

THE GRAYHOUND

GRAVEYARD

VOLUME II

**A collection of scary stories and original artwork
by Burlington students**





ABOUT THIS BOOK

This is the second volume of “The Grayhound Graveyard,” a compilation of horror stories written by Burlington students.

This year, more than 140 stories were submitted by students in the Burlington Community School District’s second Scary Story Writing Contest. From those entries, a panel of judges selected first-, second-, and third-place winners for each building level, as well as honorable mention.

Participants were able to select from the following prompts, written by Burlington High School senior and Creative Writing Club president Kendal Sawyer, or come up with a prompt of their choosing with pre-approval by their ELA teacher.

Grades K-4

- You get lost in the woods and encounter a strange creature. What happens next?
- A ghost lives in your classroom! (Is it good or evil?)

Grades 5-6

- You are the captain of a ship that is caught up in a storm. There is something BIG lurking in the water.
- You time travel to the future, and it doesn’t look good.

Grades 7-8

- A slasher serial killer is on the loose! No one is safe!
- You get abducted by vampires.

Grades 9-12

- You walk into your abandoned childhood home. It’s exactly the same, except there is something not right about it.
- An unknown virus is being spread around the world... (Zombies? Plague?)

The artwork accompanying these writings was provided courtesy of students in Burlington High School’s Visual Arts Achievement Program. Thank you to all who participated.

Read on ... if you dare.



Paulina Aguilera, 10th grade

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CLASS GHOST

*By Janette Jones, 3rd grade, North Hill Elementary School
Honorable Mention*

Have you ever had your class desk's float in the air? The problem is I see desks floating in the air on their own!

My classmates are watching when a ghost said, "BOOOOOOO!"

Me and my classmates scream, "AHHHHHHH!"

Then the teacher yelled, "Duck!"

The kids ducked, they were trying to get out but the door was locked.

It...was...the...GHOST. One kid shouted out loudly, "THE GHOST IS EVIL!"

Then the ghost started ripping paper and breaking pencils. All of us yelled, "STOP!"

The whole classroom started to shake! The windows broke and wind was gushing in the classroom.

Then the ghost stopped and collapsed on the floor. The door unlocked and the teacher walked out of the classroom. Backpacks and sweatshirts were everywhere. The ghost got up and flew out of the classroom and chased the teacher out of the school. The kids didn't know what to do so they went to the school office.

BOOM!

Suddenly the teacher and ghost ran into the office and the teacher ran behind the desk and sat down and said to the children, "Guys, you have to get down behind the desk and get a phone. Does somebody have a phone?"

One of the kids grabbed the office phone and called the principal and the principal answered the phone. "Hello, how can I help you?" said the deep voice.

"Hi, this is the school that you work at," said the scared voice. "This is Prillit school. Are you the principal of this school?"

"Why, yes I am." said the principal.

"Well hey, we need help over here."

(As she was talking, he was already in the car.)

"OK, I will be right there," said the voice.

She heard a tire screech on the road.

BOOM! (Ahhhhhhhhhhh)
The phone beeps.
[beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeepppppppppp]

The teacher told the kids to stay quiet and to follow her. They were almost out of the building and the ghost came and just stood in front of the teacher and kids. The teacher whispered to all of the kids, "Don't make a sound."

Then the ghost flew away and they kept on walking and tried to leave. Then the principal came through the creaky door quietly and got to them and said, "Follow me."

So they followed the principal through the school and got outside. The principal whispered, "I am going to call my wife and tell her to come, OK?"

All of the kids whispered, "noooooooooo!!!!!"

And the teacher did, too, so he said, "OK," in a whisper voice.

Then a white and black Husky came by. It was so cute and fluffy and all of the kids whispered, "Awww!" But it was not time for that, so they kept on walking and then the ghost ran and put the dog in front of the principal. The principal is allergic to dogs of any type, so the principal sneezed and woke up all of the other ghosts. Oh no!

SPOOKY BONES

By Rosalyn Moyner, 1st grade, Black Hawk Elementary School
Honorable Mention

One Halloween night everybody was out Trick or Treating. When everyone was done Trick or Treating, and when everyone was asleep, a skeleton came up from the graveyard. Sixteen ghosts joined him. Twenty active monsters cartwheeled towards the skeleton and ghosts. Don't forget about the witches, too, who flew from the night time sky. They all went to a haunted house.

When they showed up the monsters then said, "Let's get this party started!"

When they said this the other scary creatures of the haunted house came out and joined them, who waited all year to come out. Then led by the skeleton the monsters, witches, ghosts, and other creatures of the haunted house walked inside.

Walking inside they entered a huge room. They turned on the old dusty lights and a disco ball came out of nowhere. The witches placed cooked foods on a table, including their famous Witches Fingers, made from real witches, for the monsters to munch on. A creature from the house plugged in a cord and the floor lit up in squares of many colors. A goblin came running across the room to meet the skeleton to set up the DJ



Erin Canfield, 12th grade

**LET'S GET THIS
PARTY STARTED!**

equipment. They then turned off the dusty lights and the disco ball

turned on by one of the ghosts.

So they danced all night with the Skeleton, DJ Spooky Bones, playing, "Spooky Spooky Skeletons." Every monster and ghouel had the best time.

The end.



THE HAUNTED MANSION

*By Mathia Emerenciana, 4th grade, Sunnyside Elementary School
3rd Place*

Just a normal day at school, nothing out of the ordinary.

Nico had decided he wanted to meet up with his friends. They heard about the mysterious mansion on the news.

“So where’s this mansion? I wanna go to it,” said a sandy-haired boy.

“It’s down the block, Leo,” Nico explained.

Leo glanced back at a brown-haired girl, then back at Nico.

“Can Annabeth come? She’s a good navigator for us.”

The brown-haired girl nodded. “Yeah, let me come.”

“Who said I wouldn’t let you come?” Nico asked. He looked pretty confused. “You guys got the flashlights?”

Leo and Annabeth dug through their bags, then looked back up, both holding yellow double-A battery flashlights.

As they approached the mossy mansion, they slowly got the door open.

“Hello? Anybody here?” Leo called

out.

“Nobody’s here. The coast is clear,” Nico muttered.

Their footsteps echoed through the old wooden boards.

Annabeth whipped her flashlight over to the basement door, which was emitting a strange, spooky aura.

“Guys! I found something!” she proclaimed.

Nico and Leo came darting over to Annabeth. They all fixed their eyes on the door.

The wind brushed past, and they swore they saw a ghost.

Leo yelled, “Look! A ghost!” Nico spun his head around, but there was nothing there to see. “Let’s go in the basement.”

Apparently some hidden treasure was to be found.

They opened the door slowly, and a fake skeleton fell over on them. All of them yelped in unison.

“What the heck?!” Annabeth screamed.

She immediately perked up once she noticed a golden helmet.

“Whoa there, don’t touch it,” Leo stated. Leo snapped a photo of it and searched it on Google.

“This article says that it was worn by this... skeleton. Even though it’s fake.”

Nico nodded thoughtfully.

“Yeah, but is this the treasure we are looking for?” He asked.

Annabeth caught something in the corner of her eye.

“Aah! Run, it’s a wolf!” She fell back awkwardly.

“Annabeth, it’s not a real wolf,” Leo blurted in disappointment. “Ugh, this haunted house is lame!”

All of a sudden, the floor disappeared under them. They fell for awhile, before thudding to the ground.

“Ouch!” Nico yelled.

A silver-plated sarcophagus was shown before them.

“You have completed the mystery of the haunted house! Take these



Paulina Aguilera, 10th grade

legendary treasures back to your houses,” a thundering voice announced.

The sarcophagus opened, revealing three large Ancient Greek coins

with designs etched into them..

“These are drachma,” Leo explained. “They, I think, cost a lot of money. So technically, we’re rich!”

They thanked the weird sarcophagus, before they climbed a dropped down ladder, exited the mansion, and headed home.

THE HOUSE THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

*By Hudson Russel, 4th grade, Black Hawk Elementary School
2nd Place*

In October, my family and I moved to a new house and no one knew that it was haunted. I thought it was, but my mom and dad they thought it was just a new house and I needed to get used to it.

The next day, I went to school but the kids were not friendly. They were trying to hurt me.

When I went home that day I saw a secret door and I opened it. I saw so many coffins.

I opened one and there was a clue. It said, "What's chopping?" I thought, "What's chopping? Oh, I know."

I went in the kitchen because a knife would do some chopping. On the knife I saw a note. It said "Fire it up," and I thought I was getting myself into a trap.

I went to the living room anyway because I wanted to see where the clues led to. Thank goodness the fireplace wasn't on so I could get the clue and it didn't burn.

That clue said, "Scrub-a-dub-dub." Luckily, I saw it at that time



Emma Pappalardo, 10th grade

**'SCRUB-A-
DUB-DUB'**

because right after, the fireplace without warning turned on and burned up the clue.

The clue led me to the bathroom. I went to the tub and opened the drain. I saw lots of yellow eyes and snakes started crawling out of it. The snakes were saying "shhhhhh." Then the snakes left a slime in the tub, and it said go to the quietest

place.

The quietest place I could think of is under the basement bed. When I looked under the bed, the clue was in the far corner stuck in a cobweb. There was a massive spider close to the clue. I used a cane I found to reach it. I got the clue as the spider was climbing on the cane. It kept biting me and biting me.

After I shook off the cane the spider crawled back under the bed, I read the clue. It said, "Check your pockets."

I did and there was a clue that said "Start over." I went back to the room with the coffins. I saw one that had a big "X" on it so I opened it.

There were two clues in it. One said, "Your parents aren't what you think. Go to the living room."

I went to the living room where I found my parents. I saw a switch on their necks next to a spider bite.

I realized they were 98% robot and 2% human. I remembered I was just bitten and wonder if I'm next?

THE STORY OF THE SCARY HAUNTED MANSION

*By Jurnee Bowens, 4th grade, Black Hawk Elementary School
1st Place*

One dark and scary night a girl named Jenny wanted to go to the haunted house across the street from her house.

Her mom and dad wouldn't let her because people have gone in and never came out. She wanted to go so bad, so when her parents were sleeping she snuck out and went to the haunted house. She went in.

The floor creaked and creaked then she stopped and she saw a dark figure in the corner. She thought it saw her because it was charging towards her. She ran up the stairs and it chased her into the bedroom.

She hid under the bed and the shadow was gone. She tried to get up but something grabbed her leg. She looked at it and its face melted and was almost gone. It had no skin.

"Hi, I'm John," he said. "Have you seen the ghost of John with no skin on?" he sang.

