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# SPIRITED STORIES

2017 FLASH FICTION CONTEST



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# SPIRITED STORIES

## FLASH FICTION CONTEST

**flash fic•tion** (flăsh fĭk' shən) **n.** 1. short form storytelling marked by the brief number of words or sentences required to tell the story. syn. micro fiction, sudden fiction, quick fiction, postcard fiction.

The Poudre River Public Library District invited amateur writers ages 10-18 to enter the 2017 Flash Fiction Contest, "Spirited Stories." Submissions were accepted from September 1 – 21 with winners announced and the winning stories shared with the audience during a celebration event on Friday, October 13 at Everyday Joe's Coffee House in Fort Collins.

### CONTEST REQUIREMENTS:

- Who can enter: Anyone age 10-18 who lives in the PRPLD boundary area.
- Categories by age: Ages 10-12; Ages 13-15; Ages 16-18
- Prizes in each age category are DBA Downtown Bucks gift cards: 1st place \$40; 2nd place \$30; 3rd place \$20.
- Format: The word count must be a minimum of 500 and a maximum of 1000, and submitted as an attached MS Word document file.
- Subject: The story must be spooky, and set in or around the Fort Collins area.
- Submit by email to: [librarycontest@poudrelibraries.org](mailto:librarycontest@poudrelibraries.org)
- Submissions accepted: September 1 – midnight September 21, 2017 (No late submissions will be accepted.)
- Story submission must include: a title for the story, the writer's name and age, and phone and/or email address.
- Maximum number of submissions: 1

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Winners were announced at the "Spirited Stories Main Event" for ages 10+ at Everyday Joe's Coffee House in Old Town Fort Collins on Friday, October 13, 2017 from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Contest entries were combined to create an eBook of stories that will be promoted and available for download on the Library's website and may be adapted to additional formats in the future. At no point is authorship credit removed.

By submitting an entry, you acknowledge that any contest entries become licensed in perpetuity to the Poudre River Public Library District and its partners via a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution, Share Alike license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).

### JUDGING CRITERIA:

- Does the story fit the contest requirements?
- Does the story "scare" the reader?
- Is the story creative in its subject matter or view?
- Does the story stand out from the crowd?
- Does the story have unintended grammatical flaws that detract from the story?

### MANY THANKS TO OUR JUDGES:

OLIVIA HALBOTH  
MICHELLE THOMAS  
MORGAN RIEDL  
MICHELLE LACROSSE



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# AGES 10-12

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1ST PLACE WINNER  
**THE LONELY PIANIST**

*Ayden West*

I finished the last swirl of paint and declared, “Dave, this one’s done.”

“Thanks, Lain, it looks great! I know I can always count on you to get the pianos done.” He patted me on the back and rolled the newly finished piano out to a waiting truck, where it would be taken to another corner of downtown Fort Collins.

I wiped my hand across my brow and felt a cool sticky feel. “Dang it!” I got a paper towel from the roll sitting nearby and wiped the paint off. Or at least most of it.

My phone beeped and I pulled it out of my back pocket. My mom had texted me. I’ll pick you up at the forest piano, the one near Walrus Ice Cream, it said. I hurried to clean up my paints and packed all my stuff into my bag. Then I grabbed the bag and rushed out the door, waving goodbye to Dave on my way out.

The forest piano wasn’t far away, so I took a leisurely stroll, pausing to look in the window of the Apricot Lane Boutique, my favorite clothing shop. I was tempted to stop by, I had some cash in my pocket, but I remembered that Mom was waiting for me so I kept walking.

My mom loved the idea of putting creatively-painted pianos in public areas throughout a city, and eventually the pianos became our navigation system. We’d say things like I’d like to go to the new breakfast place, it’s by the waterfall piano, or I’m waiting for you by the tulip field piano.

When I reached the forest piano, I looked around, but Mom was nowhere to be seen. I got closer to the piano and heard an unusual tune. I walked around the piano to get a better look at who was playing, and when I did, A man looked up at me and smiled. It seemed like there was something off about his face, but I couldn’t pick it out.

“Greetings, young miss. Come join me, we will make beautiful music together.” He spoke an outdated English, with a dull, flat tone. I felt pulled toward the piano somehow, but I knew Mom would be here soon.

“Sorry, I’m meeting someone,” I replied.

“It will take but a moment.”

“I have to go.” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my mom’s car pull up, and she waved at me from behind the wheel. I nodded at the man, who had continued playing the piano while we had spoken. He was still playing, never faltering, even as he nodded back at me, looking away from the keys.

He must be really good, to play like that, I thought. Then I ran towards the car.

The next day, I finished up with my painting at the art studio I volunteer at and started to clean up my supplies. “Hi, honey!” It was Susy, the lady that ran the studio. “I heard about a new sale at ALB today.” She knows about how much I love that place.

“Cool. I’ll check it out on my way home.” I waved goodbye then started walking to the boutique.

Hi, Mom, I texted, I’m going to stop by Apricot Lane Boutique on the way home from the studio, they have a good sale today. I walked past Walrus Ice Cream and heard a familiar sound. It was the same lilting tune I had heard yesterday! I glanced over at the piano and saw the same man playing.

He looked up as if he sensed I was there and smiled. Once again, I was struck with the sense that something was wrong with him, but I felt that same strong pull towards the piano. What harm could it possibly do? I’m surrounded by people, what could happen?

I stepped up to the piano, sat down, and set my hands on the keys next to his. “Here, play this while I play the melody,” he said, and he showed me a simple, repetitive part. He started playing, and I joined in with my piece. I closed my eyes to enjoy the music and found that I could continue my part without watching my hands!

I lost myself in the tune. Then, I felt a weird, tingly feeling. I opened my eyes and saw that the hand that was playing had faded, and that my skin was quickly fading up from that hand. I screamed, and tried to pull away from the piano, but I

couldn't!

I looked up at the man and yelled, "I can't get my hand away from the piano!" He looked at me, and up close, I realized what was wrong with his face. He had no irises, just one huge pupil in each eye, surrounded by white. I screamed again, and tried harder to pry myself from the piano.

I realized that I was almost all faded, it had gone across my whole body and was at my fingertips on my other hand. Then it had covered my whole body. I blinked, and suddenly I wasn't faded anymore. Everything around me except for the man and the piano was, though!

"You are mine now," the man smirked, "fated to play this piano forever and doomed to never be seen by any but those who will someday join us."

I screamed again, and tried with all my strength to pull myself away, but nothing worked. "It's of no use," the man smiled. "You're stuck."

I felt the fading creeping across my thoughts, and I became even more terrified...

Make them feel our pain, join us, make them feel our pain, join us, make them feel our pain...

\*\*\*

I walked towards Walrus Ice Cream with my girlfriend, Lucy. I saw a girl and a man playing a piano nearby, and I dropped Lucy's hand. "What's wrong, Brice?" I felt drawn towards the piano, and I couldn't hear Lucy.

