to see that the once beautiful houses of this fine neighborhood are now crumbling to the ground. The front lawns outside are also unkempt, as if they hadn't been mowed in years. As I look in the direction of the horizon, I see a skeleton that appears to be gardening. At first I am scared but then I guess that it is an animatronic decoration for the upcoming holiday.

As I journey to Chloe's house, I notice more and more skeletons. I think it's a little weird, seeing only these bony creatures and not any other mythical monster decorations, like vampires or zombies. I finally reach her house. I knock our special code so she knows it's me. There is no reply so I try again. Knock knock knock knock knock, knock knock. Still no answer. I turn the handle and find the door unlocked.

When I open the door, it creaks open. As I walk inside, I hear nothing but the sound of the heater in the living room. I search the large house and find no human beings in the vicinity. That's weird, I think as I examine the house again. It's a Saturday, so there is no school. When I am done checking for people, I become annoyed and agitated. "Where is everyone!?"

I walk out of the house beginning to sob. I realize that there are over twenty skeletons in the yard. Something is going on. When I came here, there was not a single skeleton outside. All of the sudden, the bony things start to circle and surround me. One of them reaches for my hands. I scream and recoil. As the weird creatures begin to close in, I shove one aside and run. At that moment, I ran the fastest I had ever run in my entire life.

I jog in the direction of the old abandoned log cabin of the widow Myers. She had been killed at a young age, just two days after her husband. I don't remember much else about it but I am lucky that it's close. I jump across a large tree root and stumble into the house. I turn around and slam the door.

It's really dark in here, I think as I examine the house. I still have my phone! I realize as I pull it out of the pocket of my sweatshirt. "Turn torch on," I tell Siri. The bright light startles me for a moment but in a second, my eyes adjust to the glow of my phone. I scan the tiny, disheveled room and find a pile of bones in the corner. I am taken aback at the sight. I don't have time to be disturbed for long though, because there is pounding at the door.

I glance out the tiny window and let out a cry. Outside, there are multiple skeletons. A few of them are using a larger one as a battering ram, trying to bust down the wooden door. I back into the corner, still being wary of the pile of bones in the left corner. Suddenly, the lumpy mess begins to shake. The bones start rising and form the shape of a human with no skin or organs. I run out the back door of the decrepit building and head towards Town Hall across the street. I am interrupted by a skeleton trying to intercept my path. I sidestep around it and jog faster. As I head inside, I notice the photos on the wall. They are the usual pictures but with bony creatures in their clothes. I gasp and bolt the door of the long hallway, only to find that there is a skeleton breathing down my neck. "Don't touch me!" I scream as I kick it in the shins.

I start to run towards the mayor's office. I find him reading a newspaper. "Thank goodness you are alive. I thought I was the only one left," I wheeze as I attempt to catch my breath. Then the mayor lowers his newspaper. He wasn't the mayor! He was in fact a skeleton wearing his clothes and sporting a toothy grin. I cry out and attempt to get out of the room. I almost trip on a loose arm that grabs at my ankles. I stumble out of the place and open the side door so as not to arouse the skeletons in the front entryway. All of the sudden, a skeleton grabs at me.

I wake up screaming. Breathing heavily, I glance around the room. "Phew," I say, right before the closet opens. Out comes a skinless arm, groping for the handle. "Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!"

The Song of a Siren

Hayden Lucero-Mihelich

"Mrs. Neris, can we do the campfire now? I want to hear a scary story," one student remarked.

"That is a great idea," said Mrs. Neris. "Gather around the campfire," said Mrs. Proctor. All of the children grabbed their stuffed animals and their blankets because they know Mrs. Proctor and Mrs. Neris are the best scary story tellers in the whole school. Mrs. Proctor started out by saying, "Are you ready to hear the scariest, freakiest, and most terrifying story we have ever told?" Mrs. Neris replied by saying, "It all began on the beach in 2018." One day a boy named Billy went to the beach with his friend Brandon. Billy and Brandon were walking on the beach when all of a sudden Brandon ran into another friend named Mandy. Mandy and Brandon started talking so Billy wandered off on his own. Billy came across a very old boat while strolling along the beach. He decided to sail the boat out on the glistening ocean. Billy got carried out into the ocean by the huge waves leaving him lost at sea.

All of a sudden Billy heard what he thought was help as a melodious voice drew him in. He came across a beautiful girl with long curly blonde hair and he swore that her eyes were as blue as the sea. She was perched on a rock that appeared to be on land. As he was getting closer to the girl the voice began to put him in a magical trance. Once Billy reached the girl she glanced at him before hopping back into the water.

The beautiful girl swam up to the very old boat that Billy was on. Billy asked the girl, "Are you lost?" The girl replied with a faint smile and resumed singing the most beautiful song you have ever heard. Billy believed that he heard her telling him to join her in the water. "Jump in and join me," the girl was telling him.

Hypnotized by her siren song Billy jumped overboard to join her like she said. All of a sudden everything went black. Billy woke up in a hospital confused, and in shock. The last thing he remembered was the girl's voice.

When the young nurse walked into the room he asked her what had happened. The nurse replied, "Billy you were found passed out on a boat in the ocean." Billy remarks, "Really?" The nurse commented, "Yes Billy, three months ago." Billy was in shock, terrified, and worried. Billy then asked the nurse "Where is the girl?" The nurse then said "You were the only person who we found, Billy. The doctor will be in to see you soon."