"Please don't hurt me," Jenny said.

She ran downstairs into the basement. She found no light.

Something fell on the other side of the basement and she went to it. Then, SOMETHING POUNCED ON HER! She was never seen again.

The next day her parents noticed that she was gone. They thought she was at school but it was the weekend. Then they thought again.

"She went inside," her dad said. "Oh my God," so they called the police. When they got there, they said they could not put out an Amber alert if she wasn't missing for about 24 hours.

"She has," said her mom in frustration."

"OK, miss, we will put out an Amber alert when we get back to the station," said the policeman.

They went inside to check the news. There was nothing about Jenny there. It was almost dark out and the Amber alert had not been sent out. Then everything went dark and the lights went out. Then came the Amber alert. Jenny's mom and dad went outside and across the street to the doorstep of the haunted mansion.

They went in they called for her.

"Jenny, come out please!"

They thought the dark figure in the corner was a life-size action figure. But the next moment it was gone. Then they tried to get out but the figure was there at the door. They ran up the stairs and into the bedroom in the closet and something took them down, but her mom escaped and her dad sacrificed himself for her.

She went to the police station to sleep there. In the morning, she woke up and told them everything.

"She's dead, he's dead; they are dead. I have no one" she cried.

"Don't go! You will die, too. Please," she said

"We won't go, miss. We will knock the house down. "We will tell everyone not to go into the house," they said."

"I hope they listen," she said.

"They will miss you," the police said.



THE CALL

*By Everton Benne, 6th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
Honorable Mention*

It was October in the U.S. A family in San Diego, California, was getting ready to move. One of the kids, however, did not want to move.

Kennedy, who was 14, was going to miss all her friends and her house. Kennedy loved San Diego so much, because of the weather, her friends, her school, the zoo, and SeaWorld. Tomorrow they will be moving to San Francisco, California.

Her little sister, Ainsley, and her older brother, Liam, were excited to move. Ainsley and Liam loved trying new things so it would be fun for them. During the car ride, it was raining and Kennedy was so bored. They stopped for food half way there, which made Kennedy so relieved.

After eight or nine hours of driving they finally got to their new neighborhood and it stopped raining. Their new house was pretty nice, it had five bedrooms, and three-and-a-half bathrooms. Their new house was on a cliff with a nice view of the ocean. Everyone decided to start unpacking.

“Wow! My room is big, and I have my own bathroom!” said Kennedy.

Kennedy was starting to think that maybe moving wasn't so bad

after all. She still really missed her friends though.

“Kids! Get downstairs. You need to get ready for school,” their mom yelled.

When they got back from school, Kennedy decided that she was going to walk her dog named Brownie. While she was walking Brownie, she got a call from a random number. She figured it was someone from school that she got close with, so she answered.

It was a ton of static and then someone and a deep creepy voice said, “I see you.”

Kennedy thought it was just some prank call, which she hates getting. A few days later, Kennedy's new friends also got a call, but each call said something different, like “I'm coming, watch out,” and “I'm right here.”

The girls couldn't tell if it was real or a prank call. One night the girls decided to have a sleepover at Kennedy's house. Her friend Sloane thought she saw something outside in black with a weird mask. No one believed her though. They decided to watch a horror movie. While they were watching it, Kennedy's friend Everliegh heard knocking on the window.

“Guys did you hear that?” Everliegh asked.

“No, what are you talking about?” said Kennedy.

“Let's just go to bed,” said Sloane.

“OK,” said both of the girls.

It was the morning, and Everliegh and Sloane had to go home. Later that night, Sloane and Kennedy got invited to go to Everliegh's house to hang out. Once they got there, they went to Everliegh's basement to hangout. They heard a knock on the door. It was their friends Zack and Byran. Zack was really fun to hang out with, but Byran was annoying. They all went back to the basement.

“I- I left something in my car. I'll be right back,” Byran stuttered.

“Oh, OK,” said Everliegh.

It was a few minutes later and Byran still hadn't came back.

“Guys, I have to use the bathroom, but when I'm done I'll check on Byran,” said Everleigh.

Once Everliegh left, they heard a loud noise come from upstairs. They went to investigate. They saw Everliegh dead in the bathroom.

They were all scared to death. Yet Byran was nowhere to be seen. Everyone decided to go out to Byran's car. It wasn't there. The only thing that was there was blood droplets near tire marks where his car was.

It was one day after Everleigh's death. Everyone was scared. Byran was never at school since then. They all wondered where he was.

"Did he kill Everliegh? Did he leave to escape, or did he leave before then?" they all thought.

The fact that Everleigh was dead and there was nothing they could do about it hit them hard.

It was a Saturday and all of them noticed something off about the town, so they all decided to stay at Kennedy's house and figure out what was wrong. Everything was going fine until they heard a noise downstairs but they were home alone.

"Did you hear that?" said Kennedy.

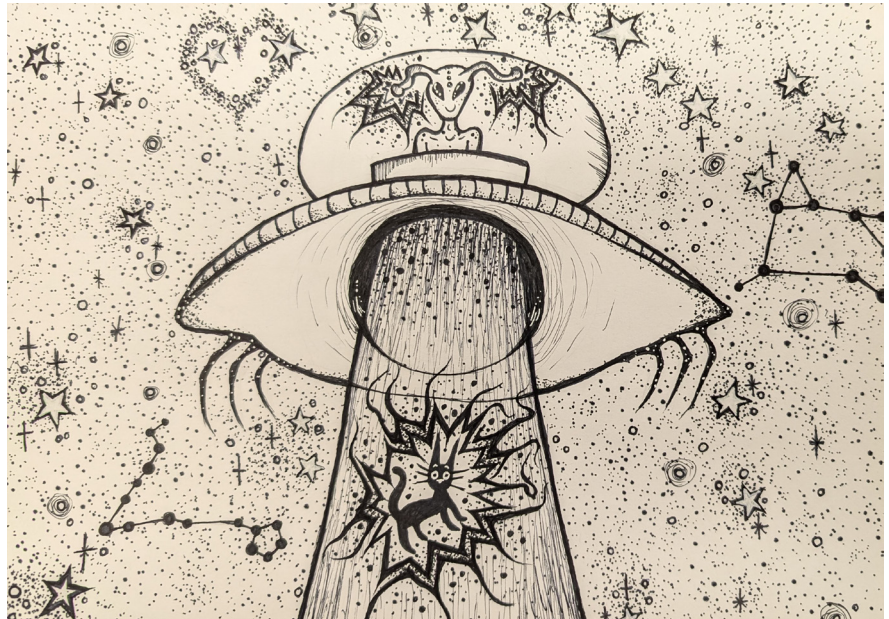
"Yeah," the rest of them said.

They decided to go see what it was. When they went downstairs, no one was there.

"I'm going to go grab a snack real quick," said Sloane.

"Same," said Zack.

"Ok, be careful," said Kennedy.



Marley Anderson, 11th grade

Kennedy went upstairs because she was not going to trust that noise. She heard Sloane scream at the stop of her lungs. Zack ran upstairs.

"Kennedy, help me please!" yelled Zack.

It was too late. Zack screamed in pain. Then everything turned silent. Kennedy heard someone breathing outside of the door to her room.

"Kennedy, I know you're in there. "Open the door. I won't hurt you," said the person outside the bedroom door.

Kennedy stayed silent and felt like crying and screaming as loud as she could.

"Oh come on. I just wanted to say hi," said the stranger.

He broke down the door and looked everywhere in the room. He couldn't find her. Kennedy realized she was right. It was Byran. The only thing she could think about was how much she wanted to cry. After she didn't hear anyone, she came out. Kennedy was sneaking downstairs so she could escape. Then Byran came up behind her. He had a good hold of her and she could barely move.

"Why did you hide from me...?" said Byran.

She realized he was a psychopath.

"Y-you monster!" said Kennedy.

She kicked him and ran. As she started crying, she turned her car on. Kennedy drove her car as fast as she could. She escaped. She did it. She was free. Or so she thought.

To be continued...



POINT NEMO

*By Keelan Savoie, 6th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
Honorable Mention*

March, 16th, 2018

Xavier Dungey was driving down the highway. It was 10:12 PM on a Tuesday. Xavier was a 17-year-old boy who just got his driver's license. Xavier was driving down the highway on his way home from his friend's house.

As he was driving, he got a call. The name read "Beau Lambert" Xavier looked at the unknown number and hung up. Once he got home, he checked his phone and read his notifications. He had a text message from that unknown number. He read through the messages and it said, "Hello, this is Beau Lambert, I am the head oceanographer in our expedition. We are trying to map an uncharted area of the Abyssal plain near Point Nemo.

"You have been invited to join our crew of scientists!"

Xavier looked at his phone and got excited.

June, 17th 2018

Today is the day Xavier boards the ship. Xavier heads to the docks. He arrives at exactly 6:56 in the morning to be early. There he meets Beau. Beau is a 26-year-old

**'WE ARE NOW CLOSER TO THE
INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION
THAN WE ARE LAND.'**

man. He works here as the head oceanographer on the crew. He greets the crew, they are all marine biologists and oceanographers.

Afer preparations are made for their voyage, Xavier boards the ship and the captain sets sail toward Point Nemo.

The ship is basically a high-class pirate ship, with bedrooms and a living space.

Beau started speaking, "We have officially set off for Point Nemo. Once we get there, we will launch two drones and send them down the Abyssal Plain. Then, we will catch a fish and strap a camera to it. Once we do that we have to wait 5-6 hours for the drones to reach the bottom. While we wait, we'll watch the camera on the fish."

Everyone liked this idea, but it'll take a while to reach Point Nemo.

A few days later

"We are now closer to the International Space Station than land," Beau announced.

This made Xavier panic, but he was fine. The crew started preparing the drones and the camera attachment. The time was now 9:19 PM. It was getting dark. They caught a mackerel and attached the camera to it. The drone was an hour away from the destination. They set off the fish and watched the camera.

The water was very murky and looked like an endless abyss. This was the moment strange things started happening.

The camera on the mackerel started shaking and glitching. Then, the fish moved at a staggering pace of 47 MPH into the ocean depths, as if it were being pulled.

Everyone on the ship started to panic. The temperatures on the camera read -3°F . This means something grabbed and ate that fish.

Xavier saw this and looked overboard. Beau started to panic and looked around frantically.

The boat started rocking. At this point everyone was panicking and nobody knew what was happening.

The time was now 10:32. Xavier was running around and asking everyone what was happening, if they were in some sort of storm or a tsunami was about to hit. Some of the scientists on board started calling for help. Then, they realized... There was a low chance someone would come but they still tried.

