

The background is a vibrant purple night sky. A large, bright yellow full moon is centered at the top. Dark, stylized clouds are scattered across the sky, some containing small yellow stars. Numerous yellow stars of various sizes are floating in the sky. In the foreground, there is a dark grey ground. On the left, there is a small black flower with five petals and a stem with two leaves. On the right, there is a black silhouette of a tree with many small green leaves. In the bottom left corner, there is a black silhouette of a tulip flower. In the bottom right corner, there is a black silhouette of a dandelion seed head. The title 'Spooky Spring' is written in a large, white, serif font across the middle of the image.

Spooky Spring

A WRITING CHALLENGE FOR EVERYONE

THE PIED PIPER BY THE BROTHERS GRIMM

RETOLD BY AVERY HOHENSCHAU

THE VILLAGE OF HAMELIN WAS SET RIGHT BETWEEN TWO MOUNTAINS. IT WAS A SMALL, COZY TOWN, WITH TINY COTTAGES MADE FROM MUD AND STONE AND THATCHED ROOFS. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE VILLAGE WAS NICE. THE VILLAGERS TOOK CARE OF ONE ANOTHER, EVERYONE HAD A GARDEN IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSE, AND THE CHILDREN PLAYED TOGETHER WHEN THE WEATHER WAS FAIR. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE TOWN WAS NICE- EXCEPT FOR ONE THING. IN EVERY HOUSE AND EVERY BUILDING, THERE WAS AN INFESTATION OF RATS. THEY ATE THE FOOD AND CHEWED THE WALLS. THEY WERE PESTS, AND THE TOWN WANTED RID OF THEM. IN ONE OF THE TINY COTTAGES, A GIRL SAT IN A CHAIR. “MOTHER!” ANABELL CRIED AS HER MOTHER TUGGED A HAIR BRUSH THROUGH ANABELL’S TANGLED BROWN HAIR.

“ANABELL, DEAR, YOU MUST LOOK PRESENTABLE IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND SCHOOL.” HER MOTHER SAID, THEN MUTTERED, “WHEN I WAS YOUNG, GIRLS WEREN'T ALLOWED TO ATTEND SCHOOL.”

“I AM PRESENTABLE.” ANABELL GRUMBLED. HER MOTHER FINISHED BRUSHING AND LET IT HANG IN A LONG BRAID. “ALRIGHT, GOODBYE.” ANABELL JUMPED UP, GRABBED HER LUNCH PAIL, AND RAN OUT THE DOOR.

A LONG PATH WOUND THROUGH THE TOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN. THE SCHOOL WAS THE FIRST BUILDING YOU SAW WHEN YOU CAME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN TO HAMLEN. ANABELL WENT IN. SINCE THERE WERE MANY CHILDREN, THE SCHOOL NEEDED TWO ROOMS.

ANABELL WENT INTO THE ROOM FOR GRADES 5-9. AFTER GRADE 9, YOU HAD TO FIND A JOB OR MOVE SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU COULD GET MORE EDUCATION.

ANABELL SAT WITH HER FRIEND ELAINA IN THE THIRD-TO-LAST ROW FOR SEVENTH GRADERS.

“ANY WORD ON–” ANABELL LOWERED HER VOICE
“THE RAT SITUATION?”

ELAINA SHOOK HER HEAD AND PUT A FINGER TO
HER LIPS. ANABELL KNEW THAT IT DIDN'T MEAN
'NO,' IT MEANT 'NOT RIGHT NOW, TELL YOU LATER.'

ELAINA WAS THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER, SO
WHENEVER THERE WAS NEWS ABOUT THE TOWN,
ELAINA WAS THE FIRST TO KNOW. ANABELL WAS
SECOND.

“GOOD MORNING CLASS.” THEIR TEACHER, MISS
MAVEN, WALKED IN. “PLEASE HAND IN YOUR
HOMEWORK.”

ELAINA STOOD TO GIVE THE TEACHER HER PAPER,
BUT ANABELL BIT HER LIP. SHE HADN'T DONE IT.
“ANABELL?” MISS MAVEN SAID. “YOUR HOMEWORK?”
ANABELL GRIMACED. “UH... YOU SEE, MISS, I–” SHE
TRIED TO THINK OF A GOOD EXCUSE.

FORTUNATELY, SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO. OR MAYBE IT
WAS UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE THE THING THAT
SAVED HER WAS THE THING DESTROYING HAMLEN.

“ A HUGE, FURRY, BLACK RAT DARTED INTO THE
MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. MISS MAVEN SCREECHED
AND SEVERAL BOYS JUMPED ONTO THEIR DESKS,
THEIR EYES WIDE WITH TERROR. ANABELL AND
ELAINA STARTED BACKING AWAY.

THE RAT SNIFFED THE AIR. ANABELL WAS SURE IT
COULD HEAR HER BEATING HEART. THE SOUNDS OF
PANICKED VOICES FADED INTO THE BACKGROUND.
TIME SEEMED TO SLOW. THE RAT TURNED ITS HEAD
RIGHT TOWARD ANABELL. A SHIVER WENT DOWN
HER SPINE. THE RAT'S EYES GLINTED RED AND SHE
GASPED. SHE SWORE SHE SAW IT SMILE SLYLY AT
HER BEFORE IT SCAMPERED AWAY.

TIME SPED UP AGAIN, AND ANABELL HEARD MISS
MAVEN CALLING FOR EVERYONE TO CALM DOWN.
ANABELL AND ELAINA SLIPPED BACK INTO THEIR
SEATS. ANABELL COULDN'T CONCENTRATE AS MISS
MAVEN STARTED HANDING OUT WORKSHEETS. AT
FIRST SHE THOUGHT IT WAS THE RAT THAT HAD
UNSETTLED HER. THEN SHE STIFFENED AS SHE FELT
EYES ON THE BACK OF HER NECK. SOMEONE WAS
WATCHING HER.

BUT WHEN SHE TURNED TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW,
NO ONE WAS THERE.

AFTER SCHOOL, ELAINA AND ANABELL WALKED TOGETHER DOWN THE ROAD.

“SO.” ELAINA SAID. “MY DAD AND THE VILLAGE COUNCIL DECIDED TO HIRE THIS GUY FROM BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS. HE SAYS THAT HE CAN GET RID OF THE RATS, BUT HE DIDN’T SAY HOW.”

“OH... SO THE RATS WILL BE GONE SOON!” ELAINA NODDED. “THEY’RE PAYING HIM A LOT OF MONEY. I WAS REALLY SURPRISED.”

“HUH.” ANABELL SAID, AND THEY WALKED IN SILENCE.

THE NEXT DAY WAS SATURDAY. ANABELL WAS FEEDING THE CHICKENS AROUND NOON WHEN IT HAPPENED.

LILTING, BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FILLED THE AIR. ANABELL LOOKED UP. A MAN DRESSED IN A SUIT OF BRIGHTLY COLORED FABRIC WAS STANDING ACROSS THE STREET, PLAYING A FIFE.

EVERYWHERE, CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS POKED THEIR HEADS OUT OF HOUSES TO LISTEN. EVERYONE WALKING ABOUT STOPPED AND STARED AND LISTENED.

AND THE RATS. THEY STREAMED FROM UNDER PORCHES AND OVER WINDOWS. THEY CAME FROM HOUSES AND BUILDINGS AND TREES. THERE WAS SOMETHING OFF ABOUT IT, AND IT GAVE ANABELL A WEIRD FEELING. WHAT WAS HAPPENING? WHY WAS THE MUSIC SO COMPELLING TO THE RATS, AND ANABELL FELT, DEEP INSIDE, TO HER? SHE WATCHED AS THE MAN PLAYED HIS FIFE AND THE RATS FOLLOWED AS IF IN A TRANCE. SHE WATCHED AS HE WALKED DOWN THE PATH UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, AND THE ENCHANTED RATS DISAPPEARED OVER THE HILL. THE MAN DIDN’T RETURN.

UNTIL THE NEXT DAY, SUNDAY. ON MONDAY, ELAINA TOLD ANABELL WHAT HAD HAPPENED THE DAY BEFORE.

“MY DAD WOULDN’T PAY HIM FOR GETTING RID OF THE RATS. AND, WELL, NOW HE’S MAD.”

“OH NO.” ANABELL GRIMACED.

“YEAH. REALLY MAD. MY DAD DIDN’T THINK HE COULD ACTUALLY GET RID OF THE RATS.” ELAINA WOULD HAVE SAID MORE, BUT THEY HAD ARRIVED AT SCHOOL.

THEY SAT ON THEIR BENCH AND MISS MAVEN STARTED TALKING ABOUT HOMEWORK. ALL THE CHILDREN SEEMED QUITE BORED... UNTIL MUSIC FILLED THE AIR. ANABELL GLANCED OUT THE WINDOW. THE MAN WITH THE FIFE STOOD PLAYING. THEN THE ENCHANTING MUSIC FILLED ANABELL'S EARS AND MIND. THEN SHE WAS LOST TO THE SOUND.

THE CHILDREN STOOD UP FROM THEIR DESKS IN UNISON. THEY WALKED OUT OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE WITH THEIR EYES FIXED ON THE PIPER. THEY FOLLOWED HIM AS HE LED THEM AWAY FROM THE TOWN.

ANABELL WAS VAGUELY AWARE OF MISS MAVEN YELLING TO THE CHILDREN AS THEY LEFT. ANABELL DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE THE MASS OF KIDS THOUGH. THE MUSIC WAS BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL, AND HOW COULD ANYONE THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE?

THE PIPER LED THE CHILDREN OFF THE PATH AND UP THE MOUNTAIN. THEY FOLLOWED. WHEN THEY REACHED THE MOUTH OF A CAVE, THE PIPER TURNED TO FACE THEM. HE STOPPED PLAYING FOR A SECOND AND ANABELL SUDDENLY REALIZED WHERE SHE WAS. HE GRINNED AT THEM. BUT THEN THE MUSIC PICKED UP AND NO ONE QUESTIONED THE PIPER AS THEY FOLLOWED HIM INTO THE DARKNESS. ANABELL KNEW THOUGH, SOMEWHERE IN THE BACK OF HER MIND, THAT THEY WEREN'T COMING OUT AGAIN.



THE CASE OF THE POISON TULIP

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MRS. MARY'S FLOWER GARDEN. THE ROSES SHONE LIKE RUBIES AND THE DAFFODILS DAZZLED IN THE SUN AND THE TULIPS TOWERED HIGH. MRS. MARY WORKED HARD IN HER GARDEN. SHE MADE SURE HER PLANTS GOT WATER AND SUNLIGHT. NOW LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MS. CATHY'S VEGETABLE GARDEN. THE CARROTS WERE CRUNCHY AND THE ASPARAGUS WAS AWESOME! MS. CATHY REALLY LOVED HER VEGETABLES AND TOOK GOOD CARE OF THEM. MS. MARY AND MS. CATHY LOVED THEIR PLANTS VERY MUCH. BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENS ONE DAY WHEN A BUNNY COMES ALONG? A NAUGHTY BUNNY!!!

CHARLIE THE NAUGHTY BUNNY WAS A VERY HUNGRY BUNNY AND WAS ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DELICIOUS VEGETABLES. HE HAD BEEN WATCHING MRS. MARY AND MS. CATHY GARDEN ALL SPRING. HE WAS VERY EXCITED TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING IN THEIR GARDENS. HE WAS MOST EXCITED ABOUT MS. CATHY'S VEGETABLE GARDEN. UNFORTUNATELY, MS. CATHY HAD AN ELECTRIC FENCE AROUND HER GARDEN!

CHARLIE HAD TO COME UP WITH A PLAN TO MAKE MRS. MARY GROW VEGETABLES INSTEAD OF FLOWERS BECAUSE MRS. MARY'S GARDEN WAS NOT FENCED IN AND CHARLIE COULD EASILY GET THERE. SO CHARLIE THOUGHT: "WHY NOT POISON MRS. MARY'S FLOWERS!"

THIS IS JUST WHAT CHARLIE DID! HE GOT SOME POISON BULBS AND WENT TO MRS. MARY'S FLOWER GARDEN. MRS. MARY WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED TO HER FLOWERS, "OH MY!" SHE THOUGHT WHEN SHE SAW THAT HER FLOWERS HAD ALL DIED!

MRS. MARY GOT OUT HER GLOVES, SHOVEL, WATERING CAN, COMPOST AND SEEDS. SHE GOT TO WORK PLANTING MORE, HEALTHY FLOWERS.

CHARLIE THE BUNNY WAS MAD! MRS. MARY WAS NOT GROWING VEGETABLES, SHE WAS GROWING FLOWERS AGAIN!! MRS. MARY WORKED HARD AND IT TOOK HER 5 HOURS TO REPLANT ALL HER FLOWERS.

CHARLIE THE BUNNY DID NOT GIVE UP! CHARLIE GOT MORE POISON AND STAYED UP ALL NIGHT. CHARLIE WAS TIRED! MRS. MARY WAS UPSET WHEN SHE LOOKED OUT AND SAW HER GARDEN THE NEXT MORNING. SHE WONDERED WHY HER BEAUTIFUL FLOWER PLANTS DIED TWO TIMES! SHE GOT TO WORK AGAIN. MRS. MARY WAS DONE IN ONLY 2 HOURS THIS TIME, BUT THEN SHE WONDERED WHY MS. CATHY'S VEGETABLE PLANTS WERE HEALTHY AS A HORSE!

MRS. MARY WALKED OVER TO MS. CATHY'S HOUSE AND TALKED TO TO HER, "WHY DON'T YOU PLANT A VEGETABLE GARDEN?" MRS. CATHY ADVISED HER. MRS. MARY LIKED THE IDEA AND SHE GOT RIGHT TO WORK WITH HER GLOVES, SHOVEL, WATERING CAN, COMPOST AND SEEDS. CHARLIE THE BUNNY WAS VERY HAPPY TO SEE THAT MRS. MARY WORKED 3 HOURS IN HER NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN. MRS. MARY WENT TO SLEEP VERY TIRED AND CHARLIE WENT TO SLEEP THINKING ABOUT THE YUMMY VEGETABLES IN THE NEW GARDEN!

CHARLIE SNUCK INTO THE GARDEN AND ATE ALL THE DELICIOUS CARROTS, TOMATOES, BROCCOLI AND ASPARAGUS. WHEN MRS. MARY AWOKE THE NEXT MORNING SHE WAS THRILLED THAT HER PLANTS WERE NOT DEAD BUT SHE WONDERED WHY ALL HER VEGETABLES WERE GONE!

CAN YOU GUESS WHERE THEY ALL WENT? CHARLIE'S BELLY! POOR MRS. MARY, EVERY LAST ONE WAS GONE!

MRS. MARY WAS VERY SAD. SHE HAD AN IDEA. SHE WOULD PUT UP VIDEO CAMERAS. SHE FOUND HER OLD VIDEO CAMERAS IN THE GARAGE BUT THEY WERE VERY CONFUSING! SHE SPENT 2 HOURS FIGURING OUT HOW TO SET THEM UP. "TECHNOLOGY THESE DAYS!" SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF.

MRS. MARY WENT TO SLEEP AGAIN. IN THE MORNING SHE SAW CHARLIE THE BUNNY ON THE VIDEOTAPE. HE WAS EATING HER VEGETABLES! NOW MRS. MARY WAS THE ONE WHO HAD A PLAN! THAT NIGHT SHE STAYED UP LATE AND FINALLY CHARLIE SHOWED UP. MRS. MARY CAUGHT HIM WITH HER BARE HANDS! SHE SAID "STOP EATING MY VEGETABLES! PLEASE AND THANK YOU!"

CHARLIE ANSWERED HER, “I’M SORRY FOR
POISONING YOUR FLOWERS AND EATING YOUR
VEGETABLES. BUT THE VEGETABLES ARE JUST SO
YUMMY AND MS. CATHY HAS A FENCE SO I CAN’T GET
THERE.”

MS. CATHY OVERHEARD ALL THE COMMOTION AND
SHE SAID, “OK, HERE IS THE DEAL. YOU CAN HAVE
HALF OF MY VEGETABLES AND HALF OF MRS. MARY’S
VEGETABLES EVERY TIME THEY GOW AND WE WILL
PICK THEM FOR YOU AND LEAVE THEM IN A BASKET.”