A few minutes later the doctor walked into the room. Billy asked why he was in the hospital. The doctor said, "A helicopter was flying over the ocean when they saw the old boat that appeared to be lost at sea. You were flown in by helicopter with severe hypothermia and life-threatening vitals. If you were not found when you were you would not be alive now. The shock your body was in alone could have killed you." The doctor told Billy, "I'm going to have to ask you a series of questions because of the current state that you are in." Billy replied with a faint nod. Then the doctor then asked Billy what is the last thing that you remember? Billy replied, "There was this beautiful girl with long curly blonde hair, eyes as blue as the sea, and she sang the most beautiful song you have ever heard." The doctor replied, "Okay, what are these?" The doctor pulled up Billy's sleeve where there appeared to be bite marks on his arm. Billy exclaimed, "What are those?!" The doctor explained that they appeared to be bite marks that were not that of a human. The bite marks were not like ones they have seen before. Billy was in shock as he stared at the marks on his arm. Confused and distraught, Billy thought hard about what had happened. The nurse then opened the door and said, "you have a visitor." All of a sudden Brandon walked in.

In a tone of relief and joy he exclaimed, "Billy, you're alive! I tried looking for you on the beach, but you were nowhere to be found." Billy was happy to see Brandon, but still had wondered what had happened to the girl. The doctor told Billy that he could leave the hospital as soon as his mom got there.

Brandon stayed with Billy until his mom arrived. As Billy was riding home in the car they were driving along the coast line. When he was looking out the window he heard the most beautiful song you have ever heard. Though he thought he was imaging it he looked across to the water and saw the most beautiful girl splashing around. Billy yelled out loud, "mom can you hear it? Do you see the singing girl in the water?" The mom replied, "No Billy, do I need to take you back to the hospital?"

Time passed and Billy could still hear the song of the siren ringing in his ears. One day he heard it again and decided to follow the voice back to the beach.

Billy saw the girl and followed her into the ocean never to be seen again.

"Wow! Mrs. Neris that was the scariest story you ever told. The girl in the story looked a lot like you."

"Yes, I needed some inspiration," said Mrs. Neris. "Alright time for bed," Mrs. Proctor yelled. After the students went to bed Mrs. Neris began to sing and returned to the sea.



Alone

Jamie Heavrin

Chapter 1

It was October 1, 1969, at 5:00 pm it was a cold day, not a sound to be heard, not a sound to be made. On that day a small town in London, everything was about to change and no one would expect it to. To start with three kids and a mystery.

We were just kids back then it all changed when Ann went missing for weeks, there was not a sign of her. I just can't believe how it all happened so quickly. The only thing found was a red bow by the old water fountain. No one could believe that she had gone missing. We could never guess the horror waiting for us.

"Anything yet Rosie? Jake?" "No!" I shout out to Zack.

"Nothing here I don't think we're going to find anything about Ann's file," Jake said.

I want to smack Jake in the face. But I would have to find him in these piles of books. "I can't believe you would say that Jake!" I shouted out. It's been hard on all of us, especially her little brother. He was heartbroken to find out his big sister was gone.

"What! Come on Rosie what do you expect me to say? Ann has been missing for three weeks now not even the police can find her," Jake said.

"Guys come here I found it!" yelled Zack

I ran as fast as I could, my heart pounding. When I got there I saw a picture of a red bow. I knew that the red bow there was dangerous the farther we got into this mess. Good job Zach, wow he found something...hmmm.

Yeah man, good job. Finding something on Ann. I can't believe he found something I guess Rosie is right. I'm not going to tell her that she'll just brag about it for the rest of the night. Well, what now guys?

"Well, guys we go to (slam) here," Zack said "A picture?" Jake said

No, you idiot we'll go to (I took a long pause) the insane asylum. "What!?" Jake yelled so loud it could almost echo the room we were in. Me and Zack covered our ears.

"Good God Jake, there's no need to yell we're right in front of you."

"Yeah, man you could bust someone's ears out with your yelling," Zack said in a quiet tone.

"Sorry guys, the insane asylum," Jake said in a soft quiet tone.

"I guess we have our first clue, ladies and gentlemen. I know we're going tonight," said Zack with a mischievous smile.

To be continued...

Curiosity Killed the Cat

Isabella Melster

It had seemed like a normal afternoon for Officer Charlie Beckett that was until he was called to respond to a noise complaint at the old Jackson house. He found it odd, being called to investigate such a thing at the abandoned home, and to his knowledge, no one lived there. But, then again, that doesn't mean some teens decided to crash the house... on a Wednesday...at 2:45 p.m. Yeah, unrealistic, but you never know.

He pulled up to the house, parking his police cruiser outside. The house was old, a simple two-story house, windows blocked by faded red drapes. Charlie didn't notice anything at first, well, besides the door swung wide open.

The cop approached the house, walking inside as he listened to the chatter of his radio. "Dispatch, this is Officer Beckett, responding to a noise complaint on 36th Street. There's nothing here, I'm returning to the station," he said. "Copy," replied a voice on the other end. He looked around one last time, he would've left, if the open door to the basement hadn't caught his attention. Charlie shrugged and walked towards the ominous doorway, flicking his flashlight on and embarking on his journey to the basement.