Then, we remembered the drones. They have reached the Abyssal Plain by now. "Well, the drones have disappeared off the face of the earth." one of the scientists said. The ship started to shift and we tried to get out of here. We heard a sound... like a low rumbling from underneath us. Then... we saw the Thing.

It jumped out of the water and took out the front half of the ship. It took two of the scientists with it, including Beau. We all stared into the abyss of the void. Then we started to sink.

Xavier regrets everything he did up to this point. The Thing re-emerged



Penelope Osbourne, 10th grade

and started taking down more and more of the ship, taking good scientists with it.

Xavier was the last man standing. Then, he spotted a helicopter flying above him. He looked up and frantically waved his hands to get their attention. They spotted him

and threw down a ladder.

The next morning

The government decided to place him on house arrest for what he had seen. They didn't want anyone finding the area. But Xavier, he would never forget.



FREDDY

*By Tarini Rajesh, 6th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
Honorable Mention*

To whom it may concern.

I'm Lana. I was expelled from my old school in Chicago and now I live in Austin, Nevada. It's so small, I hate it. I was expelled from hitting another girl. And the thing is, I didn't even do it.

It's all because of my grandpa, Freddy. He was a very bad man. He was convicted for murder of 13 people. I know it's scary, but he was always so nice to me. I could never believe that he could hurt a soul. And of course people would believe the most popular girl in school other than me, and of course my grandpa had something to do with it. So, that was it for me there. People used to start rumors about my grandpa in my old school. That he would haunt me and kill me as a ghost. But he would never do that, he loves me! At least I think...

You see, I loved my grandpa but he was a bit distant from me. He was like that with everyone. He died in jail from not eating their food. Not surprised. He always wore a buttery soft black coat, white shirt, and a top hat over his clothes. But let's not talk about my grandpa too much.

On the first day of school I was already running late.

"Noooo, not today!" I said in a panic.

Late?! On the first day of school?! I must have overslept. I quickly got out of bed and brushed my teeth. I didn't bother to have breakfast. I somehow caught the bus and I was on my way to school. I was so nervous.

"I'm home!" I said coming upstairs looking for my mom after school. The school day was fine. I obviously had no friends and could hear a lot of whispering about me. But it was fine.

When I went upstairs, I found a sad crying version of my mom. I immediately went to console her.

"Oh my gosh what happened mom?" I said in sympathy.

She said to me sobbing in horror, "Oh honey.. Your dad has been murdered."

I couldn't believe it. Murder?! Who in the world would kill my father?!

"The funeral is this Saturda,," Mom said, still crying.

They said they found a black string of fabric and that's it. After that I went to bed, not knowing what to do with my life. Tears came to my

eyes as I just realized, I don't have a dad anymore.

The next day at school was awful. I could hear everyone whispering about me, about my dad dying. How did they even know that? All I wanted to do that day was cry.

When I came home I immediately went to bed. All of a sudden I was in Candy Land. I was happily running through until I saw him. My grandpa Freddy.

He looked so scary and he was running to me. With a knife. With his coat, top hat, and white shirt. Only, it was bloody. He had this disturbingly abnormal smile. And when he was right about to reach me, I woke up. Panting with fear, I couldn't sleep again. Not from what I just witnessed.

When I went downstairs, I was horrified to see my mom. Dead. Blood everywhere. And the only thing that was next to her body was a black string.

As I was just about to call the police I heard this faint sound, getting louder and louder. Freddy, Freddy, Freddy, Freddy. Each time it got louder the more breath was taken away from me. And it hit me. The black string. From my grandfather's buttery soft coat.



Emma Pappalardo, 10th grade

And then I saw him. The coat, the top hat, and instead of the normal white shirt under, it was a bloody one. Again. Instead of the serious expression on his face, it was an

abnormally giant smile. Again. And the next minute, pitch black.

All I could feel was agonizing pain. But I couldn't scream, I couldn't

call for help, I couldn't move. I was helpless. And then, I was gone.

This is my message from above. Beware of Freddy.



DEAD GIRLS CAN'T TELL STORIES

*By Aila Plein, 6th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
3rd Place*

"Nooo," Christy whined.

"Come on, you know we don't really have a choice," I sighed.

"Yes, we do," she argued. "We could just say we did it."

"Come on Christy, you know someone will find out if we don't."

"But it could be dangerous," Christy begged.

"Scaredy cat," I taunted.

"I didn't know wanting to live made you a scaredy cat," she quipped back.

Just then the school's biggest bully, Amber Lee, walked by. Her long blond hair blowing in the wind as she strides over with her long legs. On spotting us, a smug smile cut across her lips.

"Well, if it isn't Isabela Smith."

I winced as she used my full name. which she knows very well I hate.

"I thought you guys were supposed to be at the not-so-abandoned

house on Third Street," Amber said with a sneer.

"Come on Amber," I moaned.

"If there is no serial killer in the house, how come you chickened out?" Amber asked.

"Who said we chickened out? We were actually on our way there when you interrupted us." I said hoping she bought it. "So if you're done," I continued, "we will be on our way." I turned my back on Amber then grabbed Christy's arm and pulled her toward the house.

"What did you just do?" Christy hissed.

"I just saved us," I whispered back.

"No, you just ensured we had to go into the house," Christy argued.

"Why are you so scared anyway? I thought you didn't believe a serial killer lives there?" I asked.

"I don't," said Christy.

"Then why are you so scared?" I asked exasperated.

"Ugh. I just have a bad feeling about that place," said Christy.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," I said.

"I guess you're right," Christy sighed.

"Then Let us go forth on our quest for the truth," I joked, making Christy laugh.

Christy had been my friend since the third grade. It was Christy's First year at East Point Elementary. We immediately became friends ever since we have been inseparable.

"You ready?" I asked as we arrived.

"Nope," Christy replied.

The house looked as if it had been there for over 100 years. The windows were all broken. No one would be able to live there. We locked hands and slowly walked up the sunken slightly rotted stairs until we reached the door. My heartbeat quickened and my hands began to sweat.

"After you," I whispered.

"You go," Christy insisted, "You're the one that wanted to do this."

I took a deep breath, and then slowly pushed open the door. It squeaked as I pushed it open. Inside Under all the grime and cobwebs everything seemed normal. Other than the mantle. From it came the only light source. three lit candles. The moment I saw it I was filled with dread. I turned to the door to leave. but suddenly a large gust of wind came slamming the door behind us and blowing out the candles.

we were suddenly submerged in darkness. "Christy?" I yelled. Nothing. Then footsteps. First slow then into a Sprint. "Christy?" I screamed louder, "Christy?" Then I did the dumbest thing ever. I followed the footsteps. I ran faster and faster out of breath. But still I went on determined to find my best friend. All of a sudden I stopped.

I saw a faint. I slowly walked closer until I finally could make out a shape in the light. My mind raced. I continued to walk closer until I could see the face. It was Christy. I let out a relieved sigh. We hugged so tightly I thought I might Suffocate. "Christy, what were you doing?" I asked.

"Finding a lighter," she said as if it was obvious.

"But I don't understand how you



Sarah Cruz, 10th grade

know where- Arrrgg!" I screamed suddenly as I stumbled to the floor. My back felt as if something had punctured my skin. Weakly I reached back feeling a hot slightly sticky liquid streaming down my back.

I don't know how long it took me to fully comprehend what was happening but it didn't matter.

Christy was gone. I laid on my side and waited for death. I coughed up drops of thick hot blood. I asked myself why. Why had my friend killed me. My mind raced through a million possibilities. Death finally claimed me.

But wait, dead girls can't tell stories.

NIGHTMARE PUMPKIN

*By Nora Brakeville, 5th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
2nd Place*

Once upon a time on Halloween night, there was this pumpkin that sat upon the fence. Trick-or-treaters would come by in costumes and get candy.

One of the kids had this candy that accidentally landed in the pumpkin's carved out mouth. Then the pumpkin started to grow legs and hands, his smile started to get sharp and then he came alive.

You are probably wondering how that candy made the pumpkin come to life. Well, let me tell you about a label on the wrapper of that candy. It said, "Warning: Do not feed to pumpkin. They will become alive and be evil."

Everyone was screaming at the sight of the pumpkin and they were all running.

"GIVE ME YOUR CANDY," the pumpkin demanded.

The pumpkin ate the candy and started to eat all of the kids' candy. He destroyed the town and ate more and more candy.

But then this group of kids wondered if the pumpkin gets bigger when he eats candy, does he get smaller when he eats healthy stuff?



Pauline Aguilera, 10th grade

"HEY PUMPKIN GUY, EAT THIS!" the kids yelled.

Then they tossed the vegetables into the pumpkin's mouth.

"EW, GET THIS OUT OF MY MOUTH," said the pumpkin.

Then the pumpkin started to shrink and shrink. Then the evil pumpkin was the size of a mini skittle.

"Even if you smash me now, I will

be back next Halloween," the tiny but still evil pumpkin squeaked.

Then the kids smashed the mini pumpkin and all of the candy that the evil pumpkin ate came exploding out.

All of the kids grabbed their candy and ran back to their parents with happiness, glad that the evil pumpkin was gone.

But remember, he'll be back next Halloween.



JOURNALS FROM THE DEEP

By Benat Struve, 6th grade, Aldo Leopold Intermediate School
1st Place

The following are entries from Franz Herr's recovered journal.

December 20th, 1944

I'm finally stationed in the cold! I've been in Africa for too long. I've heard the officer wants to promote me from sapper to machine gunner. Better than having this Swedish mauser. I'm gonna go hunt the finnish elk, which my mauser is actually pretty good for.

December 21st, 1944

The elk was good last night, but the officers seem worried about something. It feels off.

December 23rd, 1944

We are gathering all the soldiers and supplies, along with the civilians. The officers say a JU-52 is coming to pick us up and bring us to quarantine, what's happening?

December 25, 1944

The officers say there is a virus, making people become cannibal sort of creatures that are gray skinned. I got a machine gun today and was stationed to hold the small airport that our plane would come into, but happy christmas I guess.

December 26, 1944

The plane finally arrived, we are going to a deserted island, I think there is no one there. I believe it's called Jan Mayen.

December 27, 1944

We crashed in the swiss alps, it feels eerie here, there's an old bunker around 2 miles away from here, glad we got rucksacks to bring our food and water.

December 29, 1944

The cannibals are here, we got in the bunker and locked it up, guess we'll be playing five finger filet for a while for entertainment.