"Hello," the girl said. "Like to join us?"

## 2ND PLACE WINNER

## ALICE

*Neva C. Foy*

When Luna first found Alice, she was nestled between two sharp rocks that jutted out from the relatively flat terrain halfway up a hiking trail to the top of Horsetooth rock. Alice's rosy cheeks were smudged with dirt, and her silky black hair was tangled with sticks and dried leaves, yet her perfect glass skin was unscratched. Maybe this was what attracted Luna Rose Winston to the clearing shaped into a perfect circle. Maybe it was the way Alice stared with her blank marble eyes, or maybe the faded pink dress and shiny Mary Janes that she wore. But whatever it was, Luna didn't have it in her to simply leave the doll in the beating sun, so she grabbed its porcelain hands and took her to her mother's hovel on the edge of a crumbling cliff that overlooked Horsetooth reservoir.

"There you go." Luna murmured, fussing with the doll's hair and clothes. "You look just fine. Everly will love it."

Luna planned on giving the toy to her seven-year-old sister, Everly. Ever since the flood, money was scarce and any luxury they could afford was very appreciated.

Luna peered out of the dirty glass window pane in their cabin, and saw her mother, Meredith Winston, trudging up the rocky path with her bag slung over her shoulder. Clothes for mending from the rich neighbors that lived closer to the more densely populated part of Fort Collins. It was the only way they made money, other than Luna's baby sitting and the money Everly got from friends who pitied the small family.

Everly was practically the opposite of Luna. Her red curls gleamed in the sunlight, her pale face always lit up with a smile, and her blue eyes filled with jeweled tears whenever someone was sad. Luna was a temperamental, messy-haired dog standing next to Everly, or at least she thought so. But Meredith insisted that Luna had a certain spunk and fire about her that Everly did not. Luna was sure to be someone even with Everly's perfection.

"Luna, dear! I'm home! Help me with the sewing, will you?"

Luna frowned at the prospect of a chore, but decided to keep quiet. She left Alice in a sitting position on the windowsill, staring out across the vast sheet of water.

Luna ran inside of the bedrooms, eager to tell Meredith all about Alice. But just as she opened her mouth, she closed it again. A surprise! She decided.

"Hello dear." Meredith said tiredly. "Everly is with your grandmother. Will you do a quick whip stitch on that pillow? It's falling apart."

"Yes Mama." Luna said, grabbing a needle, baby blue thread, and a few pins. They worked in silence, except for the occasional snip of fabric scissors or sigh of frustration. These were Luna's favorite moments with Meredith, because though no words were said, a thousand were shared, and she loved it.

But her thoughts were interrupted by a loud bang of the door.

"Hey guys!" Everly yelled.

"We're in the bedrooms dear." Meredith called back.

"Okay do you need any--what is this?"

Luna padded into the kitchen to find her holding Alice with great care, a confused look on her face. Luna's heart sank.

"It was supposed to be your birthday surprise. I found it in a weird clearing, I thought you might like it."

"I love it!" Everly said. She cooed and fussed over the doll while Meredith came to watch.

"Luna, honey, why did you leave it in the kitchen if it was a surprise?" Meredith asked.

"I... I didn't." Luna stuttered. "I left it by the window, right there," she pointed.

"Well then why was she sitting by all of the candles? And where is that coconut candle Grandma gave us?" Everly said suspiciously.

“I don’t know.” Luna said. “I don’t know.”

And Luna didn’t know. Not entirely. She didn’t know why the doll had moved by the candles. The next day, she didn’t know why Alice was sitting by the ripped-up pillow, the fake gems on the pillow missing. Or why she loved to be by the stove. Everly noticed nothing out of the ordinary, and instead thought Alice was making a collection of the missing items somewhere. It was all games to her.

Luna’s frustration and confusion only grew. Meredith thought she was crazy, and Everly thought she was jealous. So, Meredith would ask her, every day, the same simple sentence.

“What is going on?”

“I.. I just don’t know.” That was the only answer she was ever sure of.

But Luna knew, the moment she woke up on the hot August day a week from when she found Alice, that something was wrong. She sat up, sun streaming through the slats on her window. Luna quickly stood up and ran into the living room. She was the only one awake, and an eerie silence muffled her footsteps. Alice was on the mantle, and the mirror that usually was above her was gone. Her porcelain feet stuck straight out, and light brown writing caught Luna’s eye.

Owner: Rain Williams. Stout, Colorado

Luna thought back to the history classes Meredith taught her.

“Stout was a beautiful town right up here.” Meredith would gesture at their surroundings. But when the reservoir was built, the town was destroyed. Some say it even... disappeared.”

Luna felt her blood freeze. Alice was no longer on the mantle.

“Mama!” She called. A quick recession of footsteps lead Meredith to her door. “Is something wrong, honey?” She asked, her brow creased with worry.

“Where is Everly?” Luna said immediately.

“In her bedroom, why--” But Luna was off, running across the creaky floorboards, her nightgown billowing behind her.

“Everly!” She shouted, to no avail. Luna dashed to Everly’s bed, tore off the covers, to find nothing. Nothing but a rosy cheeked doll with a grin on her face. Nothing but Alice.

3RD PLACE WINNER (TIE)

**WOUNDED**

*Ian Deleon*

**Chapter 1**

I trudged my way through the damp puddles of rain, getting my grey and orange high-tops soaked to the brim. As I got to the old abandoned CSU office building, I shuddered at the thought of what might be in there. I pulled out my old metal police flashlight. I sighed.

“Well, dares don’t do themselves.” I said to no one as I pulled away the boards blocking off the doorway. I clicked on my flashlight when the light from outside faded away into nothing as I went deeper into the building.

I kept hearing whispers as I continued down the hallway. There were bloodstains lining the walls, words written in blood as well. There was ash all over the floor- there were signs of a fire.

There were holes in the walls, and everything was all burnt and covered with ash. I worked my way through a pile of ash towards the main office area. As I walked slowly through the rows of desks with crushed and burnt computers with broken screens, I saw a door that seemed somewhat intact. As I got to the door, I could see rust around the edges, as if it was telling me not to enter.

But as I said before, dares don’t do themselves.

I pushed the door open. It reluctantly gave way, but instead of giving way and opening, it fell down with a tremendous crash. I darted inside and hid under the desk- but the reason was unknown. Maybe I felt that I had alerted something that I was there.

I reluctantly got up from under the desk, and saw that there was a laptop on the desk that seemed like it could work.

I opened the screen and clicked the computer to life. There was only one thing to open: Camera system. I realized that I had opened to door to the security office.

I turned on the cameras and clicked on them all. On hallway 6B, I screamed and ran.