The basement was quiet, and dark, like any other creepy old basement. It was empty like it hadn't been touched in years (which it probably hadn't). He carried his black boots clacking against the cement floor. Something did catch the officer's attention-something gleaming, shiny. Charlie made the stupid choice and walked towards it.

To his surprise, the light from his flashlight had reflected off of a hatchet. A hatchet. Fitting thing to find in an old creepy basement, the cop thought. He bent down to get a better look at the blade that was sticking out of a box. "Why would-," he was cut off, by a loud thud from upstairs. The officer's head shot up. He stood up straight, fixing his uniform before heading back to the stairs. He made an effort to be quiet in case the owner of said hatchet was up there.

His hand found his handgun as he reached the top stairs.

He stepped back upstairs, only to find no one up there, everything looked like it had, untouched and dusty. Charlie was about to go back down the stairs to the mysterious weapon, but another 'bang!' interrupted yet again. His grey eyes darted towards the stairs, leading upstairs.

Just some dumb kids causing trouble, he told himself. Right? He approached the wooden stairs; he didn't want to call out and make his presence known just yet to the unknown being upstairs.

He reached the top of the stairs, another thud, followed by... scraping? He didn't question it, he located the noises to what he guessed was a bedroom, with, of course, a closed door. He reached for the door handle, pressing his back against the wall in case someone was armed in the room. He opened the door, raised the weapon in his hands, and stepped into the doorway, only to find a disturbing sight.

The mangled body of months-long teen, Eros Andrews. Blood soaked the teen's clothes and seeped into the floorboards. His neck and arms were bent at an unsettling angle. "Dispatch-," Charlie didn't get to finish. A voice from behind him made his blood run cold.

"You shouldn't be here, Mr. Beckett."

"The New York Times"

Shocking Investigation Unfolds in New Orleans. Saturday, October 21, 2023

NOPD has finally spoken out to the public about the case of Eros Andrews, a 16-year-old who went missing from his home in June of 2023. The police have confirmed the long-suspected death of the teen. His body was found in home 306 on 36th Street. The department confirmed the theories last night after Officer Charlie Beckett was sent to 306 last Wednesday to investigate a noise complaint.

Officials say the officer stopped responding to his radio around 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

Two officers were sent to the house where they found Beckett dead in an upstairs bedroom, along with the body of Eros Andrews. The police have no leads or suspects as of right now. The teen's family has chosen to not say anything, and the officer's spouse has chosen to keep quiet as well.

Exploring Abandoned Churches

Olivia Weaver

I don't scare easily.

Neither does my best friend, Aiden Thomsonson, with whom I have spent the last four years on the move, looking for new adventures, new horrors to participate in.

Currently, we are driving along a dirt road about 50 miles west of Salem, Massachusetts. There is a map on my lap of the US-red X's cover it, marking the places we've been, the ghosts we've seen. The last truly haunted place on our list is about...

"Two miles," I say to Aiden. "The church should be at the end of the road." "Got it," Aiden says. "You know, Norrie, I've got a bit of a bad feeling about this. This one feels... well, it feels bad."

"Like to share with the class?"

"It feels different from the other places we've been, I can feel it from here, just this sense of dread and guilt--"

"You should feel guilty," I grumble. "You stress-ate my M&M's." "You know what I mean."

I do. This place is dripping with panic and fear.

We drive through the night, like feeling through a dark hallway for a light switch. The only source of illumination is our headlights, and even then, the darkness almost seems to close in on them.

Finally, after two hours of driving, we find it. The unnamed church in the middle of nowhere. There is something about it that is inherently off, like the way it seems to tilt until I tilt my head with it-then it seems perfectly normal. Or the way I feel like I am seeing faces in the windows before realizing that stained glass cannot stare at me like a living thing.

"Well," I say, getting out of the car. "Let's go inside."

Aiden climbs out as well, his expression apprehensive and... and scared.

We walk over to the front door. No lock, swinging open on its hinges, and something laying down just inside...

I push open the door. There is a leather tome titled, *A Guide to Exploring Abandoned Churches*. I motion for Aiden to come inside as I bend over to lift it off the ground. I flip through the pages.

I frown. "It's all blank." Then, a folded piece of yellowed paper flutters to the ground. Aiden lifts it up.

"Rule One," he reads, "'Don't bring groups smaller than three.'" "Failed at that," I comment.

"Rule Two: Leave immediately.' Yeah, let's go, Norrie."

"Keep reading." Something about this place deeply compels me.

"Rule Three: 'Don't...'" He trails off, furrowing his brow. "Don't exist," I purse my lips. "Well, that's totally not creepy."

"Norrie..." "Aiden."

We walk further inside, our shoes tapping on the wooden floor. Pews surround us, books sitting on them.

We keep walking towards the altar. Up a couple steps, past the communal railing, up to the white marble block. It nearly glows in the persistent moonlight coming through one of the windows.

I run my hands along the frigid surface, and chills run down my spine like water down the edge of a cliff. I gasp and I can see my breath. Goosebumps raise on my arms and legs. I am freezing.

"Good God," I mutter, turning to Aiden. "Do you feel it too?"

But he is removing his backpack and taking off his hoodie. "Yeah, hotter than the inside of a volcano here. Lord, what is this?"

I ignore the logical bits of my mind telling me to leave and sidle up behind the altar. I look out over the pews.