December 30th

We found an air strip with a little bomber, my partner said it was a Saab 18, we lost most of the people in the crash, but we had me, the pilot, and my friend Guenther.

December 31 1944

We cleaned up the bomber and got it fueled, which should be enough for Jan Mayen.

January 2, 1944

An English ship is trying to shoot us down! They hit our tail once and our front wings a little, the plane is still loaded with bombs, were trying to evade them but

January 3, 1944

We crashed, they think we're dead. Honestly we probably will be. I hear moans, or something coming from the depths. I need some rest, I think those Brits will be here to arrest us by tomorrow, and we don't have guns. I lost my mauser in the crash, and there was no drilling gun with the pilot.

January 4, 1944

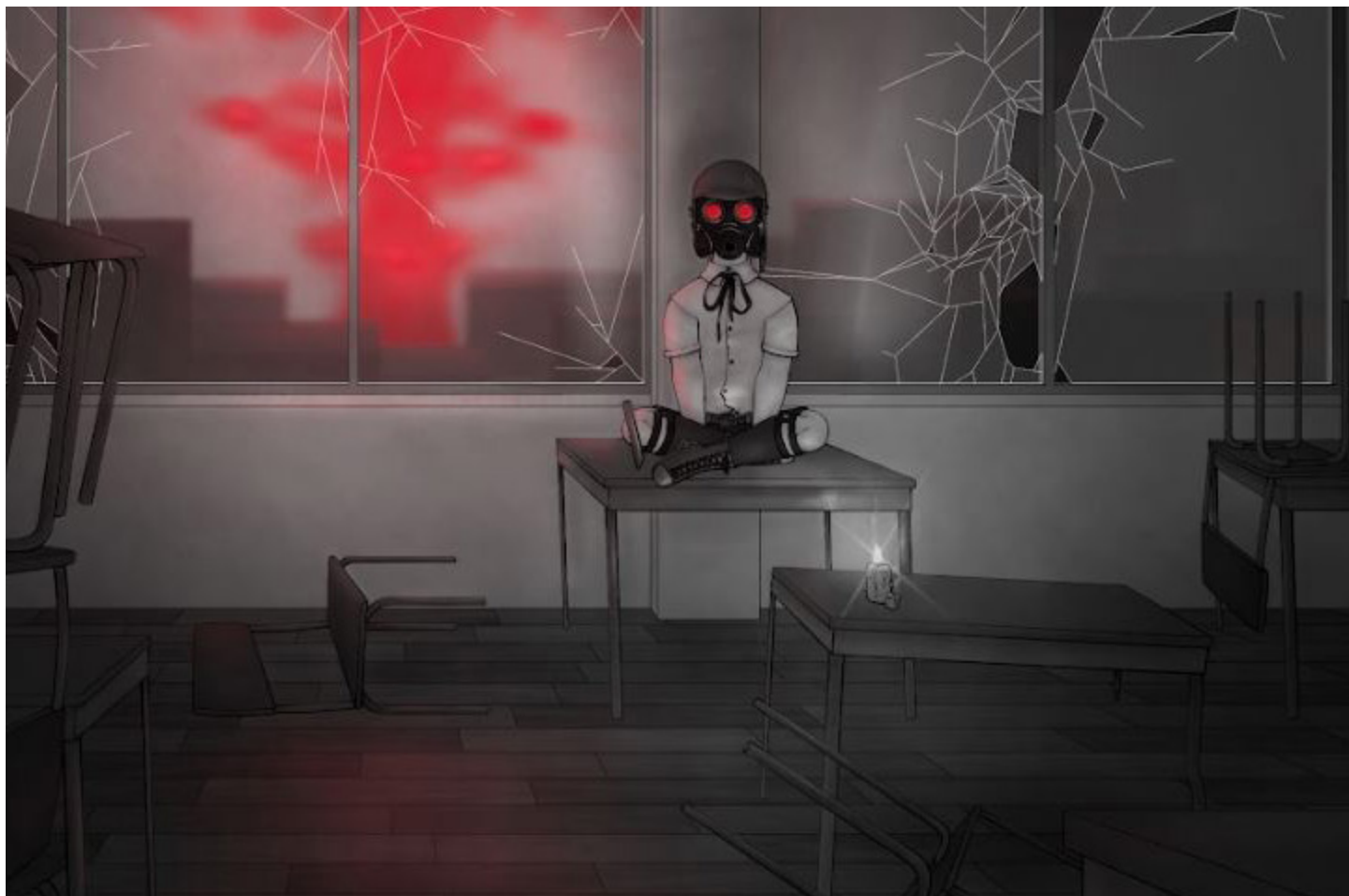
The English were actually quite nice. They allowed us to be on deck, just not to interfere with anything. Surprising since they shot us down.

January 6, 1944

The ship needed food, they sent us out on a rowboat with a lee-enfield to go hunt the elk on shore.

January 7, 1944

We got three elk. It was pretty good last night, but one was just coming toward us, not even running, also foaming at the



Rex Ruther, 10th grade

mouth. I think we should get rid of it, but the pilot says we waste no food.

January 9, 1944

Something was in the elk, I felt sick, and I kept throwing up blood. Is this what being sea sick is like?

January 10, 1944

I feel very tired, something was in that elk, must've been. Some of the others including my friend are having the same experiences

January 12, 1944

I feel hungry, but when I eat some bread, I'm even more hungry, this isn't sea sickness.

January 14, 1944

They put us in a jail cell, I think the elk was infected.

January 18, 1944

They give us a bit of bread every day, and they watch us. I'm starting to see a shade of red. I wonder if the English poisoned us with the elk stew?

January 20, 1944

I see full red, this is weird, i feel like i'm going insane, i need out of here.

January 24, 1944

I just opened up the jail cell, i never knew i was this strong, im opening up the others and we are leaving this godforsaken place.

January 29, 1944

why. friend. bite. red. stuff. come. out. Nausea.

run.out.room

help.



ATTACK ON THE BIG FAMILY

*By Verity Sedlack, 7th grade, Edward Stone Middle School
Honorable Mention*

Once upon a time, there was a mother of seven who got an alert on her phone that there was a serial killer in her town.

With all of her kids under the age of 3, she panicked, trying to figure out how to keep herself and her kids safe. The eldest, Hazel, a 2-year-old girl who is good half the time and bad half the time, took Blaire, a 2-day-old girl who was just trying to understand her surroundings normally, to the basement while the kind mother, Vee, took Roxy, the 2-month old, and Charlotte, the 3-week-old, down to the basement with Blaire.

Ivy, the second 2-year-old girl, friendly unless she loses in a game, and Charex, the third 2-year-old, and Leader, and only boy, ran behind everyone else. They could see the killer's obscured shadow through the window. Fortunately, they had boarded up all the doors and windows.

Then Vee realized she couldn't find her boyfriend, Jax. She checked upstairs and found him sleeping on the front porch.

"Jax, wake up! You have to get in the house," she told him.

Jax continued sleeping. She kept trying to get him to wake up, but he

didn't. Vee went back to her kids, crying.

"Are you okay, mommy?" Charex asked.

"No, the killer got your dad," said Vee, hugging the babies and toddlers.

They heard loud noises at their door. The killer broke down the door with a chainsaw and grabbed Vee. He killed her, leaving only the babies and toddlers, locked in the basement.

Ivy found a jackhammer and broke the door, only to be caught and abandoned in the landfill with the other babies. They were buried under trash. They tried to find a house, but all the houses were full of debris and they were the only survivors left.

Hazel got hungry and tried eating an apple core, but it was 3 years old and made her sick. They had no money for treatment or real food and didn't know how to get it, so they tried eating trash and they all died from it except for Charex. He was smart and begged on the street nearby.

But eventually, he got an unknown disease from Charlotte and also died, which was what the killer had

secretly planned for a long time.

The killer had won, nobody was left in that town.

He was completely covered up, but the police made him get rid of the disguises and the killer was... Jax!? It turns out Jax had made a clone of himself and killed him in the same spot he usually hangs out at to make himself look innocent.

When the police found this out, Jax was sent to death row and got executed for killing 413 people.

But how did he do it in just a few hours? He had lots of secret clones that he lended his spare knives out to. The clones were also executed so they wouldn't go on to cause trouble elsewhere.

One of Jax's clones even unplugged the mayor's life support. The next year, murder became a popular trend around the world and police had to invent a killer detector machine that could detect killers and they would be left on Earth while innocent people were moved to Mars.

Some people liked being on Mars because it was a second chance for humans to live on a planet and not destroy it and cause global warming.



IT'S JUST THE WIND

*By Julia Grieves, 7th grade, Edward Stone Middle School
3rd Place*

“Phwwwwwwwhht,” an unfamiliar sound filled the cold crisp October air. A whistle, but from where?

Abigail Fletcher was tending to her family’s little garden. Harvesting carrots, trimming tomatoes, and collecting sunflower seeds. Everything to prepare for the first freeze of the year.

How she loved autumn. The leaves, the colors, the pie. Not to mention the fact that they usually have bacon.

Quiet footsteps creep up behind her. Slowly getting closer.

“BOO,” her older brother yells as he grabs her shoulders. “Aw, did I scare you?”

“No, I just wasn’t sure who you were,” she replies with a hint of truth.

“Come on, you’re helping feed the pigs.”

Begrudgingly, she follows him over to the old red barn, paint peeling from the wood. They open the door and walk over to the container of feed. Upon opening it, the dusty corn and soybean mix spread about the air. Reaching down, they both grab giant scoops

and exit the barn.

“Billy, stop whistling, it’s getting annoying.”

“I’m not whistling. Are you okay? Do you need to get your ears checked?” he asks.

“No, I swear I heard whistling,”

“It’s just the wind,” he reassures her.

“I don’t think so.”

“Well, whatever you think, the pigs need fed. now come on,” he replies assertively.

They walk over to the pen, to see the pigs basking in their mud. Reaching over the old pen wall, they give the pigs their food.

Quickly Abigail counts the pigs, “Yep thirteen as always.”

“Why wouldn’t there be thirteen? Are you feeling okay?”

“You can never be too sure, AND, YES! I’m fine!” she says, starting to get actually annoyed by him.

Abigail then heads back to the garden to finish her work. The plants aren’t going to tend to

themselves, after all.

A few days go by.

“Abby, can you go feed the pigs? I’m going to the market,” her mother shouts from the kitchen, as she walks out the door.

“Yeah, sure,” she replies knowing that is the only answer.

She pulls on her tattered jacket and heads to the barn. Again she heard it. The whistling. How? Where is it coming from?