CHARLIE BEAMED “YES, YES, YES! THAT IS A PERFECT
IDEA!”

AND FROM THEN ON THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER
AFTER.

THE SPOOKY STORY

BY EVIE STINSON

THERE ONCE LIVED A WITCH THAT WAS SCRAWNY. AND SHE DID NOT USUALLY CATCH ANY CHILDREN, THE CHILDREN WERE TOO FAST AND HER BROOMSTICK WAS TOO OLD. SHE NEEDED A NEW ONE. BUT NEARBY SHE HEARD THE “OOOOH” OF THE SOUND OF A GHOST. SO SHE WENT OUTSIDE WITH HER CAT, PEGAPHIE, AND THEY FOUND THE GHOST AND THEY BECAME FRIENDS WITH THE GHOST. THE GHOST’S NAME WAS ELEPONTE. AND THEY BOTH TRIED TO CATCH CHILDREN TOGETHER, AND TOGETHER THEY CAUGHT SOME BUT THE WITCH WAS STILL SCRAWNY. THE WITCH ALSO HAD SOME FRIENDS WHO WERE ZOMBIES, AND THEY USUALLY CATCH A LOT OF CHILDREN AND THEY SHARED THE CHILDREN WITH THE WITCH- CAUSE THEY MET ONCE ON A FAIRY ADVENTURE. AND THEY GAVE HER A LOT OF CHILDREN. AND IT WAS VERY YUMMY FOR DINNER AND BREAKFAST.

BUT NEARBY THERE LIVED ANOTHER GHOST IN A NEARBY PUMPKIN THAT WERE ALSO FRIENDS, AND A NEARBY ZOMBIE THAT WAS ALSO FRIENDS. AND THEY ALSO STOLE CHILDREN TO EAT. AND SO FINALLY THEY MET WITH THE WITCH AND THEY FOUND EVEN MORE CHILDREN, BUT NEARBY THERE WAS A CASTLE THAT WAS BEING ATTACKED BY A DRAGON. ALL OF THEM DECIDED TO SET OFF TO ANOTHER CASTLE, TO THE VERY SAME CASTLE, AND WHILE THE GUARDS WERE FIGHTING THEY COULD NOT GUARD THE CHILDREN WHO WERE INSIDE THE CASTLE SO THE CHILDREN WERE ALL ALONE. AND THEN THEY CAUGHT SOME CHILDREN AND THEN THEY HAD A REALLY BIG FEAST FOR EVERYONE, EVEN THE DRAGON. AND THEY MADE A BIG, BIG MEETING PLACE WITH A TABLE FOR DINNER.
THE END

RIVERCHILD

TOBY BAKER-ROUSE

I SIGH. I HAD HOPED THAT I COULD HAVE EATEN DINNER TONIGHT WITH MY FAMILY, BUT A NEW DELIVERY OF BOOKS HAD KEPT ME UP LATE. I PUSH THE DOOR OPEN, THE BELL JINGLING EERILY. THE OTHER LIBRARIANS SAY THAT I AM TOO DEDICATED TO MY WORK, BUT I DISAGREE. THERE IS NO WAY TO BE TOO DEDICATED TO BOOKS. I LOCK THE DOOR BEHIND ME, AND BEGIN TO WALK DOWN TO FLATBREAD. I ALWAYS LEAVE MY CAR AT FLATBREAD BECAUSE I LOVE TO GRAB A PIZZA THERE EVERY ONCE AND A WHILE, AND SAVE MYSELF FROM MAKING DINNER EVERY NIGHT. HOWEVER, I CAN BARELY SEE MY FEET AS I WALK DOWN TO MY CAR, AND EVERY CLACK OF A STONE AS IT SKITTERS AWAY FROM MY FEET MAKES ME JUMP. FINALLY, I SEE THE FAMILIAR LIGHTS OF FLATBREAD UP AHEAD, AND MY CAR BATHED IN A GOLDEN GLOW. BUT THEN I HEAR THE SPLASHING. IT IS FAINT, BUT DISTINCT OVER THE REPETITIVE ROAR OF THE FALLS JUST DOWN THE RIVER. A WEAK CRY SUDDENLY COMES UP. "HELP!" I START, SURPRISED.

IT IS A CHILD'S VOICE. I RUN TO THE EDGE OF THE HILL LEADING TO THE MASSIVE RIVER. I SEE A STRANGE FLICKERING LIGHT, NOT UNLIKE A FLAME. I STEP FORWARD TO CALL OUT TO THE CHILD, AND I FEEL THE GROUND BENEATH ME GIVE WAY. I TUMBLE DOWN THE STEEP SLOPE, ROLLING TO A STOP AS THE HILL FLATTENS OUT. THE ORANGE-YELLOW LIGHT BRIEFLY TURNS GREEN, THEN IS PUT OUT QUICKLY. I STAGGER BACKWARDS. SOMETHING IS MAKING ME UNEASY. I TURN TOWARDS THE DARK SHAPE SPLASHING IN THE WATER AT THE CENTER OF THE RIVER. "DON'T WORRY", I YELL. "I'M GETTING HELP!" THE CHILD TURNS HIS HEAD TOWARDS ME. I GASP. WHERE THERE SHOULD BE TWO NORMAL HUMAN EYES THERE IS A SINGLE EYE, GLOWING BLUE GREEN IN THE DARKNESS. SUDDENLY, I FEEL HANDS ON MY BACK. "NIGHTY NIGHT", SAYS SOMEONE BEHIND ME, VOICE GRAVELLY AND UNUSED. THEN I GET SHOVED INTO THE RIVER, AND EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.

ADVENTURES TO THE UNKNOWN

BY TRUE

RIBBIT! RIBBIT! RIBBIT! THE FROGS CROAKED INTO THE WARM NIGHT AIR. IT WAS SPRINGTIME IN AXELANDIA. THE FROGS WERE CHIRPING, BABIES WERE BEING BORN, PLANTS STARTED LEAFING AND BUDDING OUT. IT WAS A GREAT SPRING EXCEPT FOR THE HORRID MAN-EATING TOADS. THEY ONLY COME OUT AT NIGHT, AND THEY ARE ALL IN PACKS. QUICK AND SILENT AS A BIRD THEY WOULD HOP INTO THE NIGHT MOSTLY INVISIBLE.

REESE REMINGTON RAN IN THE NIGHT AIR. SHE COULD HEAR THE FROGS CHIRPING AND THE HOT MUGGY AIR STICKING TO HER SKIN. SHE RAN INTO THE HOUSE AND QUICKLY LOCKED THE DOOR. LIKEWISE, SHE THEN RAN INTO THE KITCHEN AND STARTED MAKING BREAD. “KNEAD KNEAD KNEAD, ROLL ROLL ROLL, SHAPE SHAPE SHAPE, CUT CUT CUT, BAKE BAKE BAKE.” SHE WHISPERED TO HERSELF AS SHE DID THESE ACTIONS. WHILE SHE WAITED FOR THE BREAD TO FULLY BAKE, SHE ATE SOME BISCUITS THAT SHE HAD MADE EARLIER THAT DAY.

ON HER SECOND BITE SHE HEARD:
“CROAK CROAK CROAK”.
SHE QUICKLY PUT THE BISCUIT DOWN ON THE TABLE AND RAN TO THE DOOR. THERE WASN'T A TOAD IN SIGHT. SHE SIGHED.
“MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT” SHE COAXED HERSELF. SHE WENT BACK TO THE KITCHEN AND FINISHED THE BISCUIT. THEN, SHE SAT DOWN ON HER CHAIR AND PICKED UP HER BOOK WHILE SHE WAITED.
“ ‘DOLORES HOW DARE YOU ACCUSE FRANK FOR KILLING GEORGE!’ SAM SAID GLARING AT DOLORES” THE BOOK READ. “ ‘I THINK FRANK KILLED GEORGE BECAUSE THE MURDER WEAPON HAS HIS FINGERPRINTS ON IT.’ ‘WHOSE FINGERPRINTS?’ SAM SAID.
‘ FRANKS’S!’ EXCLAIMED DOLORES.”
REESE FELL ASLEEP...

IN THE MORNING, REESE WOKE UP TO FIND THE BREAD WAS OUT OF THE OVEN. "I NEVER TOOK THE BREAD OUT! THEN WHO DID?" REESE THOUGHT TO HERSELF. SHE GOT A CUTTING BOARD AND A KNIFE AND CUT TWO SLICES FOR HERSELF. "THE BREAD COOKED WELL" SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF. SHE GRABBED THE BREAD AND RAN OUT THE DOOR. SHE RAN TO THE BAKERY AND FOUND THAT THE BAKER WASN'T UP YET. SHE STARTED MAKING GINGERBREAD COOKIES.

"KNEAD KNEAD KNEAD, ROLL ROLL ROLL, SHAPE SHAPE SHAPE, CUT CUT CUT, BAKE BAKE BAKE" SHE WHISPERED.

"CROAK CROAK CROAK".

"NO WAY" SHE SAID OUT-LOUD. THE TOADS SHOULDN'T BE AWAKE RIGHT NOW. SHE QUICKLY RAN TO THE DOOR AND OPENED. NOTHING.

"I THINK I'M GOING INSANE". SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF. SHE DECIDED TO GO VISIT THE PHYSICIAN TO HAVE A CHECKUP.

SHE WORKED AND WORKED, MAKING BREADS, PASTRIES, COOKIES, AND CAKES. AT 4:00 SHE BID THE BAKER GOODBYE, AND WENT TO THE PHYSICIAN. AT THE PHYSICIAN'S HUT, THE PHYSICIAN SAID THAT SHE WAS VERY WELL AND HEALTHY. NO CAUSES OF ANY INSANE THINGS.

" MUST HAVE IMAGINED IT". REESE THOUGHT TO HERSELF. SHE BID THE PHYSICIAN GOODBYE AND WENT HOME.

FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, THIS KEPT GOING. SHE KEPT HEARING THE TOADS, AND SHE WENT TO THE PHYSICIAN FOR CHECKUPS. THIS LASTED FOR 3 MONTHS AND ON THE LAST DAY OF THE LAST MONTH SHE WENT TO BED. SHE WOKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO FIND A MAN EATING TOAD SITTING ON HER STARING AT HER. SHE SCREAMED AND FLUNG THE TOAD OFF OF HER. SHE RAN AROUND THE HOUSE TO FIND THAT THE TOADS WERE EVERYWHERE. SHE TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM THE DOOR AND WINDOWS, BUT THEY WERE BOLTED SHUT. EVENTUALLY THE TOADS FOUND HER AND ATE HER UP.

A FEW DAYS LATER...

"I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO REESE" THE BAKER SAID OUT-LOUD. HE WENT TO BED AND HEARD:
"CROAK CROAK CROAK".

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...
A NEW TOAD WAS BEING BORN. THE TOADS NAMED THIS TOAD REESE REMINGTON.
THE END (OR THE BEGINNING?)

THE BARRED OWL BY JOE BRIDGMAN

DURING THE DAY LEO HANDED OUT THE MAIL AND IN THE EVENINGS HE HANDED OUT ITALIAN FOOD. LEO WAS OUR POSTMASTER AND THE POST OFFICE WAS IN A SMALL EXTENSION OF HIS AND BARBARA'S HOUSE. IT HAD A MARBLE-TOP COUNTER WITH ONE OF THOSE CALL BELLS YOU TAP WITH YOUR FINGER. WHENEVER SOMEONE ENTERED THE TINY LOBBY AND TAPPED THE BELL LEO WOULD POP AROUND THE CORNER WITHIN SECONDS, SMILING, AS THOUGH HE'D BEEN WAITING JUST OUT OF SIGHT AND HOPING FOR SOMEONE TO COME IN.

THE RESTAURANT WAS IN A BUILDING NEXT DOOR, WITH A SIGN OUT FRONT THAT SAID "BARBARA'S PLACE." SHE WAS PART ITALIAN AND COOKED REALLY WELL, SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALLS, STUFFED CANNELLONI, THINGS LIKE THAT. SHE WAS A PLUMP BLOND WOMAN, QUIET BUT VERY NICE. LEO WAS THE SOCIAL ONE AND HE BROUGHT OUT THE FOOD AND DRINKS AND CHATTED WITH CUSTOMERS.

SOMETIMES HE EVEN TOOK AN EMPTY CHAIR AND SAT DOWN WITH US. HE KNEW EVERYONE BY NAME, BECAUSE ETHAM WAS A SMALL VILLAGE ON A LONELY

STRETCH OF THE HIGHWAY THAT THREADED THROUGH THOSE MOUNTAINS. I'VE BEEN GONE FORTY YEARS NOW AND I STILL MISS THE PLACE, THE PEOPLE I GREW UP WITH, AND LEO AND BARBARA. BACK THEN THE DRINKING AGE WAS EIGHTEEN, AND ON MOST FRIDAY NIGHTS MY FRIENDS AND I SHOWED UP AT BARBARA'S PLACE. IT HAD A BEER-AND-WINE LICENSE AND THE PRICES WERE FAIR, SO WE COULD KNOCK BACK A COUPLE AND HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT. LEO WATCHED US TO MAKE SURE NO ONE DRANK TOO MUCH. HE WAS LIKE A PARENT ALMOST. AND IF HE EVER TOOK HIS EYES OFF US, HIS BIG STUFFED OWL NEVER DID. IT WAS A CHUBBY BARRED OWL ON A PERCH UP NEAR THE CEILING, AND IT ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE STARING DOWN AT US WITH EMPTY BLACK EYE SOCKETS. THEY ACTUALLY WEREN'T EMPTY, BECAUSE IN THE RIGHT LIGHT YOU COULD SEE THE GLINT OF THE OWL'S GLASS EYES, WHICH WERE DARK ORANGE. LEO REALLY CARED ABOUT THAT BIRD. MORE THAN ONCE I SAW HIM ON A LADDER DUSTING OFF ITS WHITE AND BROWN FEATHERS.

AS LEO TOLD THE STORY, ONE NIGHT HE WAS DRIVING DOWN THE HIGHWAY WHEN THE OWL SWOOPED IN FRONT OF HIS TRUCK AND HIT THE WINDSHIELD.

HE PULLED OVER, RAN BACK AND FOUND IT LYING IN THE HIGHWAY, STILL BREATHING. HE WAS GOING TO PUT THE OWL IN THE WOODS BUT THEN HE WAS AFRAID SOMETHING WOULD ATTACK IT. SO HE WRAPPED IT IN HIS COAT, BROUGHT IT BACK TO HIS HOUSE AND PLACED IT IN A CARDBOARD BOX. IN THE MORNING THE OWL WAS DEAD.

A TAXIDERMIST DOWN IN HARRISON TOLD LEO HE WOULD MOUNT THE OWL BUT LEO NEEDED A STATE PERMIT BEFORE HE COULD HAVE IT BACK, SO LEO WENT THROUGH ALL THE RED TAPE TO GET THE PERMIT. IT REQUIRED HIM TO USE THE OWL “FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES,” SO HE PUT IT ON THE WALL IN PLAIN SIGHT AND TALKED TO PEOPLE ABOUT IT A LOT. LEO WAS A LAW-ABIDING GUY. AFTER ALL, HE WAS THE POSTMASTER.

ONE DAY HE LEARNED THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO BUILD HIM A REAL POST OFFICE, AT THE EDGE OF ETHAM, JUST A HUNDRED YARDS UP THE HIGHWAY. HE WAS ECSTATIC AND WHEN WE WENT IN ON FRIDAY NIGHTS WE ALMOST HOPED HE WOULDN'T SIT DOWN WITH US BECAUSE ALL HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT WAS THE NEW P.O. LEO WAS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN US AND FROM AN EARLIER TIME.

HE USED POMADE TO HOLD HIS POMPADOUR IN PLACE AND SOMETIMES PUSHED QUARTERS INTO THE JUKE BOX TO LISTEN TO ELVIS PRESLEY AND JERRY LEE LEWIS.

THEN ONE MORNING HE WAS STANDING BEHIND THE POSTAL COUNTER, HELPING THIS GRUMPY OLD LADY NAMED MRS. GARDENER (HE WAS NICE EVEN TO HER), WHEN HE COLLAPSED AND DIED RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER. SHE SCREAMED, AND BARBARA CAME FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE AND EVEN THE NEIGHBORS COULD HEAR HER YELLING, “LEO! LEO! LEO!” IT WAS BRAIN ANEURYSM.