There was something standing there. It had no jaw, just the top row of teeth, and was staring at me with blank eyes. There were red holes rings around it’s eyes, and it was making a terrible screeching noise that could make a man go insane. All it’s skin had been burnt off, and there were parts of flesh torn off, and it was slowly turning it’s head away from the camera.

Suddenly, my flashlight started flickering out. I started running towards the way I came, but I couldn’t find my way.

And just like that, my light went out.

**Chapter2**

I was stranded in the dark, in an old burnt up building, with a creature roaming the halls that could probably see in the dark. I saw a little bit of light coming from a small hallway.

It probably wasn’t a good idea, but I walked towards the light, and when I got there, it was a table with a desk light. It was shining on a pack of batteries, which I grabbed and put into my backpack except for two, which I put in my flashlight. I walked back out into the office space.

I noticed a doorway in the dark, and pointed my flashlight at the ground so I didn’t stumble and/or trip. As I got to the hallway, the door slammed behind me. Typical.

I peeked around the corner. There was an intersection. The opposite way, I saw the thing run from left to right. I whimpered, afraid to scream because the thing would notice me. As I stepped around the corner, I yelled as I fell down into the basement.

I was unconscious for a while. As I woke up, I was facing upwards. I saw the gap I fell through. Suddenly, I saw the thing peek over the hole. It tilted its head as if to say: “What is that?” And then made some clicking noises, and then ran away. I was too terrified to move. I heard thumps, like someone running down stairs. The thing was definitely down here with me. The basement was a labyrinth.

I walked around the labyrinth. Suddenly a scuttling sound got louder and louder behind me. I turned behind me, and saw the thing chasing me.

I yelled and ran as fast as I could, considering the fact that there were boards strewn all over the ground. I turned the corner and the boards slipped out from underneath me and I fell on the floor. I hoped the thing had lost track of me, because there was a ginormous gash in my leg that I had just gained.

I winced in pain as I slowly stood up. There was blood seeping out of my wound like mad. I winced as I limped towards the closest area with no boards. I sat down and felt the blood seeping out the wound and oozing down my leg. I couldn't take it anymore. I laid down and screamed in agony. I didn't care anymore. I probably would die anyway.

I closed my eyes. I heard clicking noises, and opened them again, and saw the thing looming over me. I whispered something I couldn't understand, and my vision faded to black as my neck was snapped by the creature.

### **Chapter 3 - Epilogue**

"What the-" I said in a series of clicks and whispers. I realized what I had become. I was hearing other people whispering. I saw flashlights bobbing up and down among the halls, and had the sudden urge to kill.

I felt to see if I had a jaw, and sure enough I did. But one of the sides was hanging off.

I suddenly felt very hungry, and stalked my way into the hallway. I saw two people walking down the hall. I sprinted towards them- and before I could think, their necks were snapped.

3RD PLACE WINNER (TIE)

**THE WALL**

*Chloe Jakovich*

“Come on Becca!” I whined, exasperated with my best friend. “This paper is due tomorrow and we need an ‘A!’”

Becca tucked a strand of short, curly red hair behind her ear and raised an eyebrow at me.

“Stop stressing Juniper.” She said calmly. She was used to dealing with my over the top antics regarding my grades. I had to admit, it was a weekly occurrence.

“You act like you don’t have a 4.0 average. If anyone should be stressing, it’s me.”

I lifted my mass of dark blue hair with one hand and fanned my neck with the other. The temperature in our little corner of the library had been steadily rising over the past few minutes.

“Well, we should hurry! I don’t know when the library closes, but I’m guessing it’s soon.” I replied in a huff while leaning back into my chair and glancing around.

I loved this corner of the library. It had books I had never found anywhere else. There was one on dreams that I had borrowed so many times, I could recite each chapter backwards and forwards.

Becca fanned herself with a paperback book called ‘Emma Lauren’.

“It’s so hot here,” She moaned “I swear they are trying to bake us.”

She got up and started pacing, still fanning herself with a book.

“Okay, let’s get back on task! We need to write a four page story for English class and we still need a storyline and characters.”

She rested her back on the wall along our desk, which seemed to be the only one missing a line of book shelves. She seemed to sink in, almost like quicksand. Her face contorted in horror and fear as her body quickly sank into the wall. I jumped up and reached out, trying to grab at her hand which was the last thing to disappear into the light green wallpaper.

Stunned, I brought my hand to my mouth. I couldn’t believe what just happened. The only thing before me was a wall, no Becca. I wasn’t stupid enough to touch the wall. Getting up, I stumbled through a maze of book shelves. My hand ran along the spines of books as I ran. I needed to tell someone, anyone. The librarian sprang to my mind; she’d be the one I could get to the fastest. I think I was in shock, becoming more frantic as I ran. My thoughts were swirling and my hands started to shake. I felt like I was going to throw up as I stumbled the final steps to the front desk.

Perhaps telling the librarian was stupid. I have read books before where some girl sees something horrifying and tries to tell someone, and they think that they are crazy. I didn’t think she would believe me but I have to try. I read the read label clipped to her shirt.

“Mrs. Jones you have to help me.” I said in a frantic tone.

The librarian cocked her head to the side and looked at me questioningly.

“What is it honey?” She asked gently.

“The wall ate my friend,” I blurted out.

She just stared at me, completely confused.

“I know you don’t believe me but it’s true it just opened up and ate her! It sounds crazy, but you have to help her!” I realized I was babbling and that she had gotten up from her seat and was now standing in front of me.

“Now honey, I don’t think the wall ate your friend.” Her cold hands touched my cheek, making me flinch. “You probably have just been studying too hard and didn’t notice that your friend left. Let’s gather your school stuff and you can head on home. You can stop by her house and check and see if she’s there.”

Maybe she was right and she did leave. I mean it’s not that impossible, I do have a tendency to drift off sometimes. Maybe

this was all a bad dream, but the picture of her face, terrified, as her eyes met mine flashed through my mind and I knew I couldn't have thought up something like that.

We finally reached our study desk. Becca's books were still there; I turned to the librarian and pointed.

"Her stuff is still here. She couldn't have gotten up and left. She would have taken her phone and school supplies."

Mrs. Jones smiled at me. I was so upset before that I didn't notice how her smile was a bit off, it looked sinister, not comforting. I started to back up from her and my foot bumped against something on the ground. I looked down and noticed the book by my feet.

"You know," she said softly as she walked towards me, "you can look for her."

She gripped my shoulders but I couldn't take my eyes off the book. On the front in large letters was Becca's name. Suddenly the librarian turned me around and pushed me. I stumbled and fell. I couldn't stop my momentum and I rolled right into the wall. I was swallowed me up whole. The last thing I saw before the darkness was Mrs. Jones smile of satisfaction.

Mrs. Jones waited patiently and after a moment a book popped out of the wall and landed at her feet. She picked up the two books on the floor.

She placed them in the shelf next to the wall and smiled to herself as she read the titles, "Becca's Untold Story" and "Juniper's Collection". She walked over to the wall pressed her cheek against it, gently caressing it.