“Maybe I’m just losing it,” she tells herself, and heads off faster to the barn.

When she opens the barn door, an owl flies out, making her jump.

Walking into the barn, she sees the barrel of open feed.

“BILLY! You forgot to close it again. Is it really that hard?”

Getting two giant scoops, she exits the barn and heads toward the pen. It looks damaged, at least more than usual. Feeding the pigs, she counts them. It’s become a habit now.

“One, two, three... ten, eleven,

twelve. That's not right." she says.

So she recounts them and again gets only to twelve.

"Twelve, there can't be twelve. That's not possible." She heads inside in a hurry. "BILLY! COME HERE!" her shouts echo through the walls.

"What do you want?" he says, rather annoyed since she just pulled him away from... who knows really.

"THERE'S TWELVE PIGS!" she shouts.

"No there's not," he says in calm disbelief.

"You don't believe me? Come look and see for yourself."

He follows her over to the pig pen to prove her wrong and sure enough, there were only twelve instead of 13.

"Okay well one of them must have gotten out. Look, the wood looks damaged," he says, trying to get her to calm down. "Hey, let's just go look for him."

"Oh... okay," she says, trying to hide the worry in her mind.

They spread out across the property. No luck. Again she hears the faint sound of whistling in the distance. This time she decides to follow it. It leads her down a path to the edge of her property.



Gwen B, 11th grade

"I haven't come back here in forever," she thinks to herself.

She gets to the end to find an open clearing. All of a sudden the whistling stops.

"You know what tastes surprisingly like pigs... just better?" a voice echoes from the center of the clearing. "People!"

Now the Fletcher household sits untouched.

ALL A GAME

*By Grace Van Valkenburgh, 8th grade, Edward Stone Middle School
2nd Place*

The murder was all a game, all a game to him. Who is the murderer? The entire town is asking this question, but only I know the answer.

I was the one who saw it, my mind flashed to the hurt eyes, her hair sprawled on the floor, the knife protruding from her still chest. Then to him standing there with a crazy look in his eyes. She was gone, gone from earth forever. The murderer smiled, satisfied with his job, and was gone in a flash.

I have been seeing things, things that no one else sees. I have seen messages written on mirrors, I have heard screams that no one else hears, and I have seen Ava. But that can't be right, Ava's dead, I watched her die. She's haunting me, she knows.

I was going crazy, my soul was being chipped away little by little. It was all too much, but I kept going, kept covering for the murderer. Why? Well you'll find that out soon enough.

I was in all black. It was foggy, the weather matched the mood. The priest was praying, I looked into the distance and there she was. She was watching me, then she opened her mouth and started screaming.



Edén Meyer, 11th grade

**THE COFFIN WAS STILL
THERE, THE COFFIN
HOLDING
ALL MY GUILT.**

I covered my ears and crumpled to the floor, my eyes squeezed shut.

The screaming stopped after what felt like hours. I opened my eyes to find that I was still in the graveyard. The coffin was still there, the coffin holding all my guilt. If they would just bury it, everything would be normal again,

no more murder, no more lies, and most importantly no more guilt. Everyone was crowded around me and I stood up and brushed the dirt off. Everyone was whispering, I couldn't take it anymore.

"I did it, I killed Ava. She was so spoiled, I guess you could even say that I was jealous. I grabbed the knife off of the kitchen counter and stabbed her."

Everyone was silent, was this a mistake? Confessing in front of everyone that loved her?

"I saw her soul leave her body and her chest stop breathing."

I thought about how I stared in a mirror and saw a pair of wild, almost crazy, eyes staring back. Then I did a thing that I will never forget, I smiled, I was happy that she was gone. That I'm not lying about.

The police arrived to take me away, I went willingly and admitted everything. Then they took me to a cell and slammed the door shut, locking it.

"This is my new home," was my last sane thought, before the disease slowly started taking over my body, turning me crazy.

THE CHILD

*By Ryder Douglas, 7th grade, Edward Stone Middle School
1st Place*

“Hi! My name is Zarah White. All my friends call me Ziggy, though! Nice to meet you, Mrs. Walter,” I say, shaking the woman’s hand.

“My dear Haspian will be no trouble at all to watch; he’s already fast asleep,” Mrs. Walter eerily tips her head, “Well, I must get going, the night won’t party by itself.”

She pushes past me, walking to her car and pulling out of the driveway.

Weird. Mrs. Walter hired me to babysit her son, Haspian, but unlike other parents I had babysat for, she didn’t really tell me anything about him.

“She didn’t give any contact information? Or allergies and stuff?” I shake my head “I guess I will go watch TV.”

I walk over to her living room and can’t help but notice that the house isn’t very well taken care of. The paint is peeling of the walls, the couch has rips and tears, and the TV screen has a giant crack straight across the middle.

“Really, Really weird,”

I sit down, but before I can grab the remote, I hear footsteps upstairs.

**'MY DEAR HASPIAN
WILL BE NO TROUBLE
AT ALL TO WATCH.
HE'S ALREADY FAST
ASLEEP.'**

“Haspian must be awake.”

I stand up, rolling my eyes. I start traversing the stairs, when a ball bounces down the stairs.

“Haspian, I don’t want to play. It’s really late, bud, you should go to bed,” I call out.

I go up one more step before another ball bounces down.

“Haspian, knock it off!” This kid is getting on my nerves.

“Play with me,” Haspian says, his demand followed by the sound of fading footsteps.

“Haspian, stop! You’re eight years old, too old to be acting like this!” I yell, climbing up the rest of the

stairs.

I run toward the sound of a giggle coming from a room down the hall.

When enter the room, I am immediately overwhelmed by the smell of must.

“Haspian! Where are you? This is no time for games,” I yell.

I turn around to go out the door, but when I open it, I feel something dump onto my head and hear glass shatter.

Spiders. I am covered in spiders. So many of them. Haspian, it seems, has poured a literal jar of spiders onto my head.

I scream and run into the bathroom, where I wash my hair in the sink, desperate to get the spiders out.

“What the heck, Haspian?!” I yell after I get all the spiders out of my hair. This has gone way too far.

I walk out of the bathroom and into the bedroom. I hear breathing coming from the closet and tip-toe over to it, opening the door and lunging at... a doll? There’s nothing in the room but a doll.



“What the —”

The closet door slams shut.

“Haha, not in there,” I hear Haspian say with a sinister giggle.

I start banging on the door.
“Haspian, please let me out! I’m claustrophobic, please Haspian!”

I start to hyperventilate. I bang on the door, pleading and crying to be let out. Just then, the floor creaks and I fall through into the dining room.

“Oww!” I sit up, my head spinning.
“Haspian!” I scream. “I’m down here.”

I hear footsteps coming from the stairs that lead into the basement.

“Come up here right now!” I say, trying to keep my tone authoritative while stumbling down the stairs.

Then power goes out.

“Haspian!” I yell, before tripping over a flashlight.

I pick it up and turn it on. When I look around, there is black mold covering every wall.

“Haspian, it’s not safe down here!” I scream, running back up the stairs. Suddenly, I hear a knock on the front door.

“Hello?!”

I open the door. “Mrs. Walter, you’re home,” I say, exhausted.

“Yes! You can get going now. Here’s your \$50.”

She hands me a wad of cash, and I don’t stick around. I walk to my car, get in and speed off.

Two days later, I pull up to the child welfare building and walk inside.

“Hello ma’am,” the man working one of the counters says.

“I need to talk to someone, about checking a home,” I say.

“Right this way,” he says, leading me to an office with a computer and a chair. “Ok, tell me about why you think we need to check this family.”

“Well, I was babysitting for this mother a couple days ago, and when I went upstairs, I fell through the floor. Also, the basement was filled with black mold,” I say.

“Oh my...Do you remember the address?” he asks.

“Uhm- like, 318 S. Miller St., I think,” I say, trying to remember.

He types something up on the computer, then looks at me and sighs.

“Was it Christiana Walter?” He asks, his face beginning to twist in anger.

“Yes!” I yelp.

“Get out,” he says coldly.

“Why?!” I yell as he leaves the room.

“Out. Now,” he says.

“Why don’t you believe me?” I plead.

“Haspian Walter died five years ago,” the CPS officer says.

“What?! No, I talked to him!” I yell as he closes the door behind him.

I get into my car, speeding away. I pull into the driveway of the Walter estate. I jump out of my car and knock on the door.

“Mrs. Walter! Mrs. Walter! Please, I just want to talk,” I yell.

A neighbor emerges from her home and walks toward me.

“You’re sick, you know that?” she says.

“Why does everyone say that!” I scream.

“Mrs Walter died in her basement six months ago,” She yells, walking away.

And when I look up at the bedroom window, I see the silhouette of Mrs. Walter, morphing into a child and walking away.

W.Y.A.T.T.

*By Clayton Martin, 10th grade, VIBE Virtual Learning Program
Honorable Mention*

CHAPTER 1

He walks through the forest in a town called Shrew.

A place in Iowa that nobody knew.

The town soon deem the monster one very bad name.

A name to only bring the monster unwanted fame.

A name so vile, so terrible, so horrendously bad.

One that would make the monster very very sad.

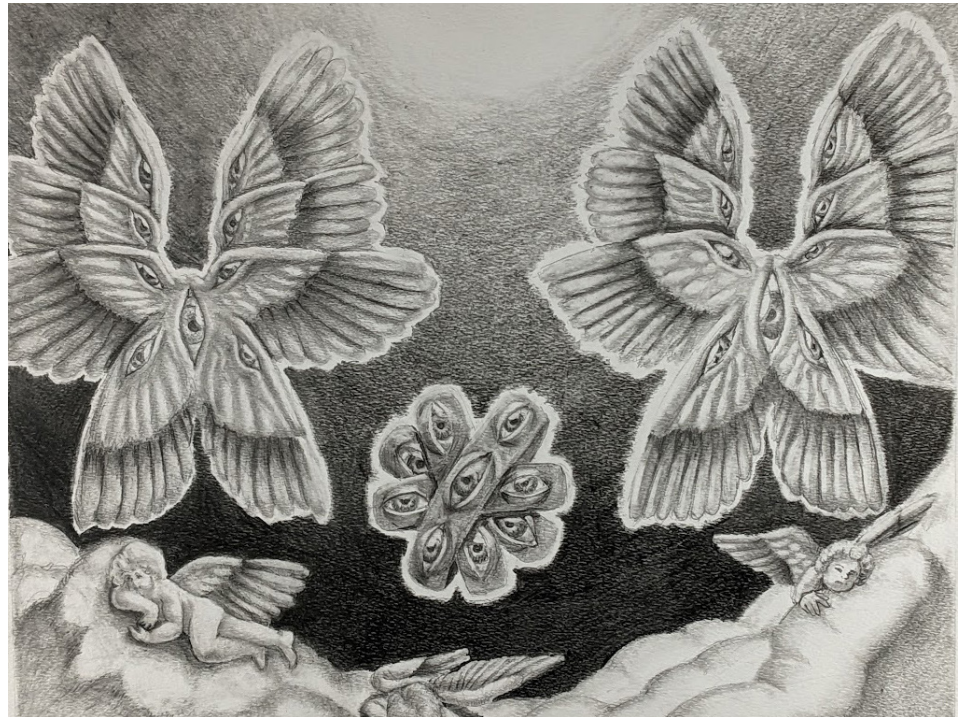
So on October the 31st W.Y.A.T.T. was born. (Wandering Yellow-Bellied appalling Treacherous Troll).