BARBARA AGREED TO DO THE MAIL UNTIL THE NEW POST OFFICE WAS FINISHED. SHE KNEW HOW, AND PUT ON A BRAVE FACE, BUT YOU COULD TELL SHE WAS SUFFERING. FIVE WEEKS AFTER LEO'S DEATH, ON A MONDAY, BARBARA FAILED TO UNLOCK THE FRONT DOOR AT NINE A.M., HER OPENING TIME. AFTER SOME CUSTOMERS KNOCKED AND GOT NO RESPONSE THEY FINALLY CALLED THE SHERIFF. THE DEPUTY WHO CAME WAS MY COUSIN, WHICH WAS TRUE OF A LOT OF PEOPLE IN ETHAM. HE KNOCKED, AND CALLED BARBARA ON HER PHONE, BUT NOTHING, SO HE JIMMIED THE DOOR AND WENT INSIDE. HE FOUND HER ON THE FLOOR, DECEASED.

SHE HAD FALLEN IN THE SAME SPOT WHERE LEO HAD COLLAPSED. IT WAS A STROKE.

THE NEW POST OFFICE WAS COMPLETED, A POSTMASTER FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE TOOK OVER, AND THE HOUSE AND RESTAURANT SAT EMPTY FOR NEARLY A YEAR. THEN ONE SPRING DAY A COUPLE SHOWED UP IN A RED TWO-DOOR JAGUAR WITH NEW JERSEY PLATES AND SPENT THE AFTERNOON LOOKING AT THE PROPERTY, ESCORTED BY A REAL ESTATE AGENT FROM HARRISON. SIX WEEKS LATER THE COUPLE RETURNED IN THE JAG, AND WERE SOON FOLLOWED BY A BIG MOVING VAN, WHICH TOOK ALL DAY TO UNLOAD. BY THE END OF JUNE THE HOUSE WAS BEING ENLARGED AND THE RESTAURANT WAS BEING GUTTED AND REMODELED. A FRIEND OF MINE WORKED ON THE HOUSE AND SAID THE BUYERS MUST HAVE HAD MORE MONEY THAN THEY KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH, BECAUSE THEY PUT HEATED TOWEL RACKS IN THE BATHROOMS. ACCORDING TO HIM THEY PLANNED TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE AND TURN BARBARA'S PLACE INTO A BED-AND-BREAKFAST FOR THE SUMMER AND FALL TOURISTS. THEY PLANNED TO SPEND THE WINTERS BACK IN NEW JERSEY.

THE HOUSE WAS FINISHED FIRST AND THEY MOVED INTO IT WHILE THE WORK CONTINUED NEXT DOOR. WHEN THE WORKERS PULLED OUT STUFF THAT WASN'T WORTH KEEPING THEY HEAPED IT ON A PILE BOUND FOR THE DUMP. SURE ENOUGH, I HAPPENED TO BE DRIVING BY ONE DAY AND ON TOP OF THE PILE WAS LEO'S STUFFED BARRED OWL, LYING FACE DOWN. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I WALKED OVER TO RESCUE IT, BUT ONE WING WAS MISSING AND I COULDN'T FIND IT, SO I JUST LEFT THE OWL WHERE IT WAS. IT WAS A GUT PUNCH. THAT BIRD WAS PROBABLY LEO'S FAVORITE POSSESSION.

ONE NIGHT IN EARLY SEPTEMBER THERE WAS A BIG COMMOTION AT BARBARA'S PLACE. THE RESPONDING DEPUTY WAS MY COUSIN AGAIN, AND HE GAVE ME A COPY OF HIS REPORT, WHICH I SAVED.

FOLLOWING THE 911 CALL AT 11:42 P.M. ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1983, I ARRIVED AT THE LOCATION OF 1564 STE. ROUTE 187, IN ETHAM AND FOUND SUBJECT OUTSIDE HER DWELLING STANDING BAREFOOT IN THE MUD IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE NIGHTCLOTHES. SHE WAS SHIVERING AND MOANING, AND IN COMPANY OF A MALE WHO STATED HE WAS HER HUSBAND. HE WAS ATTEMPTING TO CALM SUBJECT BUT SHE REMAINED FEARFUL AND KEPT GESTURING TOWARD A BUILDING ADJACENT TO THEIR DWELLING, SUBJECT CONSENTED TO AN INTERVIEW SO I PLACED HER IN THE PASSENGER SEAT OF THE PATROL VEHICLE. SHE REPORTED THAT BEFORE RETIRING SHE HAD REMEMBERED LEAVING HER FAVORITE NAIL FILE IN SAID BUILDING NEXT DOOR TO HER DWELLING AND HAD GONE TO RETRIEVE THIS ARTICLE. SHE STATED THAT WHEN SHE ENTERED FRONT DOOR AND BEFORE SHE COULD TURN ON THE LIGHT SHE OBSERVED, WITH THE AID OF MOONLIGHT COMING IN THROUGH A WINDOW, A MAN AND A WOMAN “WITH HOLLOW EYES.” SHE SAID THE TWO FIGURES WERE DRESSED IN GRAY SHROUDS AND THAT THEY WERE STARING AT HER. WHEN THIS OFFICER INQUIRED HOW THEY COULD STARE AT HER IF THEY HAD HOLLOW EYES SHE STARTED TO CRY. AFTER REGAINING HER COMPOSURE SHE REPORTED THE MALE FIGURE HAD CALLED OUT TO HER IN A BARKING VOICE, “WHATEVER YOU DO IT WON’T COME TRUE!” AND THAT THE FEMALE FIGURE THEN REPEATED THE PHRASE, IN A SCREECHING TONE. SUBJECT STATED THEIR VOICES “WERE NOT HUMAN.” AT THAT POINT SHE HAD FLED BACK TO THE HOUSE, RESULTING IN HER HUSBAND’S 911 CALL. DURING MY INTERVIEW WITH THIS SUBJECT, DEPUTY DAVIS, WHO HAD ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, SEARCHED THE BUILDING IN QUESTION AND FOUND NO ONE INSIDE AND NO SIGN OF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY. SUBJECT WAS TRANSPORTED TO HOSPITAL BY AMBULANCE AND HELD OVERNIGHT FOR OBSERVATION.

IT ONLY TOOK THE COUPLE FROM NEW JERSEY TWO DAYS TO GET EVERYTHING BACK ON A MOVING VAN AND LEAVE ETHAM FOR GOOD. MAYBE THE LESSON IS THAT WHEN PEOPLE MOVE FROM THE CROWDED REGIONS UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, THEY SHOULDN’T TRY SO HARD TO CHANGE THINGS, AND SHOULD RESPECT THE PAST A LITTLE. I’M TOLD THAT LEO AND BARBARA’S HOUSE IS LIVED IN NOW, BUT THE BUILDING NEXT DOOR IS STILL EMPTY, EVEN AFTER ALL THESE DECADES. TWO OF MY FRIENDS FROM THE OLD DAYS IN ETHAM ARE SURE THE GHOSTS OF LEO AND BARBARA STILL INHABIT BARBARA’S PLACE. I WOULDN’T DISAGREE. BUT WHAT OF IT? I SAY, LEAVE THEM ALONE.

THE HOUSE ON ELM STREET

CHRIS ALLEN

MONDAY

AS THE DUSTY, YELLOW SCHOOL BUS TURNED THE CORNER FROM MONROE STREET ONTO ELM STREET, THEO SLOUCHED LOWER IN HIS SEAT. ONLY THE TOP OF HIS HEAD AND HIS EYES WERE VISIBLE THROUGH THE GRIMY WINDOW. LIKE USUAL, THEO SAT ALONE. THE OTHER KIDS ALWAYS STAYED AT LEAST ONE SEAT AWAY.

THIS PART WAS THE HARDEST: THE DARK, OLD VICTORIAN HOME STANDING BEHIND THE RUSTED, WROUGHT IRON FENCE SLOWLY SLID BY. THEO WATCHED IT WITH A MIXTURE OF MALICIOUS LOATHING AND DREAD. THAT WAS ALWAYS THE POINT WHEN THE WHISPERS AND JEERS STARTED, BUT BY NOW THEO COULD SHUT OUT THE NOISE. THEN IT WAS PAST. GONE.

TWO BLOCKS LATER, AT THE CORNER OF ELM AND MARSH, THEO WAITED AT THE BACK OF THE LINE OF KIDS QUEUING UP TO EXIT THE BUS.

HE MADE SURE NOT TO GET TOO CLOSE. THEY NEVER LIKED THAT. JUST AS IT WAS HIS TURN, THE BUS DRIVER BEGAN TO CLOSE THE DOUBLE FOLDING DOORS, SLOWLY PULLING THE GIANT LEVER THAT SHUT THEM TIGHT. THEO JUMPED OVER THE LAST STAIR AND SQUEEZED OUT JUST IN TIME. ONE OF THESE TIMES HE WAS GOING TO GET CAUGHT IN THE DOORS AND WOULD HAVE TO RIDE LIKE THAT FOR ANOTHER BLOCK; HE WAS SURE OF IT. BUT NOT THIS DAY. HE STUMBLED INTO A PUDDLE IN THE RELENTLESS RAIN AND PAUSED. THE OLD, STINKY BUS RUMBLED AWAY AND THEO TURNED RIGHT; BACK TOWARD HOME.

TUESDAY

THEO HAD BEEN GETTING OFF OF THE BUS PAST HIS STOP FOR AS LONG AS HE COULD REMEMBER. IT DID NOT STOP THE COMMENTS AND LOOKS THAT KIDS ON THE BUS DIRECTED HIS WAY, BUT IT DID DRASTICALLY DECREASE HIS OWN DISCOMFORT. THE THREE OTHER KIDS WHO GOT OFF AT THIS STOP TURNED LEFT AND STARTED WALKING TO THE END OF MARSH STREET. ONE GIRL LOOKED UNEASILY BEHIND HER AS SHE WENT. SHE HIKED HER BRIGHTLY COLORED JANSPOUT HIGHER ON HER BACK,

HUNCHED HER SHOULDERS PROTECTIVELY, AS IF AGAINST A COOL BREEZE, AND FOLLOWED HER FRIENDS. THE WARM SUN SLANTED THROUGH THE UNMOVING LEAVES OVERHEAD, BUT THEO DID NOT FEEL IT ON HIS FACE.

THEO WALKED, AS HE ALWAYS DID, HEAD DOWN, SLOWLY COUNTING HIS STEPS. HE KNEW FROM SCHOOL THAT IT WAS BEST TO KEEP HIS HEAD DOWN; OTHER STUDENTS PREFERRED IT THAT WAY. EVEN WHEN HE WAS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL, HE NOTICED THAT SOME ADULTS GAVE HIM STRANGE, OR WORSE, PITYING LOOKS IF HE MADE EYE CONTACT. HE HATED THAT. SO, HE KEPT TO HIMSELF. ACROSS THE STREET, A DOG STARTED BARKING. YESTERDAY, THE STEADY DOWNPOUR AND OMINOUS CLOUDS KEPT ALL OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD DOGS INSIDE. THEO LIKED DAYS LIKE THAT. THE BARKING SEEMED TO PIERCE HIS BRAIN LIKE AN ICEPICK; LIKE THE DOGS KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT HE, HIMSELF, DID NOT EVEN KNOW.

THE SUN SHONE BRIGHTLY ON A BLEACHED FLYER STAPLED TO THE CREOSOTE-SOAKED TELEPHONE POLE. THE PICTURE AND WORDS TOO WEATHERED TO BE RECOGNIZABLE. SOMEWHERE, OFF TO HIS FAR

AND BEHIND HIM, A LAWN MOWER DRONED. AND THE DOG KEPT BARKING.

WEDNESDAY

WHEN THEO ENCOUNTERED THE CURB AT THE END OF THE SIDEWALK, HE STOPPED, LEANING AGAINST THE FREQUENT, COLD GUSTS. THEO LIKED THIS BLOCK. THE HOUSES WERE PAINTED CHEERFUL COLORS AND THE SIDEWALK WAS SMOOTH; RECENTLY REPAVED, PERFECT FOR A STROLL ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON.

THE NEXT BLOCK, HOWEVER, ALWAYS SEEMED TO MIRROR THEO'S MOOD. IT WAS CRACKED AND UNEVEN. PART OF THE CURB CRUMBLED AWAY INTO THE GUTTER. TWO OF THE THREE LOTS STOOD VACANT, SURROUNDED BY INDUSTRIAL STEEL FENCING. TALL, WEEDY GRASS STOOD THIGH HIGH BEYOND THE FENCES. INSECTS BUZZED AND CHIRPED, UNSEEN. THIS WAS THE ONLY BLOCK ON ELM STREET WHERE NO TREES STOOD. WHEN THE SUN BEAT DOWN DURING THE SUMMER, THERE WAS NO SHADE. WHEN THE RAIN POURED DOWN IN THE SPRING, THERE WAS NO SHELTER. WHEN THE WIND BLEW, IT HOWLED. NO BIRDS SANG HERE

ONLY CROWS, PERCHED HIGH UP ON THE SLATE ROOF, OCCASIONALLY VOICED THEIR MELANCHOLY REFRAIN.

THEO DIDN'T BOTHER LOOKING BOTH WAYS AS HE CROSSED CASTLE ROAD ONTO HIS BLOCK. A FRIGID, UNRELENTING NORTH WIND BLEW IN THEO'S FACE, BUT IT SEEMED NOT TO BOTHER HIM. HE MOVED EVEN SLOWER DOWN THE FRAGMENTED SIDEWALK; MISERY AND LOATHING GRIPPED HIM LIKE AN ICY EMBRACE. EIGHTEEN AGONIZING STEPS BROUGHT HIM TO THE FRONT GATE. IT STOOD AJAR, BLACK AND RUSTY, SLIGHTLY SAGGING FROM AN ANCIENT HINGE. UNLIKE THE LOTS ON EITHER SIDE, THE YARD BEFORE THEO WAS BARREN OF ANY GROWTH, AS IF NATURE DID NOT EVEN BOTHER TRYING TO RECLAIM THIS NEGLECTED PATCH OF CRACKED AND FORGOTTEN EARTH. THEO HEAVED A SIGH AND STEELED HIMSELF.

THURSDAY

A FLUFFY, WHITE CLOUD MOVED QUICKLY ACROSS THE SKY THROWING 127 ELM STREET BRIEFLY INTO SHADOW. THERE WAS NO USE PROLONGING THE INEVITABLE. THEO REACHED OUT TO PUSH OPEN THE DECREPIT GATE, BUT STOPPED HIMSELF. IT WAS NOISY ON ITS RUSTY HINGE. HE SUCKED HIS BREATH

IN THROUGH HIS TEETH, STOOD ON HIS TOES, AND CAREFULLY MANEUVERED THROUGH THE SMALL OPENING BETWEEN THE GATE AND THE LATCH. ON THE OTHER SIDE, HE EXHALED QUIETLY AND LOOKED UP AT THE SKY; BRILLIANT BLUE FRAMED THE CLOUDS AS THE LATE AFTERNOON SUN PLAYED PEEK-A-BOO BEHIND THEM. HE USED TO RUN TO THE PORCH AND TRY TO GET INSIDE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE, TRYING TO AVOID RIDICULE FROM ANYONE THAT MIGHT BE PASSING, BUT NOW THEO TOOK HIS TIME. THERE WAS NOTHING INSIDE THE DUSTY OLD HOUSE FOR HIM AND ONCE HE WAS INSIDE THE GATE, PASSERSBY, INFREQUENT AS THEY WERE, USUALLY PAID HIM NO MIND. E WIND BLEW, IT HOWLED. NO BIRDS SANG HERE

THEO KICKED OUT LAZILY AT A CLOTTED PIECE OF DIRT. IT HAD NOT RAINED SINCE MONDAY AND THE YARD WAS AGAIN DRY AND CRACKED.

HALFWAY BETWEEN THE SIDEWALK AND THE FRONT STEPS, THEO COULD START TO SMELL THE HOUSE. AT FIRST, IT WAS NOT SUCH AN UNPLEASANT SMELL; IT SMELLED OF WOOD THAT HAS BRAVELY WEATHERED DECADES OF RAIN, SNOW, AND SUN: AN EARTHY SMELL.