"You won't ever go hungry, I promise" she cooed before turning to head back to her desk at the front of the library. You never knew when children might need her help, she took her job as head librarian very seriously after all.



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“Ok kid. It looks like you missed the bus, and since it is your first offense, I’ll take you home.”

“Thank you sir. Thanks so much!”

Once Bodhi and Mr. Cruise left the school building, all was again normal. The monsters didn’t feel anything. It was as if nothing had happened at all. Bodhi was somewhat confused how he could have been so distracted to miss the bus, but all was well. Or was it?

# THE NIGHT OF DEATH

*Gabe Rockwell*

In Fort Collins, October 31st, Jake, a teenager, and his friends are sneaking to the old, damaged house to find out the mystery of people disappearing. Police have been reporting that the corpses of the victims have been found by the ruined house. So, Jake opened the door, it creaked open and he peaked in. There was a wooden staircase that had some broken steps and the lights were flickering. The floor creaked as Jake stepped in, he heard a bloodcurdling scream, too late.

He saw blood smeared down a hall he passed just a few minutes ago. He saw his friend being dragged by something staying in the shadows. Is it the creature? He flicked his flashlight on and turned to his nine remaining friends, but four were missing. He saw blood where his friends were.

The smears led up the wall to where their bodies were hanging upside down. Another one was crawling right toward them. He saw it had long pointed ears, black skin, five tentacles, sharp claws, and sharp teeth. He ran up the stairs and so did his friends but a leathery arm grabbed his leg and he struggled to escape. He gathered his strength and tugged his leg and he escaped the creatures grasp.

He entered a long hall with crookedly hanging pictures and scratched paintings and there were holes in the doors. He immediately ran to the end of the hall and the door was wide open. So, his friends got in and Jake slammed the door behind him, then he counted his friends and Jake realized that one was missing. He peered through a hole in the door, his friend had an axe and his friend slashed a creature's throat. The creature's skin and body fell apart, then another one killed him. Jake's friend screamed in terror as he was killed. He heard someone scream and Jake's eyes filled with horror. He spun around and he saw his friend's bodies on the ground.

Three creatures stood over the bodies. He grabbed a sword from the wall and swung it and stabbed a creature in the throat. It fell to the ground and it gurgled as the blood came spilling out of the throat. The two other creatures screeched in anger then he kicked the creature out the window and the glass shattered and it screeched in terror. Suddenly it stopped thrashing and turned to stone and it fell and shattered on the ground. He darted to the window but the creature had grabbed his leg!

As fast as lightning he swiveled his head around and he slashed the creature's arm off and it shrieked in pain. Then he darted out the window the first rays of the sun covered Jake and the creature lunged at him. The creature turned to stone as soon as the sun's rays hit it. He thought "how did it turn to stone" as he climbed down from the roof and after that he went far away so he would never encounter the creatures again.

# ELIZABETH

*Justus H. Scheetz*

## Chapter 1

### The Girl

Hello, my name is Todd Crewdson, and I'm a twelve year old boy. My family owns a funeral home, and my mom is a scientist. It's pretty weird living next to a funeral home... all the dead people and stuff.

Anyway, I like riding my bike to this park, a couple streets down from my house. Also there's this creepy house near it. They recently lost their little girl, whom we are going to bury soon. It's kinda sad... but after years of dealing with stuff like that you get used to it. Anyway, as I was saying, the house is eerie because it has a bunch of old toys laying around in the yard. A bike, ball, and an old swing set. I don't know... the house just sends out weird vibes.

But one day, I was swinging in the park, and I saw a pale, skinny girl, lurking around the creepy house. I'd never seen her before.

I walked up to her, and said "Hello!"

She paused, turned towards me, "H-hello," she said in a hushed tone.

"Umm, hi?" I said again, kinda weirded out. "I'm Todd."

"I'm Elizabeth, you call me Lizzy." she responded.

"Okay, Lizzy, wanna play?" I asked.

"That would be nice." she said.

"Okay, c'mon then" I said, while walking back to the park.

We played pretty much all day, considering it was a Saturday. There were a couple other kids at the park, but not many. We swung and played on the monkey bars. I enjoyed hanging out with Lizzy, I think it's because she's a pretty good listener, and she kinda just goes with the flow. Although, I asked her if she wanted to play tag, but she said no, she doesn't like running very much. I suppose I did notice she was pretty sluggish.

So, a couple days passed, while we were meeting up at the park everyday. Until one day she wasn't there. We made plans to meet that day, so I was confused. I looked around the park, and I still didn't see her.

"Hmm," I whispered to myself, "she must be sick, or somethin'."

But then I saw her, hanging around that weird house again. I walked up to her and said,

"Hey!", "Whatcha doin?"

"Hmm? Oh, I was just looking" she said.

"Okay..." I said, trying not to act suspicious. "How do I know you're telling the truth?" I said.

"Guess you don't." she said.

I just stared, she stared back. The look in her eye was so unsettling... I looked away, but she didn't. Creeped out, I just walked back to the park, like nothing had happened. She followed.

It was almost the end of summer break, and Lizzy and I were NOT excited. But my parents were, they got a bunch of school supplies together, bought more food for my lunch, and a whole lot more. I didn't know Lizzy's parents... I never met them, and she never talked about them. I guess she hasn't heard about or met my parents either. Maybe we could all meet up soon, a playdate.

So I told my parents about Lizzy, they said it was good I made a new friend, and that we should all meet up. I was excited, so I rode my bike down to the park as fast as possible. When I got there, she was swinging. I told her the news, and asked when her parents were free.

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She said, "I don't know if this is such a good idea, what if our parents don't like each other?"

"They probably will." I said, she was acting really cold.

"I don't know," she said, "let's just play."

"Okay." I responded.

So we didn't talk about it for the rest of the day. I guess we had only known each other for about a week, so I'd wait until she's ready to talk about whatever is keeping her from wanting our parents to meet up.

## CROSSING THE POUDBRE

*Kylie Perez*

How would you know what there is out there if you never go? What's the point of life if you don't go places, enjoy the fresh air, and just live life? Moving meant I had to leave my friends, school, and family. Which left me clueless on how to do any of those things! So that's how you would find me then; walking around my new town of Fort Collins, Colorado, trying to figure out something to do. A cemetery was on my right as I walked, and I thought "why not?" and checked it out. According to the plaque on the entry gate, I had found a pioneer cemetery. As I explored, I eventually came across a bare tombstone. It was more like a statue; four sided, with each side looking somewhat like a mirror. Each side also had a letter on it; N, S, W, and E, which I took made it a compass. A breeze blew in from nowhere and a leaf came of a nearby willow. It hit the side of the tombstone that had the W on it, but instead of falling to the ground, it went into the side! I couldn't believe it, and crept closer. Then I reached out my hand and touched it. Nothing. It had closed. Another breeze came through, and I could have sworn I saw the sides ripple. So, I took a deep breath and plunged myself into the wall. This time, I went through, and I had no idea what I had gotten myself into.