CHAPTER 2

To find the W.Y.A.T.T. I'll give you some clues.

He wanders the forest with size thirteen shoe.

If that does not indicate where the W.Y.A.T.T will be then come closer, cause soon you will see. Cause if you're not seeing him with



Andries Nieto, 12th grade

your eyes then maybe you've been duped by his clever disguise. He reeks of pop tart as we all know,

so follow that smell just go with the flow.

When you find him beware and behold.

For he is one man, but the stories I've been told.

CHAPTER 3

You've done it, you've been to Shrew,

the town in Iowa that nobody knew.

You hunted the W.Y.A.T.T. something not just anyone can say.

But whilst you lay something brings you great dismay.

In your childhood home there could be a place no safer.

Yet you feel a sudden fright, a chill down your spine.

Then within line of sight the W.Y.A.T.T. at your door.



You hit the floor, you take cover,
who knows what it has in store.

CHAPTER 4

Who knows what I will see,
this certainly concerns me.

He kicks down the door with such
a power.

He walks through the opening,
while the odor kills every flower.

He began to throw pots, muffins,
pencils, really anything on the desk
next to him.

The W.Y.A.T.T. had used too much
strength.

He falls into a narcoleptic induced
coma, so I make a break.

CHAPTER 5

Government agents arrive on
scene.

They go up to the house with a
mean looking machine.

Taking him away never to be seen.

I ran to the police station and told
them what had occurred.

They did not believe me, my story
would never be heard.

So later that night I was watching
the news.

They started out playing the blues.
Apparently I was dead. This was a
memorial to me.

It was titled Florida Man Killed By
Raging Pack Of Monkeys.

So I just told a story that never
happened. A story that I'll always
remember, but so will he.

Wyatt is my brother's name, he got
a good laugh.



HORROR WITHIN A MIRROR

*By Isabell Amenell, 10th grade, Burlington High School
3rd Place*

The room is cold, I'm always
cold. It's the middle of summer,
so I shouldn't be cold. I wish it
was winter already. My mother
is supposed to stop by my house
later, I'm really not looking forward
to it getting colder in here. I go to
start cleaning so she doesn't do
what she always does.

"Hannah... You're turning into your
brother."

It's a classic from my mother.

I go to the hallway to sweep when
I see something out of the corner

of my eye in the reflection. I go
back and look and there's a person
staring back at me who looks
exactly like me but she's a little
fatter. I'm just going to ignore
it and go on a run later after I
see my mother. I finish cleaning
right on time. I hear the doorbell,
I go to open the door and I am
standing face to face with the devil
herself.

"Hannah, hun, have you been
getting enough sleep? you look
exhausted."

Of course that's the first thing she

says to me.

"I've been getting plenty of sleep.
Would you like something to
drink?" I ask her to try to be polite
so this doesn't go as terrible as it
could.

"No hun, I'm okay. Have you
spoken to your brother recently?"
my mom asks me this as if he and
I ever had a regular sister-brother
relationship.

"No, I haven't spoken to him since
last winter."

She stares at me disappointed; that's all she ever feels about me. We have a small chat that leads nowhere so she gets straight to the point of why she wanted to come over.

"Hannah, I know I forgot your birthday this year so I bought you something."

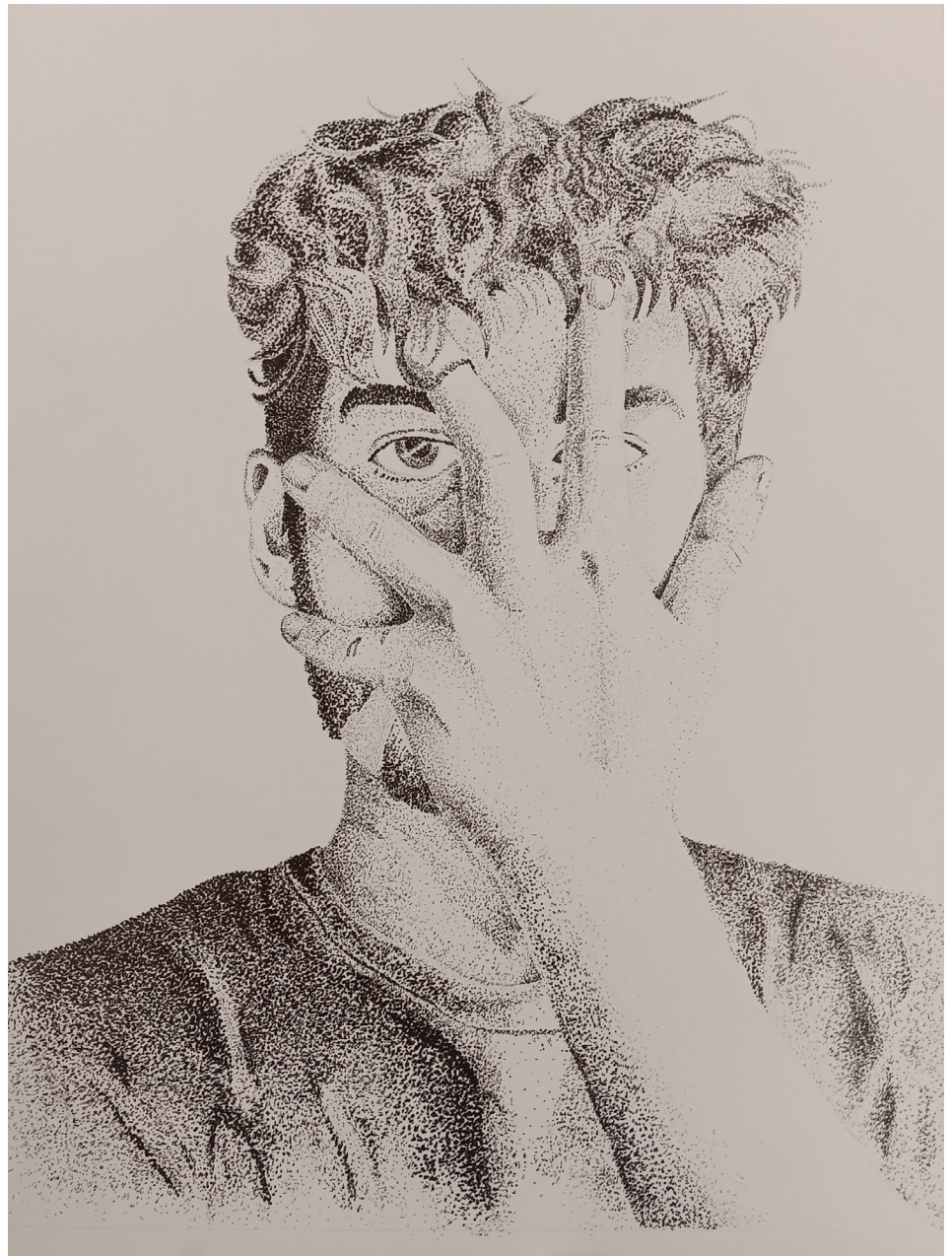
I was shocked when my mother said this because she never gets me gifts. I open the black box and it's a blush palette with a mirror on the inside. When I look into my reflection on the palette I see that my face looks 2x bigger, I drop the palette in disbelief and it shatters all over the floor.

"What the hell, Hannah?! That was an expensive palette!" my mother yells at me.

She calls me ungrateful and spoiled, but I am too in shock to get a sound to come out of my mouth. She leaves slamming the door behind her. I feel so sick that I can't even move. Is that really how I look? What have I been eating to look this way?

It's the next day. I chose to sleep it off. I was probably just seeing things because I was tired. I have been working out a lot and fasting so maybe I just needed a good sleep.

The first thing I do when I get up is go and make sunny side up eggs. They are one of my favorite breakfast food. Before I sit down



Donald Bickers, 12th grade

and start eating I have to use the bathroom and weigh myself to see the progress I've made. As I step into the bathroom I slowly turn my head to the mirror terrified to see the reflection. I let out a loud scream that the whole neighborhood probably heard. There she is staring right at me, an even bigger, chubbier, version of me.

Is this real? Am I going insane? I pull out my phone and open the camera to see if I look how I do in these mirrors. She's still there. I quickly pull out the scale and weigh myself.

"110 lbs." The scale says 110 lbs. How do I look like that and weigh 110 lbs? Your weight doesn't matter if you don't look that weight.



"I can't believe this," I say as I go back to my eggs and throw them away.

I lost my appetite. I can't get the image of her staring back at me. She's so disturbing. I need to move on with my day, but I can't get myself to leave the house looking like that. So, I stay home and spend the day doing home workouts and cleaning more. I'm shocked my mother didn't say anything about it. She always comments on my appearance, especially my weight.

Two weeks go by, I still see her and I haven't touched a piece of food since. I've been overworking myself everyday fighting to kill her. I get up this morning and do the regular, I go to the bathroom and stare at her. She's taunting me. I can't handle this anymore.

"Why won't you go away?!" I scream, as the glass shatters all over and in a matter of seconds my fist starts bleeding all over the sink.

I start bawling. I can't do this anymore. Everywhere I turn she's staring at me, mocking me. Maybe I am turning into my brother. I call my friend, Alice.

"Alice, I need you to come over and help me clean this mess up," I say to her, and she tells me she'd be over in 5.

Alice has always had my back since we were young. She never asks what happened because she knows I'll tell her when I'm ready.

She's like a sister to me. As soon as she gets here, I let her in and she has a very worried expression on her face.

"Hannah, what did you do? You need to get this looked at."

"Can you just get all the glass out that you can and just bandage it up please, Alice?" I beg her. "I really don't feel like explaining all of what happened to the doctors."