Bodies. Everywhere. Men, women, children, grotesque burns on their skin, lacerations to their faces, knife wounds in their throats. They are all real, so real, and their mouths and eyes... wide, blackened, tar or oil or something pouring out of their sockets, pulsing from their wounds, and it is making its way towards me, snaking up the steps like vines - "Norrie!"

Aiden is beside me, shaking my shoulders. He begins to look out at the people, and I try to stop him, try to keep him from seeing it all, but I am too late, and he is screaming, shrieking fear from somewhere deep in his mind, deep in his brain, and I know, with a crashing feeling of dread and guilt, that this was too much. As he falls backwards, his eyes tied to the gore we have beheld, I know that I have lost him.

"Aiden," I cry. "Aiden, come on we need to get out--"

"Can't-can't you-see them?" he cries pitifully. "Can't you see them? Can't you see them? Can't you see them? Can't you see them, Norrie?"

The way he says my name makes me want to sob as I walk cautiously towards where he is crawling away from the altar.

He finally looks at me, and his face erupts in a contorted shriek. "No! No, no, it's you, too, it's you, you, you're dead. Norrie!"

I look down at myself and oh my God. The black substance is oozing from every pore on my body, I can see my bones, they are broken and battered and I have never broken a bone so this can't be real right this can't possibly be real? I am broken, I am shattered, every piece of me is in pain, all-consuming pain, help me help me please I need to get out no I don't yes I do I need to leave escape please let me escape no you can't leave you are one of them now you are one of them one of them one of the dead-

I can't die. I have so much to live for. I smile. Yes, this is why. I cannot possibly be dead. So many more things need to happen. I need to go to med school, become a doctor, and help people. This is all a dream, a nightmare.

You know it isn't.

It is. I can't die, right?

Oh, darling, choruses a crowd in my head. You already have.

The Echoing Hollow

Cheyenne Ainsworth

In the heart of an ancient forest, where shadows danced with the whispering leaves, lay the Echoing Hollow. It was a place shrouded in mystery, known only to the bravest souls who dared venture beyond the beaten path.

Legend spoke of a presence-something neither human nor beast-that dwelled within the hollow. It was said to be a soul bound to the earth by a sinister force. Its whisper could be heard, echoing through the trees and chilling even the stoutest hearts.

One fateful night, a young woman named Eliza, with her adventurous spirit and curious mind, decided to unravel the secret of the Echoing Hollow. Guided by nothing but an old map and the light of the full moon, she ventured forth, determined to uncover the truth.

As she approached the hollow, the air grew colder and the forest seemed to hold its breath. The moonlight filtered through the branches, casting eerie shadows on the forest floor. Eliza's heart pounded in her chest, but she pressed on.

Reaching the edge of the hollow, she hesitated. The silence was deafening, broken only by the soft rustle of leaves in the wind. With trembling hands, she took a lantern from her bag and lit it, casting a feeble glow on the gnarled trees that encircled her.

As she stepped into the hollow, the ground seemed to sigh beneath her feet. It was as though the earth itself was alive, aware of her presence. Eliza's breath formed frosty clouds in the cold air, and her senses were heightened by every sound and movement.

Suddenly, a low, mournful wail echoed through the trees, sending shivers down her spine. She froze, her lantern flickered in the wind. The sound seemed to emanate from all directions, as if the very forest itself were mourning.

In the distance, she glimpsed a pale, ethereal light flickering like a distant star. It beckoned her deeper into the hollow, illuminating a path through the twisted trees. With each step, the light seemed to grow stronger, drawing her closer to its source.

As she approached, she discovered an ancient, weathered tombstone barely visible beneath the blanket of moss and ivy. The inscription was worn, but she could make out the name, "Eleanor Holloway." It sent a chill down her bones, for it was said that Eleanor was the one whose spirit haunted this accursed place.

Just as Eliza's fingers brushed the cold stone, a soft and mournful voice whispered in her ear, "Beware, for the Hollow claims all who dare to seek its secrets." She spun around, but there was no one to be seen, only the looming trees and the pale light that pulsed like a heartbeat.

Determined to uncover the truth, Eliza pressed on, her lantern casting long, twisted shadows on the forest floor. The air grew colder still, and the silence seemed to grow thicker, suffocating her senses.

Suddenly, the ground gave way beneath her feet, and she tumbled into a hidden chamber, its walls lined with ancient symbols and faded paintings. Before her stood a spectral figure, clad in tattered robes, its eyes gleaming with a mournful light.

"Who are you?" Eliza stammered, her voice barely a whisper.

"I am Eleanor," the figure intoned, its voice echoing through the chamber. "Bound to this hollow for eternity, cursed to guard its secrets."

Eliza's heart pounded, but she forced herself to speak. "What happened here?"

What is the secret of the Echoing Hollow?"

Eleanor's gaze seemed to pierce through Eliza's very soul. "Long ago, this forest was alive with magic, a sanctuary for creatures both light and dark. But when greed and darkness took root, the balance was shattered. I tried to protect it, but I was betrayed, bound to this hollow as a cardan and a warning."

As Eleanor spoke, the walls of the chamber seemed to come alive, the ancient's symbols glowing with an ethereal light. Eliza felt a surge of power, a connection to the very heart of the forest.