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When I came to, I was no longer in the cemetery. I was sitting in the middle of a grassy field. My gaze drifted to the street, and that's when I fully woke up. There were no cars on the road. Instead, I saw buggies being pulled by horses.

"I'm in the past!", I said. Looking around, I saw little cottages and people outside doing laundry. A nice old lady came up to me and said, "Why, hello! Welcome to Camp Collins!"

"Thank you. Do you by any chance know what year it is?"

She looked at me quizzically and said, "It's 1890, dear. Camp Collins just finished recovering from the flood a few years ago."

I thanked her for her time and began off to search the community.

"Oh, and don't forget dear!", the lady called after me. "Never cross the Poudre!"

I began to walk, but everywhere I went, it seemed as though someone was watching me. I began to walk to the woods, where I hoped no one would follow me.

I finally reached the woods, and no one had followed me. I found a little beach that had a river running between it and a sandbar a little way off. All of a sudden, I heard the trees rustling, and without reading the sign for the river, ran across to the sandbar. It turns out, the noise was just a crow finding some food, and I returned to the beach, only to find that the river I had crossed was the Poudre.

"I told you not to cross the Poudre, dear!". It was the old lady from before!

"I'm sorry, it's just that I got scared and ran! What's the deal with the river anyway?"

She didn't respond. Instead, she stared at me, her eyes glowing like embers. That was the last thing I saw, before everything went dark.

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I awoke as a ghost, merely floating along the Poudre along with all the other unfortunate souls who were like me; with no more life to live, no more places to go, no more air to breath, all because we crossed the Poudre.

# THISTLES

*Sierra Farnsworth*

“Hurry up, slowpoke!”

My feet pound against the path, sending up sprays of earth behind me. I gasp, choking. “Wait up Cat!” Katrina Evans has been my best friend since second grade, and we’ve been running together for even longer. I’m used to her outdistancing me, but what’s really annoying is even now, after a 5 mile run, she still looks great. Cheeks pink, eyes sparkling, but not a wisp of blond hair out of place. And, of course, her two inch, bright bubblegum pink fingernails adorned with tiny silver flowers are as impeccable as ever. She’s had them painted like this since I first met her. “Let’s take a break.” I suggest.

“Oh come on, Mya, you can’t be done already! Just a little farther.”

Frowning, I agree. “Okay, but only a little.” Katrina nods, bouncing up and down energetically.

“Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s get going!” Clutching a stitch in my side, I jog after her. The bank of the stream turns muddy, littered with rocks and tangles of wildflowers. We’re just rounding a corner when my foot slides out from under me, and I land with a jolt, splat in the mud.

“Mya! Are you Okay?” Katrina doubles back and helps me up. As she pulls me to my feet she looks down and gives a shout of surprise. “Look at that!” She exclaims.

I look down. Resting by my feet is a carved stone, splattered with mud and ringed by thistles. Katrina kneels down into the mud and tries to pull it up, but judging by how stable it stays, the rock must continue underground. I crouch down beside her to read the faint words engraved onto the stone. Starlight Templemeir, 1996 to 2012. A large star is carved beneath the words. “It’s a gravestone.” I say, “This girl was 16 when she died. Our age.” Suddenly I feel cold. “Come on, let’s get out of here.”

“Aw, c’mon Mya. Your not scared of a rock, are you?”

“Shut up Cat!” I’m only half joking. Something feels wrong about the place, but I can’t quite put my finger on it. Unhappily, Katrina stands up to follow me. And, together, we jog home.

“You’re so slow, Mya!”

I spit dirt out of my mouth. It’s hotter than usual, even though it rained buckets last night.

The news has proclaimed several floods across the area, and the creek is higher than ever.

“Hey,” Katrina stops suddenly, “Let’s go check out that grave again.” I shake my head. “Oh, come on Mya.” Katrina pouts. “We can go get FroYo after!”

“You’ll pay?”

“M-hmm!”

“Fine.” And in a few minutes we’re back and staring at the stone and clump of thistles. And that’s when something really strange occurs to me. Besides the prickly weeds, nothing grows within a three foot diameter around the stone. Like there is an invisible line that no other plant can cross. I turn to say something to Katrina, but she’s occupied trying to tug the stone up out of the mud again.

“Come on Cat, that’s hopeless.”

“Hmmm?”

“Never mind.” I watch her in silence for a minute. Just like yesterday, there’s something about the stone and Katrina’s fascination that makes me feel uncomfortable. “Can we please go now Cat?” She doesn’t object, but I see her glance over her shoulder as we jog away.

Dangerous floods across the area. Local residents have been warned. Flashes the news headline. I try to tell Katrina as we jog, but she seems preoccupied. Eventually, she slows down.

“You all right, Cat?” Katrina almost never stops while we’re running, but now she turns and grabs my arm, pink fingernails digging into my skin, eyes bright. “I can’t stand it Mya! We’ve got to go back to that grave, just one more time! I think I’ve

almost got it figured out.” I don’t stop to ask what ‘it’ is. I’ve never seen Katrina like this before. “Okay.”

She exhales shakily, and in a few minutes we’re standing by the grave. I let her look in peace for a minute, but soon the silence gets to me. Katrina is almost never quiet. “Hey Cat?”

“Hmm?”

“Don’t you think this obsession with this, um, grave is a little bit...creepy?” I venture. For a second a shadow seems to flit across her face. Then it’s gone, replaced by her usual cheerful smile. “Your right. C’mon Mya, let’s go.” Relieved, we hurry down the path and don’t look back.

The following day I received an urgent call from Katrina’s father. “Hey, Mya. Have you seen Katrina lately? She said she was just going for a run, but I haven’t seen her in a few hours, and I’m getting really worried. I wondered if she might be with you?” Panic blooms in my chest. The second I hang up, I’m dashing out our back gate. If she’s really running along the usual route we take, than I might be able to catch up to her.

I run until the bank get muddy and is littered with rocks and weeds. It’s rained even more recently and the creek is almost overflowing. But It’s not the mud splattered on my legs or the rainy drizzle that makes me skid to a stop. The wet earth all around the grave is churning, bubbling. I take a step closer, when suddenly the thistles begin to die. Not gradually, but at once. They shrivel, wither, green fades to brown, mud begins to froth, and I’m backing away, hoping I don’t slip when a hand reaches up out of the mud and grabs me. Caked with mud, covered in oozing scabs, it is the sight of the fingernails that make a scream well up in my stomach, in every fiber of my body, and stick in my throat. Because those hand are so familiar they could only belong to one person. Two inch nails painted bright, bubblegum pink with silver flowers.

Those hands belong to Katrina.