She is hesitant at first but agrees. As she cleans it, she still has a worried look on her face,

"Hannah, have you been eating?" she asks.

I put my head down and tears begin to form in my eyes. Even my best friend sees her. I can't get myself to answer her. She finishes wrapping my fist and lifts up my head.

"You need to eat, Hannah," she says in a stern voice.

I give her a confused look.

"Do you not see her Alice?" I ask, confused. Why is she telling me to eat?

"See who? A girl who's turning into nothing but bones?" Alice says as she gets up and helps me up from the floor.

Now I feel even more crazy. Alice and I finish cleaning up all the glass.

"I'm going to make you something to eat, Hannah. You need rest so go lay down and I'll come bring you it when I'm done," Alice says.

She heads to the kitchen. I don't want to eat. I still see her in my head. I follow Alice's advice anyway and go to my room and lay down. When Alice is done, she brings the food to me like she said she would. She stays for a while, then leaves to go to work. I can tell she feels bad leaving me here alone. I only eat a couple of bites of what Alice made me. It was kind of her to make me food, but the question still lingers in my mind: does she not see her?

Later that night, after resting all day like Alice told me to do, I called my brother. I haven't spoken to him since he went "crazy." Maybe he'll have some input on my situation and that girl I see in my reflection.

My brother started off as a normal 20-year-old who had a really messy house to the point you couldn't see the floor. One day he just gave everything up and never left his house.

My mother got sick of him not returning calls or seeing her so she showed up to his house but when she got there, the house was on fire. My brother was sitting on the curb outside with an empty tank of gas next to him. My mother called the cops and he was sent away for a long time. After he got done serving time for arson, he got sent to a mental hospital.



My mother tries to be there for him, but she is incredibly embarrassed of him. She tells everyone he's on a vacation for work. I don't want that to happen to me.

I dial my brother's nurse's number, my phone is ringing as my mind's racing. Someone picks up.

"Hello, this is South Central Mental hospital. How may I help you?" the lady on the other line asks. She sounds sweet.

"Hey, this is Hannah Hart. Could I talk to one of your patients, Tomas Hart?" I ask her kindly.

She puts me on hold while she gets him.

"Hello? Who's this?" The person on the other end says. It's my brother's voice. It's been so long since I've heard that warm, deep, voice.

"Hey, it's Hannah," I say almost hesitantly.

I don't know why but I'm scared of talking to him. I wonder if he hates me for not reaching out sooner.

"Hannah? It's been a long time since you called or visited, how have you been?" he replies.

I didn't expect him to be so calm.

"I'm actually struggling with something that I was wondering if you could help me with," I say, hoping he is understanding.

"Of course, what do you need help with?" He says.

"This might sound crazy but, I've been seeing a girl in my reflection who looks exactly like me but she gets bigger each time I see her, have you ever experienced anything like this?" I ask him. There's a moment of silence. It's deafening.

"Hello? Are you there?" I ask hoping he answers.

"Hannah, you need to get rid of every mirror or anything that shows your reflection. That's all I can tell you. Please stay safe. I love you, Hannah," he says in a panicked tone before a dial tone takes the place of his voice.

"Hello?" I say trying to see if he's still there. I guess not.

I should follow his advice because it's the only solution I have been given. So I take every mirror, makeup palettes, and throw them out. I hope he's right about this. Why'd he act so strange when I told him? Is this what he was seeing when he lit the house on fire? It's late so I head to bed with all these questions lingering in my mind.

I wake up in the middle of the night and get up to get something to drink. Something catches my attention and makes me forget how thirsty I was.

There's a long mirror sitting against

my dresser. It forces me to see her eye to eye. Who put that there? I got rid of all the mirrors in the house. I made sure of it.

I take the mirror and bring it outside and break it. I slammed it so hard against the concrete that I didn't even see my neighbors lights turn on. Soon I see the cops pulling up to my street. They come and ask me why I'm smashing a mirror at 3 a.m. At this moment, I have red puffy eyes and tears running down my face.

"I'm seeing a girl who looks exactly like me but she's not me in the mirrors and this random mirror showed up in my house after I threw out all the others, officers I promise I'm not crazy," I plead to them.

They look at me the way everyone looks at my brother. I soon realize what's going to happen next.

"Ma'am, can you come with us?" they ask me.

I get in the back of their car and they take me to call my mother. I try explaining everything to her in hopes she understands but she doesn't. Soon after my mother shows up to talk to the officers, I'm in the back of a police car being taken to where my brother is.

I focused so much on not turning into him that I became exactly like him, a "crazy lunatic."



FADED INTO BLACK

*By AJ Augsburg, 9th grade, Burlington High School
2nd Place*

"Come on, I can't wait on you any longer!" I said to Matty.

She has been my friend for years, super long story though. I finally got her to agree to come and explore my abandoned childhood home. After Mom and Dad died, it was always empty. No one in my family came to clean it out. Not even my brothers or sisters. I moved out at 19, got a job at a local police station a few years later, and never looked back. I always wondered what had been left at that house. Pictures? Files? Nothing?

"Alright, alright, I'm getting my shoes on. Chill out," Matty said. She is tired of me already.

"I'll be in the car since you take so long," I replied. We have to drive a few miles, but it won't take long.

"Wait, is this...your house, AJ?" Matty said as we pulled up, looking out from the passenger seat.

"Sure looks like it," I said.

My old house was a two-story, single-family home. It was big enough for me and my two brothers and one sister. Shocking right?

We looked around for the key

since we assumed it was locked. But when Matty shook the door handle, the door swung right open.

"Well, that's not creepy at all," I said.

"Yeah...totally not creepy," Matty replied.

Matty honestly thought that since my home had been unoccupied for a while, it wasn't properly secured. I thought differently.

We started walking through the little hall from the front door. The air felt heavy. Like a 10-pound weight on my chest. I saw all the old family photos, all of our old furniture, and the little blue marker stains on the couch, too. It felt so weird being back at this place. It was like I never left. Like our family never left. Matty and I decided to go explore the upstairs and my old childhood bedroom.

"Did they even clean it out?" Matty said, shocked.

"I don't think they did. Do you have that feeling that something isn't right?" I asked.

"Nah. You're crazy. Everything is fine!" Matty replied.

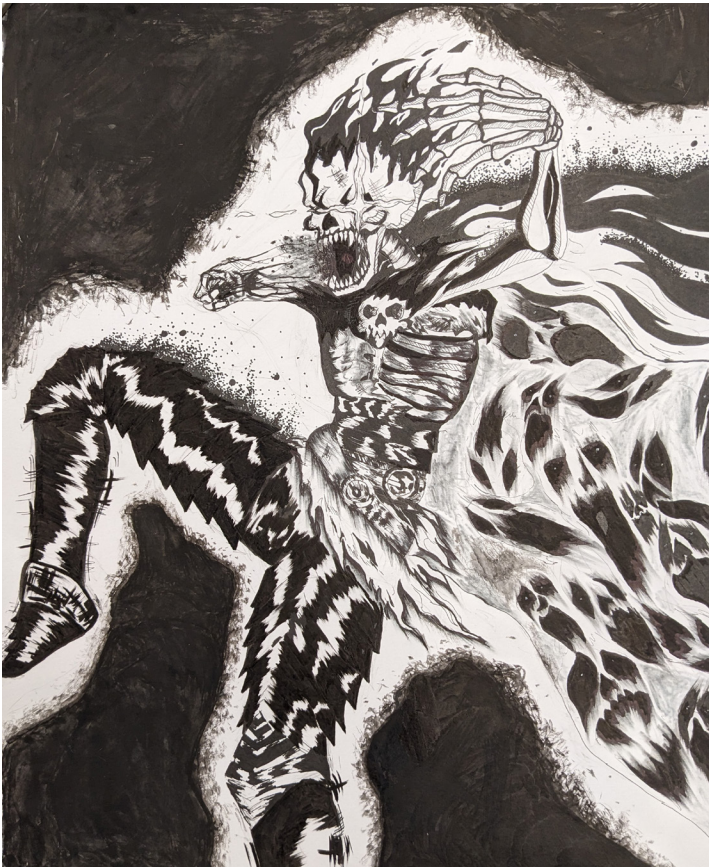
I don't think I believe her. Maybe

on the crazy but not so much on the "everything is fine."

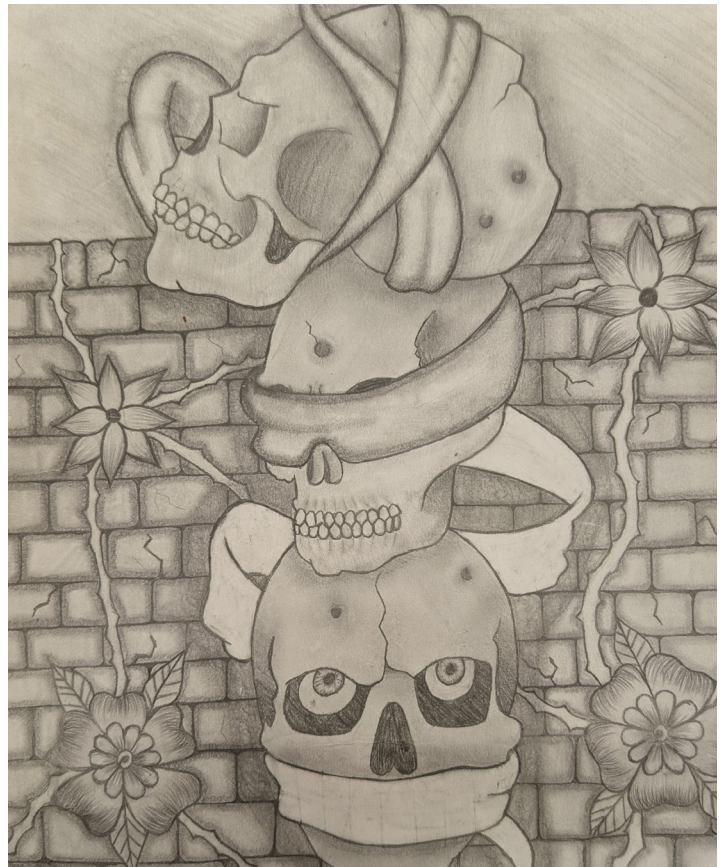
We continued to look around my room, eventually getting bored. We looked in my brothers' room since they shared one. I found some old yearbooks and old high school photos that looked... interesting, but nothing worth further examination.