AS HE GOT CLOSER, THE SMELL CHANGED; IT BECAME MORE PUNGENT AND UNDESIRABLE: OILY AND TINNY, LIKE SO MUCH DISCARDED GARBAGE. BROKEN FURNITURE AND EMPTY BOTTLES AND TORN GLAD BAGS LITTERED WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE ONCE GRAND ENTRANCE. NEIGHBORHOOD TEENAGERS OFTEN TRIED TO THROW BOTTLES THROUGH THE WINDOWS AT NIGHT.

THEO STOPPED JUST BEFORE THE SPRAWLING, GRAYISH PORCH AND SURVEYED THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE. HE WAS STILL DISMAYED THAT THIS ROTTING, CROOKED STRUCTURE WAS WHAT HE HAD TO RETURN TO EVERYDAY. A SOLEMN CROW STARED DOWN AT HIM FROM A TARNISHED WEATHERVANE; THE BIRD'S BEADY BLACK EYE CASTING JUDGEMENT. IT GAVE A SINGLE, LOUD CAW AND REMAINED.

FRIDAY

ALMOST MERCIFULLY, THEO BEGAN TO CLIMB THE FRONT STEPS FOR THE LAST TIME THAT WEEK. ALTHOUGH THE STEPS WERE ROTTING BENEATH HIS FEET, THEY NEITHER SAGGED NOR CREAKED. THE SMELL WAS ONE OF DECAY: HOT AND PUTRID.

THEO SHUFFLED THROUGH USED NAPKINS AND CRUMPLED CHIP BAGS UNTIL HE STOOD LESS THAN A YARD FROM THE BLACKENED FRONT DOOR. THERE WAS ONCE AN OLD, HANDSOME KNOCKER ON IT, BUT NOW, ONLY THREE HOLES THROUGH THE THICK WOOD: A MEMORY OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN. THEO COULD ALMOST FEEL THE GRAINY TEXTURE OF THE DOOR THAT HE STARED AT. THE PAD OF HIS MIDDLE FINGER STILL HELD A BARELY VISIBLE SCAR FROM A LARGE SLIVER.

JUST AS HE WAS STARTING TO FORM A MEMORY, THE TINKLING MUSIC OF THE ICE CREAM TRUCK FILLED THEO'S WORLD. HE WHIRLED AROUND, STARTLED. FRIDAY; ANOTHER WEEK GONE. THE BRIGHTLY COLORED, SWEET-SOUNDING TRUCK ROLLED DOWN MONROE, FADING FROM VIEW AS QUICKLY AS IT HAD COME. THEO'S FACE DARKENED AS HE TURNED BACK TO THE HOUSE AND REACHED OUT FOR THE BRASS DOORKNOB, GREEN WITH YEARS OF NEGLECT. A SIMPLE TWIST AND THE HEAVY DOOR SWUNG INWARD. THEO STILL MARVELED AT THIS; HE SEEMED TO HAVE SUCH LITTLE EFFECT ON THE WORLD AROUND HIM, BUT THIS GIANT WOODEN DOOR ADMITTED HIM WITH ONLY A TURN OF THE WRIST. HE STEPPED INSIDE AND THE DOOR SHUT.

IT ONLY TOOK A SECOND FOR THEO'S EYES TO ADJUST TO THE LOW, GLOOMY LIGHT. HE LOOKED DOWN IN FRONT OF HIM, LIKE HE DID EVERYDAY. A WIDE, PIANO SIZED HOLE GAPED HUNGRILY IN FRONT OF HIM, DESCENDING PRECIPITOUSLY TO THE COLD, STONE WALLED BASEMENT BELOW. TWELVE FEET DOWN, CRUMPLED IN A PATHETIC HEAP, LAY THEO'S BODY. HE LOOKED AT IT FROM ABOVE AND SLOWLY BEGAN TO SINK DOWN INTO IT WITHOUT DISTURBING THE DUST MITES THAT FLOATED THROUGH THE SUNBEAMS THAT LEAKED IN. ON THE WEEKENDS, HE SOMETIMES EXPLORED THE HOUSE. HE NEVER GOT TO THE FIRST TIME HE CAME THROUGH THAT HEAVY FRONT DOOR. BUT THE ROOMS WERE AS EMPTY AND LONELY AS HE WAS.

HE TRIED TO REMEMBER HOW LONG HE HAD BEEN IN THE HOUSE, BUT COULDN'T. ALL THEO COULD REMEMBER WAS SCHOOL; SO HE GOES EVERY WEEK. THE OTHER KIDS DO NOT LIKE FEELING HIM AROUND, BUT IT IS ALL THAT HE HAS LEFT TO HOLD ONTO. TWO MORE DAYS UNTIL SCHOOL.

THE FURIOUS FLAMES OF THE FIRE PHANTOM

BY: SEBASTIAN GRANT

ONCE THERE WAS A SPARK. THE SPARK TURNED INTO A FLAME. THE FLAME TURNED INTO A BONFIRE. THE BONFIRE TURNED INTO A FOREST FIRE WHICH SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE BECAUSE IT WAS WILDFIRE. WHEN THE ENTIRE FOREST WAS BURNT DOWN ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS A FLAME. AND THAT FLAME SOMEHOW CAME TO LIFE AND TURNED INTO...THE FURIOUS FIRE PHANTOM.

CHAPTER 1: THE SMITHS LOSE THEIR HOUSE
ONCE ON A STREET CALLED MAPLE STREET, THERE WAS AN OLD HOUSE. IT BELONGED TO THE SMITH FAMILY. NOW THE SMITHS WERE NICE PEOPLE, BUT THEY WEREN'T ALWAYS VERY MINDFUL OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS. ONE TIME MR. SMITH WAS SMOKING OUT-DOORS AND PART OF HIS CIGARETTE FELL ON THE GROUND. THAT NIGHT WHILE IN BED MRS. SMITH THOUGHT SHE SMELLED SOMETHING BURNING.

AND THEN THEIR NEIGHBORS, THE BROWN FAMILY, HEARD A DISTANT SCREAM. THE NEXT MORNING, THEY CALLED 911 AND REPORTED THEY HEARD A SCREAM THE NIGHT BEFORE. THE POLICE INVESTIGATED WHAT SHOULD'VE BEEN A HOUSE. BUT INSTEAD, IT WAS A SMOLDERING PILE OF COALS AND ASH. THEY REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND QUICKLY CALLED THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO COME AND PUT OUT WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE FIRE, SO IT DIDN'T SPREAD ANYMORE.

ONCE THE FIRE DEPARTMENT PUT OUT WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE FIRE, MR. BROWN ASKED POLICEMAN JEFFE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEIR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE. JEFFE SAID, "THERE HAVE BEEN LOTS OF HOUSES THAT HAVE BURNED DOWN IN THIS AREA RECENTLY. THE POLICE ARE WORRIED THIS STREET IS DANGEROUS." HEARING THIS, MR. BROWN AND HIS FAMILY PACKED UP AND MOVED.

THE NEW NEIGHBORS, THE PEARL FAMILY, SAID THEY WERE GOOD FRIENDS WITH THE SMITH FAMILY. THEY ALSO SAID THEY WERE THE FIRST PEOPLE TO HEAR THE REPORT THAT THE SMITH HOUSE HAD BURNED DOWN. KNOWING THIS, MR. AND MRS. BROWN CALLED IN A SPECIAL AGENT DUDE. HE CAMPED OUT AT THE

SITE OF THE OLD SMITH'S HOUSE. HE WANTED TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON THERE AND TRY TO STOP IT TOO.

CHAPTER 2: THE LIFE OR DEATH WATER BALLOON FIGHT

THAT NIGHT THE SPECIAL AGENT DUDE NAMED GARY CAMPED OUT AT THE SITE OF THE SMITH'S HOUSE. JUST IN CASE, HE BROUGHT A FIRE EXTINGUISHER AND A BUCKET OF WATER BALLOONS. HE LEFT THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER IN HIS CAR BECAUSE IF HE BROUGHT IT TOO CLOSE TO A HEAT SOURCE IT MIGHT EXPLODE. HE JUST BROUGHT THE WATER BALLOONS OUTSIDE WITH HIM.

THEN FROM THE TREES HE SAW SOME SMOKE. HE THOUGHT, "MAYBE SOME OTHER PEOPLE ARE CAMPING OUT TOO." BUT NO! HE SAW A LIGHT BREAKING THROUGH THE TREE LINE. THEN FROM OUT OF THE BRUSH CAME A HUGE WALL OF FIRE THAT ALMOST LOOKED LIKE....A GHOST!! THE FLAMES HAD MORPHED INTO A LARGE FIRE PHANTOM WITH TWO LONG ARMS MADE COMPLETELY OF FIRE AND A SCARY FACE THAT WOULD GIVE ANY OPPONENT PAUSE. IT HAD AN EVIL LAUGH THAT SENT CHILLS DOWN YOUR SPINE.

ATHE PHANTOM STARTED THROWING FIREBALLS AT GARY. HE QUICKLY GRABBED HIS BUCKET OF BALLOONS AND TRIED TO THROW THEM AT THE PHANTOM. BUT IT WASN'T SO EASY. THE FIRST TIME HE THREW ONE IT HIT THE PHANTOM DIRECTLY BECAUSE IT WASN'T EXPECTING AN OFFENSIVE ATTACK. BUT THE SECOND TIME THE FIRE PHANTOM WAS READY AND QUICKLY CHANGED SHAPE AND MADE A HOLE. THE WATER BALLOON WENT RIGHT THROUGH THE FIRE PHANTOM.

QUICKLY GARY OPENED THE CAR DOOR AND GOT OUT THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER. HE SPRAYED THE FIRE PHANTOM WHICH LOWERED THE FLAMES ENOUGH ON THE PHANTOM FOR GARY TO GET AWAY.

CHAPTER 3: THE COUNTER ATTACK OF THE FIRE PHANTOM

THE NEXT DAY GARY TOOK THE MATTER TO HIS BOSS OSKAR. GARY SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY A GIANT FIRE GHOST, BUT OF COURSE OSKAR DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM. SO GARY HAD TO TAKE MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS. IT WAS EASY TO TRACK THE FIRE PHANTOM BECAUSE WHEREVER THE FIRE PHANTOM WENT IT LEFT A TRAIL OF SMOKE, ASH, AND COALS.

GARY KNEW THIS SO HE WENT AND FOUND THE TRAIL. HE FOLLOWED IT UNTIL HE SAW SMOKE IN THE DISTANCE. HE DIDN'T WANT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO THE PHANTOM BECAUSE OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED THE NIGHT BEFORE. SO HE KEPT A CLOSE EYE ON IT FROM A DISTANCE.

WHEN GARY SAW WHERE THE FIRE PHANTOM WAS GOING, HE WAS HORRIFIED! RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE PHANTOM'S PATH WAS A GIANT FUEL MILL!!. THEN GARY SAW A MESSAGE BURNED ONTO A TREE.

IT READ: TURN BACK OR SUFFER.

GARY DIDN'T WANT TO TURN BACK, BUT HE DIDN'T WANT TO SUFFER EITHER. SO HE DID THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO, HE CALLED IN A HELICOPTER. WHEN IT ARRIVED, HE QUICKLY CLIMBED IN SO HE COULD WATCH FROM THE AIR. JUST IN CASE A FIREMAN HAD HITCHED A RIDE.

THEN THE FIRE PHANTOM BROKE INTO THE FUEL MILL AND YOU CAN PROBABLY GUESS WHAT HAPPENED. THE WHOLE MILL BURST INTO FLAMES! THAT WAS PRETTY GOOD FOR THE FIRE PHANTOM, BEING A FLAME GHOST AND ALL. THE FIRE PHANTOM GREW BIGGER AND BIGGER.

BUT THEN A GUSH OF WATER CAME THROUGH THE TREES AND HIT THE FIRE PHANTOM RIGHT IN THE CHEST! GARY LOOKED DOWN WHERE THE WATER STREAM HAD SHOT FROM. IT WAS THE BROWN FAMILY AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF FIREMEN! THE BROWN FAMILY HAD HEARD THE COMMOTION AND CALLED THEM FIREMEN. THEN THEY FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF THE FIRE PHANTOM AND FOUND HIM.

DEFEATING THE FIRE PHANTOM WASN'T SO EASY. IT DID SOMETHING THEY DIDN'T EXPECT. IT MADE A HUGE BURST OF FLAMES. BEING IN A HELICOPTER, GARY'S PILOT WAS ABLE TO RAISE THE HELICOPTER ENOUGH TO AVOID THE FLAMES THOUGH. BUT SOME OF THE PEOPLE ON THE GROUND WEREN'T SO LUCKY. THE BROWN FAMILY AND MOST OF THE FIREMEN WERE ABLE TO JUMP BEHIND SOME ROCKS. BUT TWO FIREMEN GOT CAUGHT IN THE FLAMES. AND ALL THAT WAS LEFT WERE THEIR SKELETONS WHICH FELL AND LAID IN HEAPS ON THE SOIL.

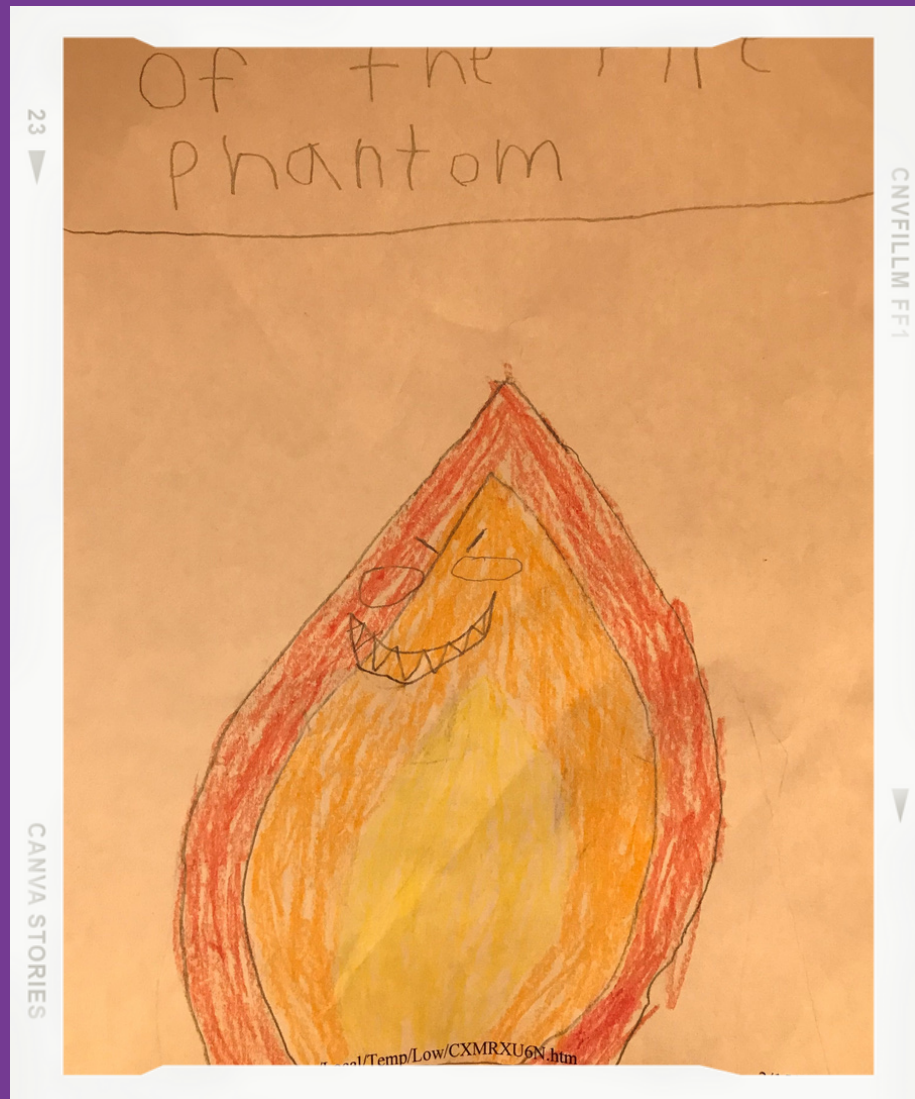
THE FIRE PHANTOM USED UP A LOT OF FLAMES IN THE BLAST AND THE FUEL MILL WAS RUNNING OUT OF FUEL. THE FIREMEN AND THE BROWN'S FAMILY QUICKLY GOT THE HOSES AND BEGAN SHOOTING AT THE PHANTOM. IT TOOK AWHILE, BUT THEY WERE ABLE TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRE PHANTOM. GARY, HIS

HELICOPTER, THE BROWN FAMILY, AND THE FIREMEN ALL RETURNED HOME TO CELEBRATE.