# THE RED-EYED RAT

*Amariah Dionne*

It was a dark and stormy afternoon at 4 o'clock. I woke up from a nap on the floor of the hotel I was staying at with my two friends, Athena and Beatrice. They were both awake on the bed reading a book. I yawned and walked over to them yelling, "Boo!"

They screamed so loud I thought that the police would come running from the station a block down from the hotel. I laughed and they laughed with me. We decided to play Truth or Dare.

Beatrice went first. "I dare Athena to sneak around the hotel and scare people." Athena giggled and left the room. An hour later she came back laughing hysterically.

"I scared over 26 people."

Next it was my turn. "I dare all of us to go to the Weelyard Mansion and sleep there for the night in separate rooms to show everybody that we aren't scared of anything."

My friends nodded, terrified looks on their faces. Nobody had gone in Weelyard Mansion for over 600 years. It was abandoned and in severe disrepair.

"At least you aren't going alone," I said.

"Well that's true," Athena whispered, quivering.

"Let's do it," Beatrice said, smiling in bravery for all of us.

We grabbed our sleeping bags, pillows, and snacks and left the hotel. As we walked over to the mansion, we talked loudly so we wouldn't hear the spooky noises that followed us every step of the way.

We arrived at the Weelyard mansion and hesitated. It was huge, way bigger than I had thought. Most of the windows were broken and all of the beautiful red paint from years before was almost completely gone. The gold roof was torn and shredded from people who had come and chipped away at it. Even though we were in the middle of Fort Collins, which seemed like a safe place, a shiver went up my spine.

Beatrice screamed a loud, shrill scream as thousands of bats began to dive down at us. I panicked and ran behind a bush. That was a mistake. Hundreds of ants climbed up my legs. I yelled and batted them off. Athena started hitting my legs too until finally they were gone. My legs were red and hurting. Scratches graced my face from the bats and Athena and Beatrice looked just as beaten. The thought crossed my mind to turn back and return to the hotel and take a nice, warm bath, but I had made a dare and I had to follow through.

"Let's get this over with."

I walked up to the door and almost fell through a crack on the porch, but luckily I jumped out of the way. The door creaked.

Athena looked at me. "We should turn back. This is creepy. I don't like the feeling of this."

Beatrice agreed, but I didn't listen.

"Come on. All we have to do is find rooms and sleep in them. We can do this."

I grabbed their hands and pushed them inside. We found three rooms and set out our sleeping bags.

"We should go exploring," I said.

They looked at me like I was some sort of weirdo and shook their heads violently.

"Well, I'm going, so if you don't want to be left here alone then I would suggest you come with me."

Both of them quickly ran over to my side. We hooked arms and went down a dark hallway and into what had probably been a luxurious room. Only moonlight shone in from the broken windows. On the wall hung paintings. I stepped over furniture and shards of glass to have a closer look. One painting was a picture of a green rat with a red eye. The detail was such

it appeared real. It was mesmerizing, and I stared at it for quite some time before Beatrice tapped my shoulder. "It's time to go to bed so we can get this dare over with." I nodded and turned, but the Rat's eyes penetrated my soul.

Once we were in the hallway, I hugged Beatrice and Athena. "Goodnight and good luck," I said. We separated and walked to our own treacherous rooms. I fell in bed soundly.

In the morning, I woke up at 5:07 to this strange scratching noise. It was still quite dark out. I quickly sat up and picked up my sleeping bag. As soon as I stepped out of the room, the noise stopped. I ran down the hallway to wake up Beatrice, but when I opened her door there was just an empty sleeping bag. Starting to freak out, I ran as fast as I could over to Athena's bedroom, but when I opened her door she was nowhere in sight--just an empty bag as well. I started screaming their names over and over again, but no one answered. I screamed for an hour until I lost my voice. I sagged against the hallway wall, crying, until I fell asleep.

I awoke to bright lights shining through the windows and into my eyes. I squinted and stood up, dazed. Then I remembered: Beatrice and Athena! It was now light enough to search. I went down the hallway and into the Rat room--the last place I had seen Beatrice and Athena. I climbed over furniture, not gazing at the freaky rat painting. No luck. Reluctantly, I decided to look by the rat painting. Scrambling over more furniture, I finally reached the rat.

The rat seemed like it had grown. Its eye was blue now, and it was gazing down. Hadn't its eye been red last night and looking straight? I followed the rat's gaze to the ground and shrieked! On the wood floor were two skulls both looking straight at me. Written on their foreheads were two names: Beatrice and Athena.

# THE DOOR AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY

*Quinn Wade*

I walked through the hallway, the floor creaking with each step. Dust Rising, making me cough. My stomach churning, but I had to find out. What was through the door? I took another step, the old wood groaning more than ever now. But I kept going. One step. One More. Another. I pushed myself to keep moving. I had to see. I turned the corner, the one I was not allowed to turn, seeing the ever stretching hallway that stood before me. Of course it wasn't stretching, but the moonlight made it appear that way. I held my breath. Tonight was the night. The night I was going to find out. One candle, after the other, went out, as in some sort of dance. One remained lit, flickering. The one at the end of the hallway.

Why had I come here? Why at night? I asked myself. But my curiosity over-ran my fear, and soon my feet started towards the candle. CREEEEEEEEAAK. My foot fell on a loose floorboard. Oh no.

"Anyone here? Come out!" Aunt May yelled. I looked for a hiding spot. She couldn't spot me. Not now. Her bedroom, or something of the sort, was right around the corner. I ducked under a table, hoping not to be seen. I saw a flashlight round the corner, along with her head, then the rest of her.

She held out the flashlight, scanning the room.

"Come out! Is that you, Jessica?" she yelled warily. She looked around once more, then turned and headed back.

"No one. Guess it was me..." She muttered under her breath. I turned my attention to the door. And I kept walking. I neared a window, looked out at the Horse Tooth Mountains. A few delicately placed steps later, I came to the doorknob.

I reached my hand out, fingers grazing the metal. There was no turning back. I turned it quietly, wincing as it creaked. There was a noise, then a twisted, pointed arm shout out, reaching for my neck!

I jumped back, but the creature still managed to hit my face, probably making a bruise. I would have to make an excuse for that later. That is, if I made it out alive.

It's bald, eyeless head came out the doorway. A huge, sharp-teethed smile was plastered on its hideous face. Its smile went up to its cheekbones, which were close to none, and were ripped and bloodied.

The rest of its body came out, somewhat looking like a man, but was contorted in many ways. It limped out of the room, walking on all fours, but because what were supposed to be arms were so long, it looked like it was standing. It opened its mouth, a tongue, protruding from the black hole, split in two. Rags, draped on the creature, looked like torn pillowcases, and were covering up little. You could see the rib bones, pressed up against the tight skin, like it had not been fed. And it was hungry.