We moved onto my parents' old room, where we ended up finding horrendous pictures of me, some old photos of my parents, and other belongings. We looked around the rest of the house for what felt like forever before returning to my parents' room to see if there was anything that we had missed, like a safe or a jewelry box.

Instead, we found something strange, really strange. Matty and I went into my parents' closet. We did find a box, but there was something inside it, rattling. Like loose change in a pocket to some pants that belong to your dad. It was like the box had been glued shut. I went downstairs into our old garage and grabbed a hammer. I then went back to the closet and used the claw end of the hammer to pry it open. There was a set of old keys. Multiple keys. Matty and I searched for what the keys might open. Our search took us out of the



Richard Hoisington, 12th grade



Jaylene Appenzeller, 11th grade

closet and back into my parents' room.

Then, out of nowhere, Matty yelled, "AJ! Look up!"

There was an entryway through the ceiling. Like one of those pull-down doors to an attic. We unlocked it with one of the 20-something keys. A ladder then struck down from the ceiling.

"Oh heck no," Matty said.

"I told you I felt something was off!" I replied.

Things just got weirder from there. We fought over who was going to go first. Matty, of course, said that

since it was "my house," I should go up first. So I did. The air felt even heavier, and it was humid and dense up there. There was water damage from past storms. We just had one a couple of days ago. It was the aftermath of a hurricane.

After I climbed the length of the ladder, I noticed there were boxes and old clothes and toys everywhere. Clothes I had never seen before. The air felt so heavy, I struggled to breathe. It was also really dark up here. I told Matty to come up here and help me find a light, but when I stepped onto some unstable rafters, an eerie feeling rushed over me. I couldn't shake it off. I yelled at her to hurry. She came back with an old, weird-

looking lantern she had found.

"This isn't the Iron Age, Matty."

"It works doesn't it?" she quipped.

"I guess."

Matty fully came up the ladder with that dumb lantern. Better than nothing. After a few clicks, it finally flickered on. Everything came into better view. The boxes had red and black writing on them. Some had shipping addresses on them. Outside, it started pouring. Inside, something wasn't right.

We looked in each of the boxes one by one, finding more photos. Some were of people I had never



even seen in my life. There were photos of my mom and this other guy. Even after me and my siblings were born, too. That made this whole “experience” make me want to go home and never turn back. Everything was the same...except the pictures, the clothes, the toys, the multiple keys. Something wasn't right, and it seemed like it was haunting me. I could already picture the nights of me drenched in sweat for the next few weeks. This was something that none of the other family was meant to see. Including me, myself, and I.

What if the curiosity was intentional for me to find all of this stuff? What if that door was meant to be unlocked? What if the key, the ladder, the boxes, and everything else were meant to be here for me to see and no one else? If I was never curious, maybe I would have never even thought about coming back. I was meant to turn away and never look back.

“AJ, are you alright?”

“I don't think I was meant to see this, Matty.”

I need answers and I need them now. There is something in this house, and it isn't welcoming.

“We have to go back. We need to go back, Matty.”

“But we can't just leave this stuff here, right?”

“Sucks for the inanimate objects then.”

WHAT IF THE KEY, THE LADDER, THE BOXES AND EVERYTHING ELSE WERE MEANT TO BE HERE FOR ME TO SEE AND NO ONE ELSE?

I couldn't hold back the tears any longer. My chest grew tight, my eyes grew heavy. The wind outside was getting stronger, the rain heavier, and the sky darker. The air and the density in this house started becoming even more oppressive. The feeling of a weight on my chest was getting heavier — 10 pounds, 20 pounds, 30 pounds. I could no longer breathe. I couldn't tell if the air was heavy because of my emotions, or because the house was abandoned. I yelled at Matty if she didn't come down I would leave without her.

“Come back! Please!” she called out.

I started yelling at her and my ears began ringing. My face grew hot. I needed to calm down. Everything is fine, just like what Matty said.

I go back to the attic. The air growing heavier with each step up the ladder, the feeling of my chest getting tighter, it all came back at once.

“I don't feel too good.”

“We can go back in a bit okay?”

I finally agreed. Everything wasn't fine. We kept looking in those stupid boxes, finding more and more photos, and just some junk. I moved some stuff around, finding nothing. Old clothes began piling up in the corner, and toys in a separate pile. Moving old junk in another pile as well.

The rain started pounding against the sides of the house and on the roof. Lightning crashed and everything began to shake. The clouds grew bigger and the storm louder. My vision became blurry and then went back to normal. I started getting this massive migraine, little dots of color in my vision, making it harder to see. The lantern began flickering, leaving the attic black, lit, black, lit, over and over again.

My heart was racing by now, and sweat marks began to form on my gray t-shirt. The lantern was flickering more violently, leaving more frequent periods of darkness rather than light. No one knows how old it is anyway, it couldn't mean anything, right?

“AJ, I think we should go now.”

“I agree, Matty.”

But right as we were about to leave, a huge roar of thunder came. The lantern was about to lose its life. The lantern shut off. Everything faded into black.



LIFE AS TIME SLOWS

By Karley Waller, 9th grade, Burlington High School
1st Place

It's a cold Halloween night with snow covering the ground. I am back in my hometown for the first time in 15 years. My family died when I was 17, and after a bad accident the following year, I decided it was time to leave.

I have always wanted to come back, but something always stopped me. Last week, though, I was invited to a party the week after Halloween. I returned a few days before the party to see some people and visit my family at the graveyard.

I walk into my old house. The walls are bright baby blue and the floor is covered with toys. It's weird, no dust or cobwebs, no wallpaper falling off the walls or broken floorboards. I look around and wonder why the house looks like it's frozen in time. I walk into the kitchen and look around. The fridge is full of food and there are colorful flowers on the table. I start to worry. Is there someone here? Have people been living in my old house? I began to search the whole house and everything was the same as it was when my parents died. It's not like how I thought it would be.

It's been two hours, or at least I think (none of the clocks work). The TV doesn't turn on, and my

**I KEEP HEARING
FOOTSTEPS; THEY
ARE NOT MINE.
THEY ARE LOUD AND
HEAVY.**

phone is frozen; the time won't change. I think I have gone crazy. I can hear kids laughing; it sounds just like my siblings. I want to leave; I don't want to stay here anymore, but I can't find the front door. The windows won't open, and I can't break them.

I think it's been four hours now. I feel dizzy. I hope someone comes looking for me. I keep hearing footsteps; they are not mine. They are loud and heavy. Please someone find me. The laughter is getting louder. It's like they are laughing at me. I must be crazy.

I think it has been six hours. Cabinets are opening and doors are slamming shut. I must be hallucinating. The voices are right in front of me but I don't see anyone. Someone, anyone, please help me.

I have lost track of the time. It could have been minutes, hours, days. I don't know anymore. The basement door opened on its own a few minutes ago, or at least I think it was only minutes.

I want to go down there but I do not have the strength. I finally stand up. My legs feel so weak, but I manage to take a couple of steps, and then suddenly, I feel like I can do anything. I start walking down the stairs. I get halfway down and glowing red eyes emerge from the darkness.

I try to run, but my feet are stuck. The eyes start to get closer and more start to appear, but I can't tell who the eyes belong to.

Finally the lights flick on and there stands my family — my mom, my dad and the twins — but they don't look the same. Their once bright blue eyes now glow red; their once beautiful smiles are now those of the devil.

"Wh-wh-what happened to you guys? I-I-I thought you di-di-died" I ask, scared but frozen where I stand.

"Lilith! Lilith! Lilith!" they scream while laughing.

I close my eyes as I start to scream



and cry “Please stop, please go away! Let me leave,” I cry out.

Then everything goes black and everything is quiet; it’s peaceful.

Then I wake up. I’m in a blue princess dress and I am sitting at a table with what looks like a tea set on it. Both of my siblings are there and they look like they did when they were still alive, but their eyes are red, not blue like I remember.

“Sissy, come play with us,” the twins call out.

I slowly walk toward them.

“Where am I?”

“You’re home, Sissy, you’re home with us and now you can never leave us,” they say at the same time, the creepy smiles never leaving their faces but their voices getting more demonic with every word.

Then the front door opens and I run to it. This is my escape. I get out the door and everything goes black.

The world seems to slow down. Everything is so bright, I see a bunch of people but I do not recognize any of them.

“Miss, can you hear me?”

I try to talk, try to scream, but nothing comes out.

“Is she dead?”

“I don’t think so.”

The people are talking but I can’t seem to reply.

“Lilith! Lilith! Lilith! Where did you go?” the twins scream.

“Stop, stop! You’re dead, you’re dead!” I scream.

I close my eyes and when I open them again I’m in a white and blue room. The sun is shining bright but there is a man in a white coat putting something into my arm. I scream and push him away.

“Shhh, child, this is for your own good,” the man whispers as he injects a green liquid into my arm.

I pass out for what feels like an hour, but when I wake up, I am strapped down to a cold metal table. I look around and see a man with dark brown hair and black glasses.

“Where am I?” I ask the man.

He looks at me.

“You’re in the basement, you will be my newest experiment,” the man says.

I try to break free but my limbs feel super heavy.

“Please let me go, I won’t tell anyone, I promise” I say.

He looks at me for a second and with a shake of his head he says,

“Nope, too late. You have already breathed in my experiment. If I let you leave now, then I won’t know the results.”

“What do you mean, ‘experiment?’ What’s going to happen to me? How long have I been here?”

“I’m a scientist and I’m trying to find a way to clone humans and I want to test it on people so that it won’t matter if they die or not, so when the time comes, it won’t kill the people I want alive after I clone them. Also, you have only been here about three hours, but the drugs made it feel a lot longer.”

“You crazy lunatic!” I scream as my body goes numb.

I lay on that table for what feels like hours as my captor injects me with so many things. It feels like it has been days when I finally hear a noise coming from upstairs. The man stops what he’s doing and goes to walk up stairs.

Everything feels like it’s going in slow motion. Cops break down the basement door, move down the stairs, arrest the scientist and untie me. Once they finish, one of them carries me up the stairs and into the back of the ambulance. I go in and out of consciousness while the paramedics talk about how I am in very bad shape and need to go to the hospital soon.

A few moments go by and as the paramedics are closing the door I hear a cop say, “Sir it’s not good there are 15, maybe even 20 more



Brynna Poggemiller, 11th grade

people. Some are already dead and the ones that aren't don't look too good. We need more ambulances here now or all of these people will be dead."

Then a different man runs up, "Get the girl to the hospital now," he screams "I found a list of what every person was given and she was given the same thing as all the

dead ones she needs to go now!" he screams.

And with that, I close my eyes for what may be the last time.