CHAPTER 4: THE END?

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE FUEL MILL. THERE WAS STILL A FIRE LEFT BURNING. THEN YOU GUESSED IT. THAT FIRE MORPHED INTO THE FIRE PHANTOM. AND IT SAID, "I SHALL RISE AGAIN. YOU HUMANS WILL PAY." AND THEN HE FADED INTO A CLOUD OF SMOKE.

THE END



WRITTEN BY BRAM & SASKIA

CHAPTER 1

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT WHEN BRAM, SASKIA AND JAMES CHECKED INTO THE HOLLOW HOTEL. THEY USED THEIR KEY TO OPEN THE DOOR TO THEIR ROOM (ROOM 206) AND SAW THREE BEDS, A COFFEE TABLE, A DINING TABLE, AND A WINDOW. ON THE COFFEE TABLE, THERE WAS A CHECKERS BOARD, AND THE GAME WAS ALREADY STARTED. SASKIA SAW SOMETHING OUT OF THE CORNER OF HER EYE; IT LOOKED LIKE A FACE. SHE TURNED AROUND, BUT IT WAS ONLY A MASK, WHICH WAS HANGING FROM THE WALL BY THE BED. SHE SHIVERED WITH FEAR BECAUSE IT WASN'T THERE BEFORE. WHEN SHE TURNED AROUND, OUT OF THE CORNER OF HER EYES, SHE SAW THE MASK AGAIN, BUT IT HAD HUMAN EYES. IT BLINKED.

SASKIA IS LYING IN BED, BUT SHE CAN'T FALL ASLEEP BECAUSE SHE CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE MASK. FINALLY, SHE TELLS BRAM ABOUT WHAT SHE SAW. "IT DISAPPEARED RIGHT AWAY" SHE SAID. BRAM LOOKED CONFUSED. HE THOUGHT SASKIA WAS PARANOID. SASKIA STOPPED TRYING TO EXPLAIN BECAUSE SHE REALIZED HE WASN'T GOING TO UNDERSTAND.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEXT DAY, BRAM WOKE UP. BECAUSE SASKIA TOLD HIM THE STORY ABOUT THE MASK, HE WAS A BIT CREEPED OUT. HE WAS SUSPICIOUS OF THE HOTEL, SO HE DIDN'T EAT THE BREAKFAST THAT THEY OFFERED. HE PACKED HIS OWN.

AT LUNCH, IT WAS SIMILAR. HE ATE HIS OWN LUNCH. ,HOWEVER, HE RAN OUT OF FOOD AT THE END OF THE DAY, SO HE HAD TO EAT THE HOTEL DINNER. IT TASTED FUNNY.

AFTER DINNER, HE WENT INTO THE BATHROOM, AND IT LOOKED DARKER. THERE WAS ALSO ANOTHER DOOR, AND HE MISTOOK IT FOR THE BATHROOM DOOR. HE DIDIN'T NOTICE A SIGN THAT SAID "PLUMBERS ONLY". WHEN HE WALKED IN, HE WAS SURPRISED. HE SAW A HUGE ROOM WITH A BUNCH OF PIPES. HE HEARD THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND HIM. HE TRIED JIGGLING THE DOOR, BUT IT WAS LOCKED FROM THE OUTSIDE. HE LOOKED BACK AND SAW A FIGURE IN THE ROOM, HOLDING ON TO ONE FO THE PIPES.

CHAPTER 3

JAMES HEARD A SCREAM. HE RAN DOWN THE HALL TO THEIR ROOM; THE HALL WAS EMPTY. THERE WAS ANOTHER SCREAM, AND A RATTLING AT THE DOOR NEXT TO HIM. BRAM CAME RUNNING OUT. JAMES

JAMES ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG, BUT BRAM WAS ALREADY AT THE END OF THE HALL. JAMES SAW WHAT BRAM WAS SO AFRAID OF. THERE WAS A FIGURE HANGING ON FROM ONE OF THE PIPES. JAMES RAN RIGHT AFTER BRAM.

BOTH OF THEM TOLD SASKIA WHAT HAPPENED. “I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING UP WITH THE HOLLOW HOTEL WHEN WE GOT HERE. THE CHECKERS BOARD GAME WAS ALREADY STARTED AND WE WERE THE FIRST ONES TO CHECK INTO THE ROOM!”

CHAPTER 4

BRAM AND JAMES SAID IN UNISON: “WE WERE THE FIRST ONES TO CHECK INTO THE ROOM?!”

“JINX, YOU OWE ME A SODA.” SAID BRAM.

“DARN IT!” SAID JAMES.

“THIS IS NOT A ALIGHTING MATTER!” SASKIA SAID. THEY STARTED PACKING THEIR BAGS IN A HURRY. CLOTHES WERE FLYING EVERYWHERE, AND THE THREE OF THEM WERE RUSHING TO GET OUT THE DOOR. THEY RUSHED TO THE DOOR IN A HURRY!

CHAPTER 5

THEY ARE LOCKED IN. THEY LOOK UP, AND SEE A PERSON WITH A MASK. SASKIA RECOGNIZES THE EYES: SHE SAW THEM IN THE MASK ON THE FIRST

DAY.

THE FACE AND THE MASK BOTH DISAPPEARED. JAMES KICKED SOMETHING – THE MASK. “GUYS, LOOK DOWN AT MY FEET” HE SAID QUIETLY. THEY ALL RUN BACK DOWN THE HALLWAY. JAMES LOOKED OVER HIS SHOULDER AND SAW A STATICKY FIGURE. IT WAS LIKE THE FIGURE HE SAW IN THE PIPE ROOM, BUT IT WAS STATICKY LIKE AN OLD TV AND IT WAS SPEED RUNNING TOWARDS THEM. THEY ALL STARTED RUNNING FASTER, AND THE OTHER TWO CAUGHT UP TO JAMES. SOON AFTER, THEY GOT TIRED OF RUNNING, AND HAD TO STOP. AS THE FIGURE GOT CLOSER, IT GOT BIGGER AND BRIGHTER UNTIL IT EVERYTHING WAS WHITE. IN THE NEXT SECOND, THEY WERE OUT IN THE POURING RAIN. BEHIND THEM WAS THE HOLLOW HOTEL, IN FLAMES. THE END

AUTHOR’S NOTE

THREE FRIENDS WENT TO A HOTEL WHERE MYSTERIOUS THINGS HAPPEN, BUT THEY ARE FREE AT THE END. FACTS:

1. THE HOLLOW HOTEL ISN’T A REAL PLACE (HOPEFULLY?).
2. BRAM AND SASKIA ARE REAL PEOPLE, BUT THEY DIDN’T HAVE THESE EXPERIENCES.
3. THE MONSTERS IN THIS STORY ARE NOT REAL (HOPEFULLY).

!THE BATTLE OF ZOMBIES AND SKELETONS

BY ELIAS URANG (AGE 6, MIDDLEBURY)

ONCE THERE WAS A BATTLE BETWEEN ZOMBIES AND SKELETONS. THEY FOUGHT OVER THE LAND. ZOMBIE TANKS AND SKELETON TANKS WERE SHOOTING DOWN ZOMBIES AND SKELETONS. THE MINIONS FOUGHT WITH GUNS. A PLANE CRASHED AND THE PILOT AND PASSENGERS CLIMBED OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BATTLE. THE ZOMBIES AND SKELETONS ATTACKED THE PEOPLE. THE PEOPLE WERE INNOCENT! THE PEOPLE RAN AND SCATTERED. THE PILOT HID BEHIND A ROCK. THE ZOMBIE GENERAL POINTED HIS GUN AT A CANNON AND SHOT IT. THE CANNON EXPLODED. THE PEOPLE SCREAMED WITH HORROR. A PERSON TRIED TO FIGHT A ZOMBIE BUT IT BITE OUT HIS BRAIN. THE PERSON FELL TO THE GROUND AND TURNED INTO ANOTHER MINIONFIED ZOMBIE. THE MINIONFIED ZOMBIE GOT UP AND FELL OVER A ROCK. THE ZOMBIE WHO TURNED IT INTO A ZOMBIE SAID "WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!" AND THEN HE FELL OVER THE ROCK. THUD. AND THEN THE GENERAL SAID "IF YOU DON'T STOP FALLING OVER ROCKS I WILL SHOOT ALL

OF THE ZOMBIES DOWN AND DEAL WITH IT MYSELF". THE ZOMBIES PROMISED NOT TO FALL OVER ANY MORE ROCKS. BUT THE ZOMBIE FELL OVER ANOTHER ROCK. OOPSIES. TWO ZOMBIES FOUND THE PILOT BEHIND THE ROCK AND CARRIED HIM INTO A ZOMBIE TANK. HE SCREAMED "LET ME GO!" THE TANK WAS FILLED WITH COBWEBS AND SPIDERS. THE CONTROLS WERE IN ANOTHER ROOM. THE PILOT FELT SCARED. THE ZOMBIES HAD A BIG POT FULL OF BOILING WATER AND THEY WERE CHOPPING VEGETABLES INTO IT. "OH NO," THOUGHT THE PILOT "THE ZOMBIES ARE GOING TO MAKE SOUP OUT OF ME!" HE GOT UP AND PUSHED ONE OF THE ZOMBIES. THE ZOMBIE WAS ANGRY. THEY TIED THE PILOT UP IN A CHAIR. THEY WERE ABOUT TO PUT HIM INTO THE POT WHEN THERE WAS A THUD. THE DOOR EXPLODED OPEN WITH A SKELETON ALREADY AIMING A GUN AT THE ZOMBIES. THE ZOMBIES RAISED THEIR GUNS AND MADE SOUP OUT OF THE SKELETON. ONE OF THE PASSENGERS FROM THE PLANE RAN IN BUT THINGS JUST GOT WORSE. THE ZOMBIES GOT SO ANGRY THAT THE PILOT WAS KILLED AND THEY ATE HIS BRAIN. THE ZOMBIES LOOKED AT THE PASSENGER AND SAID "YOU ARE NEXT!" SUDDENLY THE TANK EXPLODED WITH A BIG BOOM. THE ZOMBIES LOOKED OUT AND SAW THAT A

SKELETON TANK HAD DESTROYED THEIR TANK. THE PASSENGER DIED. HIS BRAIN WAS EATEN TOO. MORE PASSENGERS WERE RUNNING AROUND THE BATTLEFIELD. A SKELETON SHOT A SPIDER WEB OUT OF A CROSS BOW. IT WRAPPED AROUND A ZOMBIES NECK AND STRAGGLED IT TO DEATH. IT WAS SO SCARY A PASSENGER PEED HIS PANTS. A ZOMBIE SAID “EXCUSE ME, YOU WILL BE NEXT”. THEN HE ATTACKED AND THE PASSENGER LAID DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THE ZOMBIE ATE HIS BRAIN FOR DESSERT. THEN A ZOMBIE HIT A SKELETON WITH A GRIP HOOK AND THE SKELETON FELL WITH A CLUNK. ANOTHER BATTLE TANK WAS DESTROYED. BOOM! THE ZOMBIES WERE ANGRY AT THE SKELETONS. THEY GOT SO MAD THAT THEY DESTROYED TEN BATTLE TANKS IN A ROW. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

THE ZOMBIE MINIONS FILLED THE AIR WITH SOUNDS OF JOY! IT SOON STOPPED. A SKELETON TANK JUST SHOT ALL OF THE ZOMBIES DOWN. AHHH! A ZOMBIE TANK SHOT DOWN THE SKELETON TANK. CRASH! THE FIGHTER ZOMBIES FLEW IN IN THEIR FIGHTER JETS. THE SKELETONS HAD BATTLE PLANES. THE AIR FILLED WITH BOOMS AND CRASHES. A BIG STREAK OF LIGHTING HIT TWO OF THE FIGHTER

JETS. THEY EXPLODED IN MIDAIR. ANOTHER TANK AIMED UP AND SHOT RANDOMLY INTO THE AIR. IT HIT A BATTLE PLANE. BANG! “YEA!” YELLED THE ZOMBIES BECAUSE IT WAS THEIR TANK. A SKELETON PLANE SHOT DOWN A BOMB AT THE ZOMBIES. IT HIT THE ZOMBIES AND EXPLODED.

THE SKELETONS WERE WINNING. A FIGHTER JET CAME DOWN FROM THE SKY. IT WAS ON FIRE. IT HIT THE GROUND WITH A BANG. A ZOMBIE CRIED OUT “THERE IS A DRAGON UP THERE!” AND THEN ALL OF THE PLANES AND FIGHTER JETS CAUGHT ON FIRE AND FELL TO THE GROUND WITH A BANG. A DARK BLUE DRAGON FLEW DOWN AND WRECKED THE BATTLEFIELD. THE DRAGON GOT ITS WAY. THE SKELETONS AND ZOMBIES WERE ALREADY SHOOTING AT IT, BUT IT DID NOTHING TO THE DRAGON. ALL OF THE SKELETONS AND ZOMBIES AND TANKS AND MACHINES GOT SWEEP AWAY BY THE DRAGON’S TAIL. THUD! CRASH! BANG! BOOM! THE ZOMBIES AND SKELETONS WERE ALL EATEN. THE DRAGON LIT THE PLACE INTO FLAMES.

THEN A LIGHT BLUE DRAGON FLEW DOWN FROM THE AIR. IT WAS AN ICE DRAGON. THE DRAGONS FOUGHT. THE DRAGONS FOUGHT WITH CLAWS AND JAWS. THE ICE DRAGON SHOT ICE AT THE DARK BLUE DRAGON. IT MISSED. THE DARK BLUE DRAGON SHOT FIRE AT THE ICE DRAGON. IT HIT IT IN THE STOMACH AND THE ICE DRAGON EXPLODED INTO FLAMES AND BLOOD AND BONES.

THE END



THE 13 GHOSTS

BY 8 YEAR OLD MYLA JUNE THOMPSON
& 9 YEAR OLD TENLY JANE CHITTENDEN



INTRODUCTION

CHAD AND ZOEY ARE BROTHER AND SISTER.
IN THE TIDAL IT SAYS 13 GHOSTS BUT READ
VERY CAREFULLY AND YOU MIGHT SOLVE THE
MYSTERY OF HOW CHAD AND ZOEY GO
MISSING.

CHAPTER 1 GHOSTS

IT WAS A COLD NIGHT IN VERMONT THE
WIND WAS BLOWING AND ZOEY AND CHAD
WERE IN THEIR HOUSE STAYING NICE AND
WARM. THEN ZOEY LET OUT A LOUD SCREAM
AAAH SHE CRIED! CHAD RACED DOWN STAIRS
TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON. “ ZOEY
WHAT'S WRONG “ ASKED CHAD?’ I SAW A
GHOST’ SAID ZOEY.

“THAT'S SILLY GHOSTS AREN'T REAL,” SAID
CHAD. “NO CHAD I ACTUALLY DID SEE ONE “.
IT LOOKED LIKE A HUMAN BUT CLEAR. OK
ZOEY I KNOW YOU LIKE TO PRANK ME AND
THIS ONE IS NOT FUNNY, CHAD SAID.
I AM NOT JOKING THIS TIME CHAD! REALLY
CHAD STUDERED. “YES REALLY CHAD” ZOEY
RIPLIDED. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU SAID
CHAD .

WELL THEN DON'T BLAME ME IF YOU GET
KILLED “SAID ZOEY. I WILL NOT GET KILLED!
SCREAMED CHAD. “OK,” SAID ZOEY. THAT
NIGHT CHAD WAS SUPER SCARED WHAT IF
ZOEY WAS TELLING THE TRUTH? N

O WAY CHED THOUGHT GHOSTS AREN'T REAL. OR ARE THEY CHAD THOUGH. CHAD GOT NO SLEEP. HE WAS UP ALL NIGHT THINKING IF ZOEY WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. IN THE MORNING HE ATE A QUITE SLOW BREAKFAST WHEN ZOEY AND THEIR MOM CAME DOWN WHEN CHAD WAS DONE WITH BREAKFAST. HIS HAIR WAS ALL MESSY AND HE WAS VERY SLEEPY. ZOEY SAID THAT SHE SAW A GHOST LAST NIGHT. IN HER VERY OWN ROOM! CHAD KNEW THAT SHE WAS JUST TRYING TO SCARE HIM BECAUSE SHE KNEW THAT CHAD WAS STILL SCARED ABOUT THE DAY BEFORE. CHAD AND ZOEY WENT UP THE STAIRS TO HIS ROOM.