It lumbered towards me, so I took a step back, but tripped over my nightgown. It leaned over me, probably deciding whether to eat me alive or to rip me to shreds. I crawled back, but its stub of an arm grabbed the brim of my nightgown.

It pulled me closer, its breath warm on my skin. It growled something I didn't understand. The creature threw up its arm, sending me crashing into the ceiling. I fell to the ground, regret filling my head: the hope of surviving slipping away.

It dug its teeth into my side, sending pain like I've never felt before through me.

You could only hear my scream, as loud as a bomb, as it took me into its den to finish me off. CRAAACK... my bones broke as consciousness fled, never to return again.

EEE

The creature jumped out the window, falling three stories and landed on the ground with a thud. Its face was covered in blood, from that girl Jessica it heard the master say. She was good.

It ran off, into the woods, birds rising from the trees, wolves, foxes, and other animals fled too, not wanting to be a midnight snack to the beast.

Since then, kids who would play near the forest, are said to never return, being another meal for the creature that Aunt May had created.

The End!

Or is it?

# WHAT THEY WOULD GIVE FOR A NORMAL LIFE

*Isaiah Martine*

The first thing Zack felt was pain. Pain for his dog. The last thing he needed was to see Mark. “Hey, hobo! How’s it going? I heard your little...” Mark stopped, and collapsed, his back smoking. Zack felt a surge of pain, too. He gasped.

“What should I do with them?” the terrified boy heard a voice say. It was raspy, like a dying rat’s. “I’ll tell you, just as soon as you eliminate them,” a deep voice boomed. And at that moment, Zack saw a bare foot coming at him. He blacked out from another blast of pain in his face.

When he woke up, Zack looked around. He was in a blank white room, and was tied to a chair. He tried to scream, but his mouth was gagged. His feet, hands, and midsection were all tied. Then, he gasped. In front of him stood a man about 50 feet tall, a wicked baseball bat in his hands.

“Now,” the man said, “We begin.” He sneered. The baseball bat grew to a massive battle axe. He swung it around, shredding the door. “How are you today? I hear it is a very nice day for death! You’re ‘friend’ already talked to me. I killed him. Your turn!” He charged, and swung the axe, coming straight for him. Zack screamed, and it messed up his aiming, so the man chopped the chair in half, and the blade cut all the ropes, but left a huge gash down his already hurt back. The 10-year-old jumped out of the remains of the chair and ran outside.

He realized that he was right outside of Friendship Animal Hospital. Zack sprinted along Lemay Avenue. The cotton trees morphed into ghouls, chasing him along. He sprinted all the way to the Horsetooth trailhead, running up the trail. The rocks grew into giants, hundreds of them. He tripped on a stick, stumbling. Zack scrambled forward, but the monsters grabbed him. They picked him up, swung him onto a giant eagle, who screamed a war cry, and flew up to Horsetooth Rock, dropping Zack onto the rock. He thought he was safe. Then a car was thrown from the parking lot, and slammed into him. Zack fell off the rock, wondering if he would ever see his family again, or get revenge for the monster who had killed his dog, the horrible mammoth that came alive at Fossil Creek Park, and went tumbling towards his death. Thud!

Zack hit the ground.

Sammy was just walking in Old Town Square, and was tossed from the sidewalk by the bear and fish in the center of Old Town Park, into the fountain, where the statues started attacking him. Sammy sprinted away, straight into a zombie tossing fire.

The zombie smiled greedily, and whispered in a ragged voice, “I get to kill you! Wonderful! This will be fun!” The zombie reached out for Sammy’s forehead and touched it. Immediately, he saw what the zombie was planning for him: give Sammy little cuts all over his body until he died of blood loss.

Sammy came back to reality and whispered a goodbye to everybody and everything he loved. He’d never forget his mom, when she cried out in pain as the cannon in City Park shot her a week ago. Wait. Sammy remembered this zombie from the park. He was holding a remote and activating the cannon. Now, he won’t get revenge for his mom’s death. Sammy swiped the zombie’s legs out from under him and ran towards the Rocket Fizz candy store to hide. He burst inside, hiding behind a display of giant lollipops. The zombie lit the display on fire, kicking Sammy against the Bug Lollipop bin. Weapon, Sammy thought. He grabbed a scorpion lollipop, and held it out in front of him. The monster screamed and exploded into a pile of green goop, along with the lollipop. At the same time, a boy about his age tumbled over him.

“I’m Zack. Who are you?” the boy asked.

“Sammy. You being chased by monsters? Their weakness is scorpion lollipops, but they’re only a one-time use,” Sammy answered. The boys grabbed as many as they could and rushed outside. A spider taller than any building around was walking toward them, its feet smashed the pavement and crushed buildings. It just smashed Cooper Smith’s and roared. Zack thrust one of his lollipops out, and every inch of Old Town was suddenly covered in goop because the spider had a lot of it in him. Zack grinned and ran on.

“Boy, he had to go to the bathroom!” Sammy smirked. Just when he thought things were looking up, Sammy passed out, falling into the sewer.

“Gah!” Sammy cried. He yanked Zack into the sewers. “All right, I had this dream. The dream said to go toward the cold and smash the crystal. Then, the monsters will leave. And that’s all it said, so no questions!”

“Let’s follow the cold!” Zack said, his breath misting. They hurried down the tunnel.

“It’s getting colder. That’s good,” Sammy assured him. “We’re almost going to be safe!” But, sadly, they fell through THE HOLE. They missed the sign on the wall that said, THE HOLE with an arrow.

The boys crashed on top of the crystal. It was so black, it was bright to look at, and it radiated cold. The boys’ hair was covered in frost, and their lips blue and frozen shut. They removed their lollipops from their bags and pockets; throwing them onto the crystal. It exploded, and the 10-year-olds had the sense to look away. It exploded into black light and left the boys’ ears ringing.

The ice melted off, letting the boys tell their stories. Once they were done, they comforted each other for their losses and walked outside.

“Well?” Sammy stated, grinning. “We have a lot to explain to the health department!”

“Yeah! The trash department won’t like this goo either!” Zack joked.

# LITTLE SALLY

*Zoey DeHaan*

I felt my legs ache from sitting in a car for a very long time. I saw my brother Henry hopping out of the car wearing his long basketball socks and slick black sneakers. His curly brown hair was covering his face. He would always be a jerk to me when I drew my favorite animals.

“Just because I’m a better artist than you, that doesn’t mean that you can tease me”.

Now you can tell Henry is very annoying and athletic. Me? I’m not athletic. I’m the kind of girl who gets good grades and likes to be creative.

“Henry and Jemma, look at this place!” Dad called out.

My dad’s name is Patrick. He likes to look at statues, sketching them out. My mom was investigating the bakery for tonight’s dessert. From the corner of my eye, I saw a sign that said “Old Town Colorado”. Right next to that sign I saw a doll staring at me. I heard a low and polite voice coming from the counter.