With newfound determination, she vowed to free Eleanor from her eternal prison and restore balance to the Echoing Hollow. Together, they would face the darkness that had consumed the forest and find a way to break the curse.

And so, under the watchful eyes of the ancient trees, Eliza and Eleanor began their quest, their fate intertwined with the heartbeat of the Echoing Hollow, determined to reclaim its lost magic and bring light back to the haunted forest.

The Haunting House

Christopher Estrada-Aguilar

Adam stood in front of the haunting house, thinking of how badly he messed up. It all began during a sleepover earlier that night when his friend Stacy and a few other friends all played the famous sleepover truth and dare game. In the middle they had an empty water bottle that they spun to see who would go next. When Stacey had spun the bottle it had landed on Adam.

Knowing that Stacy would choose the most absurd truths to ask, he decided to go with the only safe option that he thought was safe at the time.

“Dare” He said confidently. Stacy smiled menacingly

Then an hour later here he was. Standing in front of the infamous Haunting House.

The reason why it was called “Haunting house” instead of just “Haunted house.” Was because it has multiple hauntings throughout the year. The average is set at twenty, while the most hauntings recorded in one year was thirty in 1944. The reason why it is so haunted remains unknown as there really isn’t a clear explanation to it. There are theories but only one makes sense, simple, and understandable.

The house is cursed.

Of course this didn’t stop the thousands of children from making up their own theories. “Maybe the house is haunted because of the many demon possessions there were decades ago,” said Stacy trying to sound scary as she held a flashlight under her chin.

Adam shook his head in disbelief as he gave his own opinion. “Maybe the house just attracts unexplainable energy. Or something like that.”

“Maybe the ghosts were lost souls who wandered the earth and found the house and decided to use it as their final resting place.” Said a boy that was in his pajamas.

“Good point.” Adam said.

“Alright enough stalling, you already know the dare so go ahead and go in while I time you.” Adam gulped. The dare was to walk inside the house and stay there for a minimum of ten minutes. Once the time was up, you beat the dare and were considered brave for the rest of the day before it wore off the next day. Adam nodded and took slow steps up the stairs that led up to the front door. He passed the long yellow grass that brushed against his pajama pants, he also passed warning signs that we basically said, “HEY! DO NOT ENTER. DESTROYING HOUSE ON BLAH BLAH BLAH!” in big black lettering.

Adam placed his hand on the door knob, looked back at Stacy who waved at him, then he opened the door and closed it behind him. Seconds later Stacy yelled

“Time has begun!”

Adam shivered as he thought if he should hide and wait out the time, or to explore inside the house a bit. It was his first time. He sighed, clearly frustrated. Then he made his choice. At the time it was a difficult decision, but he stood tall and proceeded to explore around the house. Adam cringed as the colorless dead wood cracked underneath his feet. He turned the corner, there in front of him was a display of what was left of the living room. An old couch, a dust covered coffee table that sat in front of the couch, a broken TV that had seen better days. Adam was about to head towards the kitchen when a loud crash that came from upstairs made him freeze.

What was that? He questioned himself.

He looked up at the ceiling and waited for anything that would follow it. But nothing. A little spooked but now cautious he made his way over to the set of stairs that faced the front door: He glanced upward at the pitch black darkness that was above. Gulping, Adam did his best to go up the flight of stairs as slowly and as quietly as possible.

When he reached the last step, something ran out in front of him causing him to jump and grab hold of the railing in order to not fall.

The heck?

What ran in front of him came back. Instead of being scared he was relaxed instead. It ended up being a big rat.

“Shoo, shoo.” Adam said, pushing his arms out in a pushing motion in front of him to make the rodent go away. In which it stood on its hind legs, wiggling its little nose at him, before turning away and disappearing into a small hole that was in the wall.

Dang rats. He commented.

Adam was about to continue on when the sound of the quietest creak in the floor board made him tense up... Someone was behind him. Turning around he came face to face with someone ... wrapped in a white bedsheet with two black holes for eyes?

He looked at the person who tried to impersonate a ghost. His muscles relaxed and he even gave a slight smile and a laugh to go along with it.

"You got to be kidding me...Stacy?"

The figure sighed and took off the bed sheet, revealing Stacy. "You are NOT fun to scare are you?" She questioned.

"Startled but got to do more than... that." Adam pointed a finger at the bedsheet. Stacy rolled her eyes.

"No fun but oh well. C'mon, the time is over." Stacy said as she began to walk down the stairs. They went out the door and onto the sidewalk. Once out Adam had the urge to look up at one of the bedroom windows. When he did, he saw a figure in the window. Stacy saw this and turned to face the window as well. She gave a quick scream before running off down the street.

But not Adam, he didn't run.

He laughed and waved at the figure who waved back, it was one of his close friends. He put his hands in his pocket and walked down the street. Leaving the house off in the distance.

Maybe the house isn't really that haunted after all.

Running

Abigail Medved

My sneakers pounded against the ground beneath me. The full moon ducked behind a cloud. I stopped. The darkness swallowed me and pounded in my ears. I looked around trying to find my way. I looked back. Two eyes blinked light and disappeared. I shut my eyes and squeezed them to stop my irrational hallucinations. I looked again. Another set of yellow eyes glared at me. I stared.

"Thump, thump. Thump, thump," my heart pounded. I wanted to run but my feet wouldn't move. I tried to scream, but some invisible force grabbed my throat suffocating my attempt.