CHAD OPENED HIS CLOSET TO GET HIS CLOTHES AND IN THERE STARING BACK AT HIM WAS A GHOST! CHAD SCREAMED AND RAN DOWN THE STAIRS AND SCREAMED ZOEY YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT I SAW. DID YOU SEE A GHOST ZOEY ASKED? Y-YES CHAD STUTTERED. TOLD YOU SO ZOEY SAID STICKING OUT HER TONGUE.K CHAD SAID. I GUESS YOU DID. NOW YOU GO TELL HIM OR HER TO GET OUT OF MY CLOSET CHAD SAID

PUSHING HER UP THE STAIRS. ZOEY WENT UP STAIRS. CHAD AND ZOEY'S MOM HAD JUST LEFT TO GO TO WORK SO IT WAS JUST CHED ZOEY AND THE GHOSTS. AND THAT WAS WHEN CHAD HEARD A VERY LOUD SCREAM. CHAD RAN UP STAIRS TO SEE IF SHE WAS OK. HE DIDN'T SEE HER ANY WARES. CHAD NOTEST THAT THE GHOST WAS GONE TOO. CHAD ALSO NOTEST THAT THERE WAS A STRANGE NOTE ON HIS BED THAT READ

*COME GT YOUR SISTER CHAD OR WE WILL TURN HER INTO A GHOST.
FROM THE 11 HOSTS. P.S. SHE'S IN THE OLD ABANDONED HOUSE.*

CHAD WAS VERY CONFUSED AND SCARED NOW. HOW DID THEY KNOW HIS NAME? AND THERE WERE 11 OF THEM? WHY DID THEY WANT TO TURN ZOEY INTO A GHOST? HOW COULD THINGS GET ANY WORSE CHAD THOUGHT. THE ONLY THING HE KNEW WAS THAT HE HAD TO SAVE HIS LITTLE SISTER. CHAD WAS USUALLY A PREPARED KID BUT THIS ONE WAS HARDER TO BE PREPARED FOR.

CHAPTER 2 MEET THE GHOSTS

CHAD STEPPED INSIDE THE CREEPY HOUSE. A LOW AND BELOW VOICE SAID SORRY CHAD YOU'RE TOO LATE SHE IS ALL READY A GHOST. THEN CHAD HEARD ANOTHER VOICE THAT SOUNDED VERY HIGH NO ,SHE'S STILL IN THE CAGE. YOU MORON IT SAID. THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET REMEMBER THE PLAN THE LOW AND BELOW VOICE SAID. YOU SAID THAT IF I GOT HERE IN TIME I WOULD GET HER BACK CHAD SAID. FIRST OF ALL I WROTE IT. I NEVER SAID IT, AND SECOND OF ALL NEVER TRUST A GHOST. THE LOW AND BELOW VOICE SAID. THE GHOST WENT UP TO CHAD AND LAUGHED IN HIS FACE ISN'T IT FUNNY HE ASKED CHAD? YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED A GHOST HE LAUGHED AGAIN AND SAID SO FUNNY THE GHOST SAID. Y THE WAY MY NAME SOUL SAID SOUL. AND THESE ARE THE TEN OTHER GHOSTS SAID SOUL. SOUL POINTED TO EACH OF THE TEN GHOSTS AND SAID THEIR NAMES. TH

HAT ONE'S NAME IS FANTUM THAT ONE'S NAME IS DEVIL THAT ONEIT IS DEEMED THAT ONE'S NAME IS SAVAGE THAT ONE'TS NAME I S DARK THAT ONE'S NAME IS GRAVE THAT ONE'S NAME IS LERCK THAT ONE'S NAME IS SPIDER THAT ONE'TS NAME IS CREEPY AND THAT'S POLLY. HI,I AM POLLY, SAID POLLY. IN THE SAME VOICE CHAD HEARD HE SAID THE SECRET PLAN OF THEIRS THAT WAS A FOUL HIM.CHAD LOOKED IN EVERY ROOM AND HE COULDN'T FIND ZOEY ANYWHERE .UNTIL CHAD CAME TO AN OLD DOOR ON THE CEILING WITH A STRING. HE KNEW THAT ZOEY HAD TO BE UP THERE. CHAD PULLED THE STRING AND A LADDER CAME DOWN. CHAD CLIMBED UP THE LATTER. AND HE SAW A GHOST IN A CAGE. SOUL WENT UP THE LADDER. NEVER TRUST A GHOST HE SAID, NOT EVEN POLLY. IS THAT ZOEY CHAT ASKED? YES, SAID SOUL. CHAD STARTED TO CRY. HE THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE HER. ZOEY THE GHOST STARED AT CHAD. LOOKING VERY SAD. CHAD FELT LIKE A SAD DOG .HO JUST GOT HIS FAVORITE TOY TAKEN AWAY. CHAD FELT VERY MAD TOO. A

T POLLY AND SOUL.. CHAD WAS VERY CONFUSED AND SCARED AND ALL HE KNEW WAS THAT ZOEY WAS IN A CAGE. SO CHAD JUST RAN. SOUL TRIED TO CATCH HIM BUT HE RAN SO FAST HE RAN OUT OF BREATH .CHAD WALKED UP THE STAIRS TO THE PORCH AND OPENED THE CREEPY SPIDER-WEBBED DOOR. AS IT OPENED THERE WAS A VERY LOUD CREAKING SOUND THAT WAS SO LOUD CHAD HAD TO COVER HIS EARS.

CHAPTER 3 CHAD'S LAST WORD
HEY CHAD SAID SOUL I WILL TURN HER BACK. BUT UNDER ONE CONDITION YOU BECOME ONE OF US SAID SOUL . WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO SAID CHAD. I WILL KEEP YOUR SISTER AND TURN YOU INTO A GHOST TOO, SAID SOUL. OK SAID CHAD. TURN ME INTO A GHOST. OK THEN ANY LAST WORDS CHAD ASKED SOUL? AS HE TOOK A LONG STICK WITH A GEM AT THE END.YES CHAD SAID. THEN SPIT IT OUT, SAID SOUL VERY IMPATIENTLY. HELP CHAD WISSPED. THEN SOUL POINTED THE STICK RIGHT AT CHAD AND WITH A BIG TORNADO OF BLUE

UST CHAD FOUND HIMSELF AS A GHOST IN A CAGE WITH ZOEY. ZOEY TRIED TO HUG CHAD BUT HER ARMS WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIM. ZOEY SIGHED AND SAID I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID THAT FOR ME. OF COURSE I WOULD, I'M YOUR BIG BROTHER , SAID CHAD. SOUL CAME TO THE CAGE YOU ARE A GHOST NOW GO HAVE SOME FUN SAID SOUL. YOU ARE A GHOST YOU CAN GO THROUGH WALLS AND SCARE PEOPLE . BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT I WANT SAID ZOEY , I WANTED TO BE A NORMAL KID WITH A NORMAL LIFE . DON'T WORRY ZOEY I'M SCARED TO BUT WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER SO WE WILL FIGHT THROUGH IT TOGETHER, SAID CHAD . I'M GLAD THAT I HAVE A GOOD BIG BROTHER LIKE YOU . THANKS, SAID CHAD. NOW LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. BUT HOW ASKED ZOEY? SOUL ALREADY TOLD US. WE ARE GHOSTS AND GHOSTS CAN GO THROUGH WALLS, SAID CHAD. OH YA ZOEY SAID EXCITEDLY! I FORGOT. THENHAD STEPPED THROUGH THE BARS. ZOEY FOLLOWED. NOW THAT WE'RE OUT WE CAN GO HAVE FUN BEING GHOSTS, SAID ZOEY. YA SAID CHAD EXIDEDLEY! SO CHAD AND ZOEY WENT OUTSIDE THE OLD

ND SAW A BOY OUTSIDE PLAYING WHEN THE BOY SAW THEM HE RAN HOME SCREAMING MOMMY!

CHAD AND ZOEY LAUGHED AND SAID BABY! FOR THE REST OF THE DAY CHAD AND ZOEY WENT AROUND TOWN SAYING BOO AND SCARING PEOPLE. FROM OLD LADYS AND OLD MEN TO LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS AND EVEN MIDDLE-ISH PEOPLE THAT WERE LIKE 30, 25, 42, AND PEOPLE IN THEIR TENES. BY THE NIGHT CHAD THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY AND WONDERED WHAT HAD THEY DONE? CHAD FELT REALLY BAD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY.

CHAPTER 4 MEANWHILE

(AT CHAD AND ZOEY'S HOUSE)

WHEN CHAD AND ZOEY'S MOM GOT HOME SHE WAS WONDERING WERE THEY WERE.

THEN SHE FOUND THE NOTE AND READ IT OUT LOUD

COME GET YOUR SISTER CHAD OR WE WILL TURN HER INTO A GHOST. FROM THE 11 GHOSTS. P.S. SHE'S IN THE OLD ABANDONED HOUSE.

CHAD AND ZOEY'S MOM WAS HORRIFIED! THEN SHE THOUGHT WHAT IF THEY WERE TRICKING HER, WHAT IF IT WAS ONE OF ZOEYS PRANKS? BUT IT MIGHT NOT BE? THEIR MOM WAS SO CONFUSED THEN SHE SAID THEY ARE NOT LYING. THEN SHE YELLED TO ZOEY AND CHAD . SHE DID NOT HEAR ANYTHING. THEN CHAD AND ZOEY'S MOM SCREAMED . IN A SCARED VOICE . MY BABYS THERE GONE SHE SAID CRYING A BIT . THEN THEIR MOM STARTED TO CALL ALL OF THEIR NEIGHBORS TO ASK THEM IF THEY HAVE SEEN HER KIDS. ALL OF THE NEIGHBORS SAID NO . THAT'S WHEN CHADS AND ZOEY'S MOM REALLY STARTED TO WORRY, THEN SHE FOUND ZOEYS PINK BOW AND STARTED TO CRY. AND IN HER MIND SHE THOUGHT THAT SHE WAS THE WORST PARENT IN THE WHOLE WORLD . THEN SHE THOUGHT ABOUT HER CHILDHOOD AND THEN SHE CHANGED HER MIND BECAUSE SHE WAS NOT TREATED THE BEST EVERY TIME SHE ASKED SOMETHING SHE WOULD GET A WHIPPING. THEN SHE THOUGHT WHY WOULD THE GHOSTS TAKE HER KIDS? SHE WONDERED WHY THEY WOULD NOT TAKE ANOTHER KID . WHY HERS. THEN SHE WAS THINKING OF WHAT

KIDS MIGHT HAVE DONE TO MAKE THEM WANT
HER CHILDREN . THEN SHE REMEMBERED WHEN
THEY WENT TO A GRAVEYARD AND THEY HAD
A BIG FIGHT . NEXT TO A ROW OF ELEVEN
GRAVES AND THE ONLY NAME SHE COULD
REMEMBER WAS SOUL. THEN THEIR MOM WENT
BACK TO THE GRAVEYARD AND SAW TWO
MORE GRAVESTONES AND THEY READ CHAD
AND ZOEY . THEN THEIR MOM WENT INTO I
NSTINCT SHOCK AND STARTED TO CRY.THEN
THEY WENT HOME. AND FELT TWO HANDS ON
HER SHOULDER AND A NOTE ON THE TABLE
SAYING ...

*MOM ITS', CHAD AND ZOEY YOUR KIDS. DON'T WORRY WE ARE ALL
RIGHT. DON'T WE WORRY CAN STILL LIVE TOGETHER AND HAVE MEALS
TOGETHER AND NO MATTER WHAT WE ARE STILL FAMILY.*

THEY ARE STILL A LOVING FAMILY TO THIS DAY.
THE END

THE GHOST FISH OF OTTER CREEK

A SPOOKY SPRING STORY

BY CONSTANTIN BELLMANN

IN A SLEEP TOWN NESTLED IN THE GREEN MOUNTAINS OF VERMONT, THERE WAS ONCE A BREATH TAKING CREEK THAT RAN THROUGH THE SMALL TOWNS. THE CREEK WAS FULL OF CRYSTAL CLEAR WATER AND HEALTHY WILDLIFE. THE CHILDREN IN THE VILLAGES LOVED TO COOL OFF ON HOT SUMMER DAYS BY SWINGING FROM TREE VINES AND LANDING IN THE POOLS THAT BRANCHED OFF THE CREEK, AND THE FISHERMAN COULD CATCH DELICIOUS FISH. THE CREEK WAS ALSO ONE OF THE BIGGEST ATTRACTIONS IN VERMONT.

OVERTIME, THE TEENAGERS BEGAN DISRESPECTING THE CREEK. THE CREEK WAS A FAVORITE HANG OUT PLACE TO GATHER AND PARTY. UNFORTUNATELY, SOMETIMES THE TEENAGERS THREW THEIR SODA CANS IN THE CREEK ALONG WITH THEIR CANDY WRAPPERS AND PLASTIC TRASH. WITHOUT THINKING OF THE CONSEQUENCES SOME HORRIFIC TEENAGERS EVEN POLLUTED THE CREEK WITH OIL AND COAL AND OTHER HARMFUL SUBSTANCES.

THE MORE THE CREEK BECAME POLLUTED, THE MORE THE WILDLIFE RETREATED. BY NOW, EVEN THE BEST FISHERMAN COULD NOT CATCH EVEN A SMALL BASS. BUT THE FISH WERE STILL THERE, IN THE FORM OF TRANSLUCENT GHOST FISH, AND THEY ONLY CAME OUT AT MIDNIGHT. AND THEY COULD ONLY BE SEEN BY CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO BELIEVED IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT. NOT MANY PEOPLE BELIEVED IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT, SO ONLY A FEW PEOPLE COULD SEE THE TRANSLUCENT FISH. IN FACT ONLY THREE OUT OF TWENTY PEOPLE COULD SEE THE FISH. THIS WAS CERTAINLY NOT A GOOD SIGN.

THERE HAD BEEN RUMORS ABOUT THESE GHOST FISH, MANY THOUGHT IT WAS JUST LEGEND BECAUSE FEW HAD SEEN THEM. AS THE STORY WAS TOLD AND RETOLD THE TRANSLUCENT FISH BEGAN TO HAVE JAGGED TEETH, BE 3-6 FEET LONG AND JUMP OUT AND BITE ANYONE WHO DARED GO NEAR THEM. WITH TIME IT BECAME A FAVORITE DARE THAT TEENAGERS DID. THEY DARED EACH OTHER TO GO TO THE FALLS AT MIDNIGHT AND BRING BACK PROOF OF THESE GHOST FISH. MANY TRIED, BUT FEW, IF ANY, SAW THESE GRUESOME FISH. THAT DIDN'T STOP THE STORIES FROM GROWING. NOW THESE FISH WERE

EATING SMALL CHILDREN AND BITING THEM AND LEAVING THEM POISONED. THE FEW PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY SAW THE FISH WERE TOO STUNNED TO TALK ABOUT IT THE NEXT DAY.

MARC AND HIS SISTER MARGARET WERE TWO OF THE LUCKY ONES WHO COULD SEE THESE CLEAR GLOWING FISH JUMP FROM THE FALLS LATE AT NIGHT. THEIR PARENTS, WHO HAD LOVED THE CREEK AS CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THEMSELVES, TOOK THEM TO THE FALLS ONE SUMMER NIGHT. THEY ALL STOOD BY THE BASE OF THE FALLS IN SILENCE WATCHING AND WAITING. THEIR MOM AND DAD KEPT THEM ENTERTAINED BY TELLING THEM ABOUT THE ADVENTURES THEY HAD AT THE CREEK WHEN THEY WERE YOUNGER. THEY THOUGHT THAT BACK THEN THE WORLD WAS SO MUCH BETTER. THEN AT 12:12 MARGARET THOUGHT SHE SAW SOMETHING, THE REST OF THEM INSTANTLY BECAME SILENT AND WATCHED. YES, SHE HAD BEEN RIGHT, AT FIRST IT WAS JUST ONE OR TWO SMALL FISH LEAPING QUICKLY FROM THE TOP OF THE FALLS TO THE POOL BELOW. BY 12:30 THERE WERE DOZENS OF CLEAR FISH LEAPING. BUT THEY WEREN'T SCARY, DIDN'T HAVE SHARP RAZOR-LIKE TEETH AND CERTAINLY WEREN'T BIG ENOUGH OR EVEN INTERESTED IN

EATING MARGARET OR HER BROTHER. BUT THEY DID SPEAK AND MARGARET AND MARCK LISTENED.