"What have you done?" it whispered. "Look at you. A vile wretch!" I heard it. I listened.

"No!" Some part of me demanded. "No! It's not true!" "But it is," it hissed. It heard me.

The moon emerged from the cloud. I ran. I ran with everything in me. I glanced back, tears distorting my vision. The eyes stared. I knew it saw me. Then, I heard footsteps, but they were not mine. On my left. On my right. Behind me. In front of me. They moved, torturing me into a dance of fear. And the eyes, I felt them.

The brush thickened and the trees overhead began to block the light. The moon dipped behind another cloud, hiding itself from my shame. I tripped and fell.

"Look! Look at your hands! They are crimson with the jealousy and torture you bestowed on your friend," the darkness screamed.

I looked. Tears rushed down my face. The shadows covered them, I couldn't tell. "It wasn't me," I thought frantically.

I ran. The darkness would not stop me. The glow of the eyes shivering my spine would not slow me down.

The moon came out. I heard an owl. I stopped. I looked around. The eyes were gone. The glow of the staring eyes had disappeared. Peace washed over me. My feet stopped running and my heart stopped racing. It was over. I had escaped.

Then, the moon was again hidden by the wrath of oncoming clouds. I was rushed back into my nightmare. The eyes surrounded me and pain filled my soul.

"Escape!" I thought, "Run!" But you can't run from yourself.

It Dwells in the Dark

Alexis Kristan

Claire slid towards the end of the ancient sofa as the last rays of twilight filtered in through the grimy window. She snapped the old library book shut, savoring the smell. Claire had always loved the smell of books even before she started working at the library. Pressing to her feet she stretched just as the old floorboards groaned. She took a few tentative steps towards the window. Peering out she noticed the sun had dipped below the horizon. She pulled the curtains together in one hasty movement and closed the small space between her and the front door in two steps. Opening the door Claire let her eyes move swiftly across the mouth of the forest without lingering, just like her Grandmama had always taught her. “Look IN the trees, not AT them.”

Although she didn’t see anything she felt the familiar trickle of ice water running down her spine. It was always the same. Right after the sun slipped behind the hill, the hair on the back of her neck would stand and the icy fingers would run down her back and settle as a feeling of unease in her stomach until morning.

“Toby!” Claire shouted. And just like every night her sweet old mutt came running from the trees.

Toby was always anxious to come in at night. Claire scanned the trees once more as Toby brushed past her legs, into the cabin. A strong urge to turn her head and look towards the trees to her right pulled at her. She felt the hair on her arms rise. Claire trembled just as Toby whined from the sofa behind her. Shutting her eyes tight she took a step back and slammed the front door. Moving quickly, Claire bolted all 6 of the locks on the front door. All were installed by Grandpa before he left and locked every night by Grandmama until Claire lost her too.

Claire didn’t chance any more glances out into the descending night as she closed the curtains on the remaining windows of the cabin. It had been this way every night. Even when Grandmama and Grandpa were here. Don’t look AT the trees was just one rule for living deep in Appalachia. “If you see something no you didn’t.” “If you hear something no you didn’t.” “Never run in the woods” and most importantly “never ever be out after dark.”

Claire added some food to Toby’s bowl before allowing herself to sink back into the sofa. She reached for the comfort of her book, even knowing that the feeling of unease would not subside until first light. She had slept on the sofa for as long as she could remember. As long as she had lived with her grandparents. They had done everything they could to keep her safe.

Now she was on her own.

The next morning Claire awoke from a fitful night of sleep just as the sun was finding its way through the cracks between the curtains. After letting Toby out and eating a slice of bread for breakfast she slung her book bag over her shoulder and started the trek into town. The Appalachian Mountains were beautiful. In the light of day.

Claire arrived just after 8 a.m. at the small local library. Ms. Margret greeted her with a warm hug. The nearly abandoned town’s population was small and many of those who still lived there were miners. There wasn’t much time for reading for anyone but Claire and Ms. Margret. Ms. Margret knew what happened to the rest of Claire’s family, just like most people in town did. But no one talked about it. There was nothing that could be done. After attending to the minimal tasks of the day Claire settled in to read an old western.

Claire gasped, sitting bolt upright at her desk, the pages of the western sticking to her cheek. She had fallen asleep in the library! Panicking she glanced around. Ms. Margret’s desk was empty. And to Claire’s horror, she realized that not only was the library empty, but every curtain remained open revealing a sky painted with dusk. A bang startled Claire. Whirling around she realized that the front door was wide open. The constant feeling of unease had been replaced by sheer panic. It was almost dark. She had to get home.

Claire grabbed her bag and ran out into the evening light. She headed towards the familiar path to home keeping her eyes straight forward on the path, very careful not to look right or left. And very careful not to run. As she walked quickly home an urge to look over her right shoulder began to grow. Something was watching her, she felt it in her bones. It took everything in her power not to run. The woods had gone dead quiet. No rustling of small creatures in the brush, no hooting owls, and no wind blowing through the leaves.

Then she heard it. Her name. It was spoken softly at first. But it didn’t sound quite right. Then it got louder. “Claire! It’s me Grandmama!” It sounded almost robotic. Like Grandmama but more guttural, more feral. Tears ran down Claire’s

cheeks as she clenched her fists. Fighting now more than ever the urge to look back. Then suddenly Claire realized that not only was it pitch dark, but she was utterly lost.