THE NEXT MORNING, MARC AND MARGARET KNEW IT WAS UP TO THEM TO SAVE THE CREEK, BOTH AS A FAVORITE FISHING HOLE, BUT ALSO TO RESTORE IT TO ITS CLEAR BLUE WATER THAT IT USED TO HAVE. THEY CAME UP WITH A PLAN WITH WHICH THEY COULD SAVE THE CREEK. MARC THOUGHT OF PUTTING UP SIGNS. MARGARET THOUGHT THAT IT WAS A GREAT IDEA. THE NEXT MORNING THEY GOT RIGHT TO WORK MAKING SIGNS FOR TWO HOURS STRAIGHT. MARGARET THEN HUNG THE POSTERS AND WROTE TO THE PAPER, BUT THE PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE DIDN'T LISTEN.

MARC KNEW HE NEEDED TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE INTO BEHAVING BETTER! HE MADE A PLAN. ONE NIGHT HE SNUCK OUT WITH MARGARET. HE BROUGHT HIS CAMERA TO THE CREEK AND TOGETHER HE AND MARGARET TOLD THE FISH ABOUT THEIR PLAN TO SAVE THE CREEK. HERE WAS THE PLAN: MARGARET WAS TO STAND BY THE WATER AND LOOK AS WORRIED AS SHE COULD. THEN HE ASKED THE FISH IF THEY COULD JUMP OUT OF THE WATER AND PRETEND TO BITE MARGARET. MARC TOOK MANY

PICTURES AND THEN WENT HOME. THEY COULD BARELY WAIT TO UPLOAD THE PICTURES TO SEE HOW SPOOKY THEY LOOKED. THEY DECIDED BLACK AND WHITE WAS THE BEST OPTION, IT MADE THE TRANSLUCENT FISH LOOK PARTICULARLY GHOSTLY.

THE NEXT MORNING THEY ASKED THEIR PARENTS WHICH PICTURE WAS THE MOST CONVINCING PHOTO.

NEXT THEY SENT THE PHOTO TO THE NEWSPAPER.

MARC ALSO WROTE A WHOLE STORY ABOUT HOW THEY NARROWLY ESCAPED AND HOW THEY COULD MAKE SURE THAT THE FISH WOULD NOT HARM ANY OTHER PERSON WHO GOES CLOSE TO THEM. THE STORY MADE THE HEADLINES OF THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER AND EVERYONE STARTED TALKING ABOUT IT. MANY PEOPLE WERE SCARED AND ASKED MARGARET IF SHE WAS OKAY. SHE ALWAYS SAID YES, BUT IF THEY WANTED TO MAKE SURE NO ONE WOULD GET HURT SHE SAID TO CLEAN UP THE CREEK. MANY PEOPLE STARTED CLEANING UP THE CREEK. SOME TEENAGERS WHO THREW CANDY WRAPPERS INTO THE CREEK WERE SENTENCED TO COMMUNITY SERVICE AND TO PICK UP THE TRASH THAT THEY THREW IN THE CREEK.

TRASH PICKUPS WERE HELD WHERE PEOPLE OF ALL AGES COULD PICK UP TRASH AND THEN HAVE SOME TIME TO TALK TO OTHERS ABOUT HOW THEY WILL USE

THE CREEK WHEN IT IS CLEAN AGAIN. SIGNS WERE PUT UP AND FINES WOULD BE GIVEN OUT TO ANYONE WHO WOULD LITTER. MAR AND MARGARET WERE ALSO GIVEN AWARDS FOR BEING GOOD CITIZENS.

IN THE END, THE CREEK WAS RESTORED TO ITS NATURAL BEAUTY, THE WATER WAS CRYSTAL CLEAR BLUE AGAIN, THE FISH NO LONGER WERE TRANSLUCENT AND CREEPY. THE POOLS WERE FULL OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF ALL AGES AGAIN AND NOW EVERYONE WAS ABLE TO ENJOY THE CREEK ONCE AGAIN. AND PARENTS MADE SURE TO TELL THEIR CHILDREN AND GENERATIONS TO COME ABOUT THE GHOST FISH WHO HAUNTED THE CREEK FOR MANY YEARS TO REMIND EVERYONE TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

THE FEAST

DENIESE AND DENEPHEW WERE NOT VERY SMART. FOR INSTANCE THEY DIDN'T KNOW NOT TO TAKE FOOD FROM STRANGERS. THEY ALSO DIDN'T KNOW NOT TO FOLLOW THEM INTO A DARK HOUSE WHERE NO ONE COULD HEAR THEM SCREAM. REMEMBER THAT BECAUSE THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED.

ON THEIR CAMPING TRIP TO ARDEN PARK IN VERMONT, DENEISE'S PARENTS TOLD HER TO GO GET WATER FROM THE SPOUT IN THE CAMPGROUND, SO BEING A NICE CHILD, DENEISE SKIPPED OFF WITH THEIR WATER BOTTLES. SHE DIDN'T RETURN. THE PARENTS SENT DENEPHEW TO BRING BACK DENEISE. RELUCTANTLY, DENEPHEW WENT AFTER HIS SISTER.

DENEPHEW TRUDGED TO THE WATERSPOUT, BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF DENEISE ANYWHERE.

"DENEISE? WHERE ARE YOU?" DENEPHEW TURNED IN A CIRCLE AS HE CALLED FOR HIS SISTER. THERE WAS NO ANSWER. WHEN HE TURNED TO GO BACK TO THEIR SITE AND TELL HIS PARENTS HE COULDN'T FIND DENEISE, HE COULDN'T FIND THE PATH. HE LOOKED AROUND FRANTICALLY, SHOUTING HIS

HIS SISTER'S NAME AND HEARING NOTHING IN RETURN. EVENTUALLY, HE SPIED SMOKE RISING ABOVE THE TREETOPS. "THERE'S OUR CAMPSITE!" HE THOUGHT, AND RAN IN THAT DIRECTION. HE RAN UNTIL HE REACHED THE SOURCE OF THE SMOKE – A LOG CABIN. HE RAN UP AND KNOCKED ON THE DOOR. "HELLO? IS ANYONE HERE? I NEED DIRECTIONS! CAN YOU PLEASE HELP?"

THE DOOR OPENED WITH A CREAK AND A MIDDLE-AGED MAN STEPPED INTO THE DOORFRAME. "COME ON INSIDE. WE WILL HELP YOU GET BACK TO YOUR CAMPSITE, BUT WHY DON'T WE HAVE DINNER FIRST? IT'S LATE, AND YOU LOOK HUNGRY." RELIEVED, DENEPHEW STEPPED INSIDE. AS HE WALKED INTO THE DINING ROOM, HIS HOST SAID "YOU'RE THE SECOND PERSON WHO HAS COME HERE TONIGHT." DENEPHEW TURNED THE CORNER AND SAW HIS SISTER SITTING AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE. HE RECOILED IN DISGUST BECAUSE ALL OF THE FOOD ON THE DINNER TABLE WAS ROTTEN AND SLIMY – AND HIS SISTER WAS GOBBLING IT DOWN LIKE SHE HADN'T EATEN IN DAYS.

DENIESE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THAT'LL PROBABLY
GIVE YOU FOOD POISONING!"

"NO, THIS IS SO GOOD! YOU HAVE TO TRY IT!"

DENIESE MUMBLED AROUND A BITE OF RANCID MUSH.

DENEPHEW TURNED TO THE HOST TO ASK ABOUT THE

FOOD. THE MAN GRABBED DENEPHEW'S ARM AND

HELD OUT A PLATE

OF WRIGGLING WORMS. "TRY IT, I'M SURE YOU'LL

LOVE IT TOO."

THE END

THE GHOSTLY GRAVEYARD

BY DECLAN SIMS

“NEVER,” SAID 10 YEAR OLD JAMES SMITH.

“WHY NOT?” SAID HIS BEST FRIEND TOM KING. HE WAS 10 ALSO.

“BECAUSE IT’S SCARY.”

“THE GRAVEYARD ISN’T SCARY, EVERYBODY IN THERE IS DEAD SO THEY CAN’T HURT YOU.”

“ALRIGHT LET’S GET A MOVE ON BEFORE IT STARTS RAINING.” WHEN THEY PASSED A GRAVE LABELED HANK WOODS A WHITE GHOST LIKE FIGURE POPPED UP OUT OF THE GROUND.

“AHHH!” SAID JAMES AND TOM. THEY TURNED AND RAN AS FAST AS THEY COULD TO TOM’S HOUSE. JAMES WAS SLEEPING OVER AT TOM’S HOUSE. WHEN THEY REACHED TOM’S ROOM THEY DISCUSSED WHAT THEY SAW.

“THAT COULDN’T HAVE BEEN REAL,” SAID TOM.

“SURE IT COULD HAVE,” SAID JAMES.

“I THINK IT WAS A PROJECTION.”

“IT COULD HAVE BEEN,” SAID JAMES.

“BOYS! TIME FOR BED!” SAID MRS.KING.

THE NEXT MORNING AFTER BREAKFAST TOM AND JAMES WENT BACK TO THE GRAVEYARD.

NEXT TO HANK’S GRAVE THEY FOUND FOOTPRINTS! “LET’S FOLLOW THEM,” SAID JAMES. SO THEY DID BUT UNFORTUNATELY THEY ENDED AT THE SIDEWALK.

“LET’S GO BACK TO THE GRAVE AND SEARCH FOR MORE CLUES,” SAID JAMES.

“I AGREE,” SAID TOM.

WHEN THEY GOT BACK TO THE GRAVE THEY FOUND A NOTE THAT SAID, “THOSE WHO STEAL OTHER PEOPLE’S TESTS SHOULD FEEL SORRY. SINCERELY, ME.”

“WHO COULD THAT BE?” SAID TOM.

“IT MUST BE SOMEONE IN OUR CLASS,” SAID JAMES.

“YOU’RE RIGHT,” SAID TOM. “LETS GO TO THE CAFE IN TOWN AND THEN COME BACK HERE.”

“SURE.”

AT THE CAFE IT WAS QUITE CROWDED SO THEY FOUND A TABLE WITH THEIR NEIGHBOR MRS.STONE AFTER THEY ORDERED THEIR FOOD. THEY TALKED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. THEY DECIDED TO HAVE A STAKE OUT TONIGHT AT HANK’S GRAVE.

THEY MET EACH OTHER AT THE GATE OF THE GRAVE YARD. AND WENT IN! THEY HAD SAT THERE FOR FIVE MINUTES WHEN THEY SAW SOMEONE IT WAS ALEX BARNES THE SMARTEST KID IN THEIR GRADE. THEY WATCHED HIM SET UP A PROJECTOR.

“I WAS RIGHT,” WHISPERED TOM. AFTER ALEX SET UP THE GHOST HE HID BEHIND A TREE AND MADE GHOST NOISES.

“JUMP OUT ON THE COUNT OF THREE,” SAID TOM. “1, 2, 3 STOP RIGHT THERE ALEX!” ALEX WAS VERY STARTLED.

“WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS ALEX?” QUESTIONED JAMES.

“BECAUSE YOU BOTH STOLE MY TEST!”

“NO WE DIDN’T,” THEY BOTH SAID.

“TOMORROW IS MONDAY WE CAN TALK TO THE PRINCIPAL THEN,” SAID JAMES. THE NEXT DAY SCHOOL PASSED SLOWLY. FINALLY THE DAY ENDED AND THE THREE OF THEM HAD A TALK WITH THE PRINCIPAL.

“WELL,” SAID THE PRINCIPAL, “THE FIRST MATTER OF BUSINESS IS TO FIND THE PERSON WHO DID STEAL YOUR TEST. ALSO ALEX HOW DID YOU KNOW JAMES AND TOM WERE GOING TO BE IN THE GRAVEYARD?”

“WELL I WAS SPYING ON THEM.”

“I SEE,” SAID THE PRINCIPAL. “ALEX, YOU HAVE DETENTION FOR THE NEXT 2 WEEKS. YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME RIGHT AWAY. TOMORROW I WILL ARRANGE AN ASSEMBLY WITH ALL THE KIDS IN YOUR CLASS.”

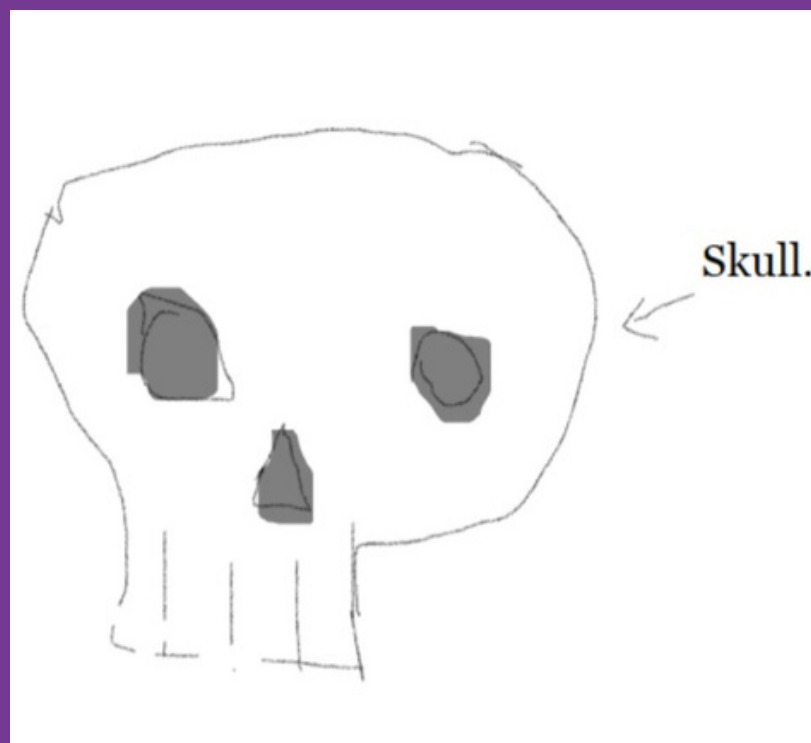
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON THE ASSEMBLY BEGAN WITH THE PRINCIPAL SAYING, “SOMEONE HAS STOLEN ALEX BARNES TEST. IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THIS PLEASE COME UP TO THE FRONT.” OWEN CHRIS CAME TO THE FRONT “I AM SORRY,” HE SAID, “I WANTED TO RETURN IT BEFORE IT CAUSED ANY TROUBLE.”

“THANK YOU FOR YOUR APOLOGY OWEN,” SAID THE PRINCIPAL. “BUT WHAT YOU DID WAS WRONG. YOU HAVE ONE MONTH OF DETENTION AND I WILL BE NOTIFYING YOUR PARENTS ABOUT THIS. EVERYBODY HEAD BACK TO CLASS.”

"THE MARIONETTE'S REVENGE. A GHOST STORY.

BY CAMPBELL GONG, CO-FOUNDER OF THE GROGU
FAN CLUB, ARTIST, LIKER OF ALL THINGS LLAMA,
SOKEEFE SHIPPER, FOUNDER OF THE FIRE NATION
CLUB.

THIS IS A TALE SO HORRIBLE IT HAS BEEN
LOST IN THE THREADS OF TIME, A STORY OF
PAIN AND WOE, OF THE ARMS OF DARKNESS
THAT REACH INTO OUR WORLD. READ ON AND
BE WARNED.