She had walked the path home thousands of times, she should have easily been able to make it back and get the curtains shut by now. This was impossible. Claire froze on the path. As soon as she stopped she felt a hot breath on the back of her neck. Her body, now completely out of her control began to turn. She tried to resist but she was unable to fight the force that had taken over her body.

A blood-curdling scream ripped through the silent Appalachian Forest.

On the front porch of the cabin... Toby whined... cowering against the darkness.

Untitled

Lizzy Lauritzen

“AAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH!”

I sit up in bed, my heart pounding. I had been dead asleep. When I look around, the room is still pitch black.

“AAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH! MOMMY SAVE ME! MOOOOOMMMYYYYY! SAVE ME, PLEASE! HELP ME! HE’S HERE! HE’S GOING TO GET ME! AAAAAGGGGGHHHH!”

MOOOOOMMMYYYYY”

I jump out of bed and race to my son’s room as fast as I can go. I shoot down the hallway and rip open his door. I see my three-year-old son, Dax, curled in a ball on his red, racecar toddler bed. His blanket wrapped around him tight, reinforcing the ball he has become. His eyes are scrunched up, he’s shaking in abject terror. He’s crying at a level I have never heard him emit before. I go to his bed, get on my knees, and lean in to wrap him in my arms.

“Shhhhhh, it’s okay, sweetie, it was just a bad dream. Mommy’s here, I got you. Shhhhhh,” I whisper as I slowly rock him back and forth in my arms. He is crying so hard I’m worried he’s going to make himself pass out. “It’s okay, baby, there is no one here. It’s just me. You’re okay.”

“No! He’s going to get me, mommy! DON’T LET HIM GET ME!” Dax’s voice sounds hoarse and rasp because of the screams he’s been letting flow free, like a river bursting through a broken dam, strong and unabated.

“It’s okay, you’re okay, we are alone,” I say again in a hushed voice, hoping to get his vocal level to reduce to match mine. I look around his sparse room seeing nothing but the brown dresser with his sound and light machine turned on sitting on the top, another bright nightlight plugged into the wall, and the door to his walk-in closet closed tight. “Look, Dax, there’s nothing in your room, it’s just us.” I find his dinosaur security blanket stuck between the side of his pillow and the inner wall of the racecar’s side and lay it on his shoulder as I continue to rock him slowly, while now rubbing my hand in calming circles on his back.

Dax sucks in a ragged breath and whimpers as he tries to push his face flat into my chest. He now whispers, as if trying to hide from some invisible foe in his room, “Please, mommy, don’t let him get me.”

“Who, Dax? Don’t let who get you?” I respond quietly near his ear, as I lean down to kiss his temple.

“Death,” he replies in an almost inaudible tone, shaking slightly in my arms.

I feel a chill pass through my body, making my skin break out in goose pimples. I gently lay my son back in his bed. “DON’T LEAVE!” he screams as I walk to the closet to open the door.

“It’s okay, bud. Shhh! I’ll show you, there’s no one in here but us,” I reassure him as I open the door and flick on the light. His closet flares up, blazing light into his room, revealing nothing but a few scattered dinosaur and car toys, along with some random clothes hanging on little, light blue hangers.

“He was here, mommy! I saw him,” Dax says more animatedly. Fearing that he would work himself back up into a stupor, I hurriedly shut off his closet light, closed the door, and quickly return to his side.

“Would you like me to stay in here while you fall back asleep?” I say in my most soothing tone.

He shakes his head no and asks in his most innocent yet pleading voice, “Will you please sleep in here? I don’t want to see him again. He almost got me, mommy. He was floating right above where you are sitting now. He almost got me.”

“There’s no one here, Dax. I promise Death is not here. It’s just us. I’m sorry, buddy, but I’m really tired. Mommy has to get up early and I have such a busy day tomorrow. But I have an idea, what if we let Tut sleep in here with you? I’m sure he’d love to sleep next to your bed instead of his kennel,” I reply in my let’s-make-a-compromise voice. Tut is our 2-year-old German Shepard Dog, who normally slumbers in his kennel in my room. I know that he would love to sleep next to his boy, and that he would bring comfort to Dax.

Dax slowly nods his head and quietly asks, “But will you stay in here too until I fall asleep?” “Of course, sweetie,” I say with a slight smile, loving how much this boy melts my heart.

I turn on the hall light as I head to my room to open Tut’s kennel. “Come on, boy. Dax needs you, so you get to sleep in his room tonight.” Tut stands up, pushes his front paws down to get in a good stretch before slowly following me back to Dax’s room. I click off the hall light and go and sit next to Dax’s bed again. The dog stops at the rooms thresh hold and I must coax him into the room to lay next to the toddler bed. Weird, I think, he’s never hesitated to sleep in here before.

After humming softly for twenty minutes and gently running my fingers through Dax’s dirty blond hair, I hear the boy’s breathing shift to the deep, fulfilling breaths of sleep. I lean over to grant him one more kiss on his head and finally return to my room to fall back asleep.

In the morning I return to Dax’s room to wake him up. “See, bud, I told you there was nothing to be worried about.”

“No, mom, but it’s okay, Tut helped me,” Dax said a little sadly. “How?” I quiz him, while reaching out to stroke the dog’s fur. “He took my spot, for now. Death took him instead of me.”

“What?” I say startled, realizing Tut was not moving, his body cold and stiff.

Baldy Timothy Venator

So this very dorky girl came back to school again today without any hair. She hadn’t been coming for a while. She came in all pale, and looking like a ghost, or something. I heard somebody say she was sick with cancer, or something. I was sitting there chewing the ends of my hair. I’ve heard I have really good hair. Ever since I was a little kid they always said, “Just look at her hair.” It’s very full, and thick, I guess. Anyway, she almost looked sort of grey, and all. She sat down slowly, and even coughed a little. I started to think I didn’t want to catch what she had if it might be contagious. It was sort of pathetic the way everyone was treating her so nice all of a sudden, and I almost felt bad for her. I couldn’t imagine if everyone looked at me that way. It made me feel all sorts of uncomfortable inside, and I didn’t like it. Who’s she to come back to school, and make people feel uncomfortable like that? Still, I couldn’t stop looking at her because it really was sort or gross.

When I saw her at lunch she wasn’t even eating! She just sort of pushed her food around on her plate, and took only the smallest bite every once in a while. That’s when she threw up. To tell you the truth I almost laughed right away, but it had sprayed everywhere when it hit her lunch tray, and I imagined if I’d been sitting next to her and it had actually gotten on me. I was wearing my favorite name brand jeans. I’d been mispronouncing the brand name at first, and I felt so stupid when I realized, but they were really cool. If she had splashed on them I don’t know what I would have done. Then, and I’m still not sure why I did this, I started laughing, but laughing really loud. I guess laughter really is contagious, and maybe because I’m really popular everyone else started laughing uncontrollably. She turned even whiter than she already was, and it almost looked like her face was trying to blush, but she was so greyish she couldn’t even turn pink. She turned, and looked at me. I mean right at me. I pictured her turning red in that look even though she couldn’t hold any color, and I felt like I had to say something so I said, “Did you cough up a hairball?” The whole cafeteria erupted in laughter. She made a half-hearted attempt to wipe her mouth, gave me such a look, and she ran away. The way she looked at me when I

said that. It was like I was staring back at a whole world of pain, and anguish. It was like she suddenly deflated all at once like a flower had suddenly wilted, and died. I almost felt bad.

When I was walking home from the bus a black cat crossed my path. I don't usually put much thought to that sort of thing, but it was almost Halloween, and for some reason I couldn't forget the look she gave me. I was chewing on a piece of my hair as I walked, and it came out in my mouth. I brushed it away, and it drifted off in the breeze. It was kind of a lot. My mother was always telling me not to put hair in my mouth.

It was October, and I was thinking about my costume. I was thinking about spraying the dye in my hair, and how pretty my hair would look with my outfit. It was a cold morning, and I was wondering if it might snow on Halloween. I hate covering up my costume because I want everyone to see how good I look in it. I noticed Baldy wasn't on the bus, that what I call her when she gets on, and she wasn't at school that day either. Then, she wasn't at school all week, and she never came to school again. I guess whatever she had that made her hair fall out killed her. The thing is though, I kept thinking of her, and I was trying not to notice all the extra hair piling up in my hair brush every morning.

Everyone made a real big deal about Baldy dying. It was like she was famous. Another thing was that the other kids, even though most of them had laughed, seemed to remember what I had said in a different way. I guess they didn't think that comment I made in the cafeteria was very funny anymore, and I was sure they started to notice what I had started to notice. My hair was getting thinner, and every night I was having the dreams.

You see, every night I had started to see her except she had hair, really beautiful hair, and she would start brushing my hair for me, but when she left she would give me that same sad look she gave me in the cafeteria that day.

Every morning I would wake up and find my hair brush full of hair. My hair was even clogging the drain when I showered so that the tub would fill up almost to the top of my ankles before I was finished, and my mother asked if I was trimming my hair in there. I wasn't allowed to cut my own hair.

All the while this was happening I suddenly developed a pretty bad cough.

I've had plenty enough coughs before, but this one scared me because I would find hair in the stuff I was coughing up. My mother took me to the doctor for the cough, but he said I just had the flu. She asked him about my hair being so thin, and he said I just had thin hair. I tried explaining that it hadn't always been so thin, but he didn't seem to pay attention to what I was saying. Meanwhile, the hair in my brush kept piling up each morning, and I didn't tell anyone about my dreams.

Halloween came, and went. It wasn't as fun as I remembered because by that time I didn't have much hair left at all to dye for my costume. The dreams would not stop, and she always gave me the look from the cafeteria when she would leave. My hair got so thin it was patchy, and I stopped going to school. My mom made an appointment with some sort of specialist, but they were scheduling out after the new year. All I wanted for Christmas was my hair back. We ended up shaving it all off because there was almost none left, and I started wearing a hat.

I was doing home school, and I started wearing the hat to bed. I wasn't having the same dreams anymore since about the time we shaved the rest of my hair off, but I started having different dreams. She was always still there, but now she would just sit at the edge of my bed, and stroke my bald head with a strange smile on her face. I would always wake up in a cold sweat with my hat on the bed next to me. My mother bought me a wig saying I have to go back to school after the holidays, and I'm absolutely dreading it. I told my mother that I couldn't see why anyone would want to live if they weren't pretty. She actually agreed with me. She always cared about having really pretty hair, and stuff.