IT WAS A COLD FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH, AND WIND
STUNG THE FACE OF THE YOUNG LAD
CONOR BARRETT AS HE RAN PAST THE GRAVEYARD.
HE WAS A LAD OF TWENTY, AND THE SON
OF THE TOWN POTTER, AND BETROTHED TO MARRY
THE ORPHANED DAUGHTER OF THE BLACK
SMITH, MARIAM. IN FACT, HE COULD SEE HER NOW,
STANDING UNDER THE OAK THAT GREW
NEXT TO THE CEMETERY. CONOR WAVED AND MARIAM
RETURNED HIS GREETING. MARIAM
WAS THIN BUT BEAUTIFUL WITH LONG, DARK HAIR
AND GRAY EYES. TODAY, THOUGH, SHE
SEEMED PALER THAN USUAL, OR MAYBE IT WAS A
TRICK OF THE LIGHT, DECIDED CONOR.
STRANGELY, ON HIS WAY TO THE INN, PEOPLE MEET
HIM WITH SHAKES OF THEIR HEADS OR
SORROWFUL GLANCES. CONOR HURRIED ALONG,
SLIGHTLY DISTURBED BY THIS ODD TREATMENT.

WHEN HE REACHED THE INN, HE WENT OVER TO THE
TABLE WHERE HIS BEST FRIEND,
MARCUS, WAS SITTING. BUT AS HE GOT CLOSER,
CONOR NOTICED THAT THEIR FACES WERE
DOWNCAST AND THEIR HEADS BOWED.

“WHAT TRAGEDY HAS BEFALLEN YOU MY FRIENDS THAT YOU SHOULD LOOK SO DOWNCAST?” HE ASKED.

“ALAS! THEN HAVE YOU HAVE NOT HEARD?” SAID MARCUS.

CONFUSED, CONOR RETORTED, “NAY, I HAVE HEARD NO NEWS THAT COULD CAUSE SUCH GRIEF.”

“AH! THEN I SUPPOSE I MUST TELL YOU THE SORROWFUL TALE,” SAID MARCUS. THEN HE CONTINUED:

“LAST NIGHT AT THE CHANGING OF THE DAY, THE MAIDEN MARIAM, ORPHAN OF THE BLACKSMITH EDEN COLE, DIED IN HER SLEEP.”

CONOR PALED FOR MOMENT, BUT THEN BEGAN TO LAUGH “YOU ARE PLAYING A JOKE!”

HE SAID. “FOR IF SHE HAD DIED LAST NIGHT HOW COULD I HAVE SEEN HER ON MY WAY HERE?” BUT THE LOOK ON MARCUS’S FACE TOLD HIM IT WAS NO JOKE.

JUST THEN MR. CLARK SPOKE UP. CLARK WAS REALLY HIS FIRST NAME, BUT HE HAD BEEN AROUND FOR SO LONG EVERYONE HAD FORGOTTEN HIS LAST NAME. HE NEVER SEEMED TO MIND, FOR, IT WAS AS IF HE WAS ALWAYS ON THE

EDGE OF INSANITY. SO, HE SPOKE: “THE FOREST THAT LOOMS ABOVE OUR SMALL VILLAGE HOLDS MANY SECRETS, IT MAY TRICK YOUR MIND. IN MY DAY THE FOREST WAS CALLED VENOMOUS WOOD, NAMED FOR THE SPIRITS THAT HAUNT IT, ON AN ENDLESS HUNT FOR YOUR SOUL.”

CONOR’S HEART WAS POUNDING, HE LOOKED AT MR. CLARK TO SEE IF HE WAS JOKING, AND MR. CLARK MET CONOR’S GAZE, HIS EYES AS DARK AS A NIGHT SKY WITH NO MOON. CONOR WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW BLACK MR. CLARK’S EYES WERE WHEN EVERYTHING WENT BLACK.



WHEN CONOR FINALLY AWOKE HE WAS IN THE GRAVEYARD INSIDE A MAUSOLEUM. HIS HEAD HURT AND HE COULDN’T REMEMBER HOW HE HAD GOTTEN THERE. IT HAD SOMETHING TO WITH MR. CLARK, OH YES, HE HAD BEEN TALKING WITH HIM ABOUT- AND THEN CONOR REMEMBERED. THEY HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT MARIAM. WHO WAS DEAD. MAYBE.

“HOW HAD HE GOTTEN HERE? CONOR DIDN’T THINK HE HAD WALKED OVER TO THE GRAVEYARD AND INTO, AND WHOSE TOMB WAS THIS ANYWAY? RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MAUSOLEUM WAS A COFFIN, CONOR STARTED WHEN HE SAW IT, FOR THE COFFIN WAS A BLANK, WHITE, WITH NONE OF THE USUAL DECORATION. SUDDENLY, CONOR FELT A CHILL RUN DOWN HIS BACK. WITH A FEELING OF DREAD, HE TURNED, AND SAW A PALE SHADOWY FIGURE SURROUNDED BY MIST, SITING ON A SHELF OF THE MAUSOLEUM PLAYING A BLACK HARP. BUT NO SOUND CAME FROM THE HARP. CONOR WAS PARALYZED WITH FEAR, HE COULDN’T MOVE HE COULDN’T BREATHE, AND THEN SOME OF THE MIST CLEARED AROUND THE APPARITION’S FACE AND CONOR SAW A GIRL WITH DARK HAIR AND GREY EYES. IT WAS MARIAM. AND CONOR SCREAMED. THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT, AND WHEN HE COULD SEE AGAIN, HE SAW NOT THE GHOST OF MARIAM BUT A GROTESQUE MARIONETTE, ITS MOUTH CURVED INTO AN EVIL SMILE. CONOR LAUGHED AT HIMSELF FOR BEING FRIGHTENED OF A PUPPET, THOUGH, IN TRUTH, THE SIGHT OF THE MARIONETTE UNNERVED HIM.

AS HE WATCHED, THE PUPPET’S MOUTH SEEMED TO MOVE, TO OPEN, REVELING A SMILE OF SHARP TEETH. CONOR TOLD HIMSELF HE WAS JUST SEEING THINGS, AND THEN MARIONETTE BEGIN TO SCREAM. IT WAS AN UNWORLDLY SOUND. A HOWL OF RAGE. THEN CONOR SAW OTHER MARIONETTES SLINK OUT OF THE SHADOWS OF THE MAUSOLEUM, SOME ON SHELVES, SOME OUT OF CRACKS IN THE FLOOR. ALL OF THEM GRINNING GROTESQUELY. AT HIM. AND CONOR SAW MR. CLARK IN ONE OF THE CORNERS, ON A PILE OF BONES. HE SILENTLY GOT UP AND STRODE OVER TO WHERE CONOR WAS KNEELING. CONOR SAW MR. CLARK LEAN DOWN UNTIL HE WAS AT EYE LEVEL WITH HIM. CONOR HEARD HIM WHISPER, “IN MY DAY THEY CALLED ME AZRIL.” NOW HE COULD FINALLY SEE THROUGH MR. CLARK’S TORN, GRAY BEARD. CONOR COULD SEE A PALE FACE AND EMPTY EYE SOCKETS. A SKULL. “AZRIL MEANS DEATH,” SAID CONOR NUMBLY, AS HE WATCHED MR. CLARK HOLD OUT A WITHERED HAND, AND GATHER DARKNESS INSIDE OF IT, SWIRLING IT INTO THE SHAPE OF A TOMBSTONE. CONOR HEARD BEAUTIFUL MUSIC,

“AS THE TOMB STONE DESCENDED UPON HIM, AND HE FELT STRANGELY PEACEFUL. PUPPETS HOWLED AGAIN, BUT THEY SOUNDED DISTANT, FAR OFF, AND HE COULD NO LONGER SEE AZRIL’S -- OR DEATH’S -- FACE. JUST AHEAD OF HIM, HE COULD SEE A GIRL, A GIRL WITH LONG BLACK HAIR AND GREY EYES.

The Phantom of Room 13



A Ghost Story by Georgia Gong

IT WAS A RAINY DAY WHEN JOHNATHAN AND HIS FAMILY ARRIVED AT MADAM SOMBRA'S HOTEL. HIS PARENTS RUSHED INSIDE, EAGER TO GET OUT OF THE RAIN. HE FOLLOWED THEM INSIDE. THE LOBBY WAS SIMPLE WITH ONLY THREE MIRRORS STANDING BY ONE WALL.

A WOMAN STOOD BEHIND THE FRONT DESK; HER FACE ENTIRELY COVERED IN VAILS SO THAT JOHNATHAN COULD NOT EVEN SEE A BIT OF IT. "GREETINGS," MADAM SOMBRA SAID IN A FAINT, ECHOING VOICE. "I CAN SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOMS."

JOHNATHAN FELT A BIT OF UNEASE AS HE FOLLOWED MADAM SOMBRA. AS THEY LEFT THE LOBBY, JOHNATHAN PEERED INTO ONE OF THE MIRRORS. HE NEARLY SCREAMED.

BEHIND HIS REFLECTION WAS ONE OF A GHOSTLY PALE FIGURE. IT WAS JUST THE WHITE SHAPE OF A BODY, LIKE A DUMMY. BUT JOHNATHAN COULD ONLY SEE ITS BACKSIDE, WHICH HAD NO DETAIL. JUST THE SHAPE. JOHNATHAN SPUN AROUND, BUT THE FIGURE WAS NOT THERE. WHEN HE LOOKED BACK IN THE MIRROR, IT WAS GONE.

AS MADAM SOMBRA LED JOHNATHAN AND HIS PARENTS TO THEIR ROOMS, THEY PASSED SOMETHING STRANGE. AT ROOM 13, THE DOOR WAS MADE OUT OF A DARKER WOOD. SOMETHING WAS SCRATCHED INTO THE DOOR:

*BEWARE.
LOOK THROUGH TO THE DARKNESS?
RELEASE THE PHANTOM
LET OUT THE COLD
NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
BEWARE.*

HE FELT A STRANGE FEELING COME OVER HIM. MIST CLOUDED HIS EYES UNTIL ALL HE COULD SEE WAS THE DOOR. IT CALLED TO HIM. HE WAS JUST WALKING TOWARD IT WHEN MADAM SOMBRA STEPPED IN FRONT OF HIM. “THAT ROOM IS FORBIDDEN,” SHE TOLD HIM. BEFORE JOHNATHAN COULD ASK ANY QUESTIONS, MADAM SOMBRA HAD WALKED ON.

JOHNATHAN FELT SCARED WHEN HE FOUND OUT HE WAS GOING TO HAVE HIS OWN ROOM. OF COURSE, HIS PARENTS’ ROOM WAS NEXT TO HIS, BUT SOMETHING FELT WRONG ABOUT THIS HOTEL. JOHNATHAN LOOKED AROUND HIS ROOM. ALL THE FURNITURE WAS MADE OUT OF THE SAME BROWN WOOD. HE EXPLORED THE ROOM FOR A WHILE BEFORE HE SAT ON HIS BED AND THOUGHT ABOUT THE STRANGE, CREEPY CARVING ON THE DOORFRAME OF ROOM 13.

JOHNATHAN SHIVERED AS THE SAME, STRANGE FEELING CAME OVER HIM. DID “LOOK THROUGH TO THE DARKNESS” MEAN LOOKING INTO THE DOOR HE HAD PASSED AT ROOM 13?

HE WANTED MORE THEN EVER TO LEAVE THIS PLACE. SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THE HOTEL. SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH MADAM SOMBRA.

THAT NIGHT, JOHNATHAN’S PARENTS TUCKED HIM IN FOR BED.

“MOM? DAD?” JOHNATHAN ASKED. “CAN I SLEEP IN YOUR ROOM? I’M SCARED.”

“JOHNATHAN!” HIS DAD LAUGHED. “THERE’S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF!”

AT THAT MOMENT, JOHNATHAN HEARD AN ECHOING, GHOSTLY, WHISTLING.

“MOM! DAD! DID YOU HEAR THAT?” HE ASKED, HUGGING THEM TIGHTLY.

“OH, HONEY,” HIS MOM SAID SWEETLY. “I’M SURE IT’S JUST YOUR IMAGINATION. WE’RE RIGHT NEXT DOOR. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JUST COME AND GET US.”

JOHNATHAN FELT ALL WRONG WHEN HIS PARENTS LEFT FOR BED. HE FELT A STRANGE TUG, CALLING HIM TO FOLLOW THE WHISTLING. HE SLOWLY CREPT OUT OF BED. THE HALLS OF MADAM SOMBRA’S HOTEL WERE DARK AND GHOSTLY, FILLED WITH THE ECHOING WHISTLING. HE FELT A COLD UNDERDRAFT AS HE NEARED ROOM 13. HE SLOWLY, SLOWLY, CAME TO THE DOOR. AS HE LOOKED CLOSER, HE REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A HOLE IN THE WOOD OF THE DOOR, RIGHT UNDER THE CREEPY MASSAGE. HE PEERED THROUGH THE HOLE.

INSIDE ROOM 13, IT WAS COMPLETELY DARK. ALL EXCEPT FOR THE BACK OF THE GHOSTLY PHANTOM HE HAD SEEN IN THE MIRROR. JOHNATHAN DIDN’T SCREAM. THE ECHOING WHISTLE WAS COMING FROM IT.

“HELLO?” JOHNATHAN ASKED IN A SHAKY VOICE. THE PALE FIGURE TURNED AROUND.

IT HAD NO FACE.

IT WAS JUST THE SHAPE OF THE BODY AND HEAD, NO DETAILS.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, A PAIR OF GHOSTLY WHITE HANDS PULLED JOHNATHAN AWAY FROM THE DOOR. IT WAS MADAM SOMBRA.

JOHNATHAN TRIED TO SCREAM, BUT MADAM SOMBRA PLACED A COLD HAND OVER HIS MOUTH. THEN, WITH THE OTHER HAND, MADAM SOMBRA LIFTED HER VEILS.

SHE WAS AS FACELESS AS THE PHANTOM.

Beware.

*The Story of the House on
Hickamo Street
by Abigail Gong*

PROLOGUE

THE FIRST OWNER OF THE HOUSE OF HICKAMO STREET WAS AN OLD WOMAN. SHE WAS VERY RICH AND HAD TWO CATS. THERE WAS A MURDER AND THE WHOLE VILLAGE THOUGHT SHE HAD DONE IT.

SOON SHE HAD TO PAY HER DEBTS, AND THE OLD WOMAN HAD AN IDEA. SHE DECIDED TO PAY FAKE MONEY THAT LOOKED VERY MUCH LIKE REAL MONEY. SHE GAVE IT OVER TO THE VILLAGE AND SOON, AFTER SHE HAD HANDED IT IN, THEY REALIZED IT WAS FAKE AND WENT AFTER HER. AND SHE WAS SO AFRAID THAT SHE HID HER MONEY UP IN

THE ATTIC. NOBODY ELSE KNEW WHERE IT WAS. A FEW DAYS LATER SHE DIED IN THE ATTIC. WHEN THEY CAME LOOKING FOR HER BODY IT WAS GONE.

CHAPTER ONE

NOBODY BOUGHT THE HOUSE ON HICKAMO STREET. ONE DAY, THOUGH, A FAMILY MOVED IN. THEY ONLY HAD A DAUGHTER. WHEN THEY OPENED THE DOORS TO THE HOUSE THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT AND THEY THOUGHT THEY SAW A PERSON. THE GIRL'S PARENTS SAID THAT THEY WOULD GO LOOK AROUND THE HOUSE.

THE GIRL WANTED TO GO EXPLORING SO SHE WENT UPSTAIRS. SHE OPENED A DOOR AND LOOKED INSIDE. THERE WAS A ROOM FILLED WITH COBWEBS AND DUST AND A LITTLE OLD ROCKING CHAIR. SHE OPENED ANOTHER DOOR. IT WAS ALMOST THE SAME BUT THIS TIME SHE SAW A CAT BED AND A CAT DISH. SHE GOT SUSPICIOUS AND SHUT THE DOOR. SHE SAW AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY SOME STEPS GOING UP. THEY MUST LEAD TO THE ATTIC, SHE THOUGHT.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STEPS DID LEAD TO THE ATTIC. IN THE ATTIC THERE WAS A COFFIN. SHE LOOKED AROUND FOR MORE BUT SHE DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING ELSE. THEN SOMETHING GRABBED HER FROM BEHIND.

CHAPTER THREE

MEANWHILE THE GIRL'S PARENTS WERE OUTSIDE IN THE GRAVEYARD. WIND SWIRLED AROUND THE GIRL'S PARENTS. THEN AN ICY HAND GRABBED THE GIRL'S MOM. THE FATHER WAS SCARED. THEN ANOTHER ICY HAND REACHED OUT AND PULLED THE FATHER IN.
THE END