“That’s little Sally. She is a unique doll.” said the bakery man.

The doll had a skull face and wore a ragged blue and green dress. Her eyes were silver black buttons. Pumpkin pie was the color of her hair. Little Sally is the creepiest doll I ever seen in my life I thought. Well not as bad as Chucky.

“Jemma, come on let’s go look at the pet store.” Henry commanded.

When I was about to grab the door, I turned back to see if the doll was staring at me. She was gone from the shelf at the same moment that I felt a chill run down my spine. Maybe the bakery man just moved the doll, I wondered reassuringly. I walked out and saw no cars or people outside. I looked at the time. It was 6 PM. I saw Henry walking to the pet store, opening the door for my mom. I sprinted frantically across the road, feeling the gravel hitting my feet. Once I reached the door, I felt the hot metal touching my hand.

“Ouch!” I yipped.

I saw kittens, snakes, lizards, and dogs. Henry was looking at a ball python. I was looking at a teddy bear hamster. The teddy bear hamster was black and white. It had a little pink soft nose with a touch of black on it. I looked at the ball python. It was a baby one. I looked at my brothers sparkle blue eyes with my emerald green eyes.

He looked depressed and angry. I felt the same. Was he home sick like I am or does he just want that snake? I looked at one of the dogs and saw that one was \$50. I tugged on my mom and she turned around and looked at the puppy. The puppy was a French bulldog. It had brown, black, white, and gold fur.

“Mom can we get it!?” I asked still looking at the puppy.

“No” she replied

I felt my hand going in my dark pocket reaching my wallet. Pulling out the money, I studied it a bit. There were two \$20 bills, two tens, three fives, and nine ones. The total was \$84!

“MOM!”, I yelled.

My mom came running and saw me waving my money furiously. She gave me a wink and a smile. I asked if I could get him with my own money. This what she said.. She said, “Yes!!”

I felt tears rushing down my face while I was holding the puppy. I gave him a big kiss on the nose. He bathed me with his cold and wet tongue.

I went outside and saw blood on the concrete. My mom had to run in the bakery to get the apple pie that she bought from the bakery man. However, nobody was there. I looked on the floor and saw the bakery man lying lifeless. He was pale as ever. I went over and saw an apple in his mouth. I was paralyzed with fear, stopped breathing, and I felt scared tears rushing down my cold face.

Wait! Where is Henry? I ran back in the pet store with my puppy and saw Henry still looking at that snake. I gave him a

kick in the ankle.

“Ouch! What was that for?” he asked.

“Come on! No time to chit chat!”

I grabbed his arm and ran out the door. We went in the bakery and saw our mom lying on the table. I felt cold tears falling on my French bulldog. He looked up at me wiped my tears away, with his warm soft tongue. Through my blurry eyes, I spotted Henry holding a knife in his hand.

“Henry what are doing with that knife?” I yelled.

He looked at the doll that was sitting on the counter. I saw her head turn at me. I saw her skulled legs walking on the counter. She was an inch away from my face.

I felt a cold metal knife going through my stomach. I felt my throat clogging up. Henry was looking at me and saying my name. But it wasn't his voice, it was my mom and dad's voice that was calling my name. I looked up and saw that I was sitting In my car. I saw Henry looking at me, and I thought, “It was just a dream.”

Feeling relieved, I stepped out of the car. There, the same bakery store that was in my dream was right in front of me. When we walked in I saw the sign that said “Old Town Colorado” and beside that sign... It was there AGAIN that I saw the doll peering at the bakery man with those black silvery buttons.

“Mom, that's the doll in my dream.” I whispered in awe to her.

Then, I looked at the doll again and saw her head turn towards me. That doll looked at my eyes and saw fear in them.

# PLAYING WITH GHOST FIRE

*Marlo Rulon*

It's a quiet night in Fort Collins of 2017. Olivia jumped on Fiona's bed. Olivia reached out for Fiona's neck. It's hard to see in the dark, she soon found what she's looking for. She crawled her fingers up to Fiona's red hair. Fiona woke with a start. She looked over at her sister's black hair which was dangling.

"Stop it Lia!" She hissed her sister's nickname trying not to wake Bella. It didn't matter, Olivia scrambled up the ladder and started waking the peaceful 5-year-old, Bella. She almost screamed if her face hadn't been pressed in the pillow. When Bella did turn, her eyes were wide in terror. Her red hair in her mouth.

"Lia?" Bella asked.

"It was the ghosts saying there ready to show you themselves, Ella," Olivia said, using her nickname.

"Oh Lia, you're scaring her," Fiona whispered.

"Fia, you know they're real you just don't want to remember." Olivia whined repaying her with another nickname.

"I want to see," Bella said. Olivia hurried across the room and Bella followed.

They went to the basement. Olivia hid while Bella tried to catch up.

"Bella, I am a ghost I'll scare you... Boo!" Olivia said in a spooky voice. She jumped out when Bella wasn't looking. Bella screamed.

"You almost saw the ghost!" Olivia said innocently.

"I do Lia," Bella said stumbling over words.

Fiona came downstairs. She scowled at both of them. Bella ran over and told her she had almost seen the ghost. Fiona narrowed her eyes at Olivia.

"Don't be putting ideas in her head. I know what you're trying to do. I've been in this..." Fiona couldn't finish.

"Fia, you know you've seen. She must too. I know you're wondering why, but the answer's deep inside!" Olivia replied. Fiona looked taken aback. She couldn't speak.

Last year Fiona had been woken to find herself facing a stunned Olivia. At the time, she was 7 and Olivia was 9. Olivia had dragged her down the stairs to the basement. There in the basement was a woman. Her dress was ripped, she looked sad, and if she were 100. Olivia went up to touched her. Olivia's hand went through her. She turned, looked at Fiona. She had red eyes. The sad expression morphed to angry.

"One hundred years I've lived there. Why'd you bring me here now," she said.

"I ... you?" Fiona managed.

"I am Beatrice. I was banished from your world. Only you could've brought me back here. Why do you now?" The woman asked. Olivia was standing with her.

"I don't know what you're talking about, my sister brought me here," Fiona added. The woman's gaze was now on Olivia.

"I came down here to scare you. I was practicing what I'd say and then, that's when Beatrice came," Olivia said in quietly.

"What'd you say?" Fiona said through clenched teeth.

"Fiona, I am a ghost I'll scare you," Olivia said in a shaky voice.

"You realize Halloween's tomorrow in Colorado." Fiona said

"Halloween? Who's Halloween?" Beatrice questioned.

"Halloween's a day to fear the dead," Olivia said cautiously. Fiona's eyes flashed red but returned blue.

“Ghost in my house. Ghost is a foe?” Fiona whispered for no reason. Beatrice started to fade. The green/blue color was fading. She was gone.

“Where’d she go?” Olivia said.

“I said... never mind.” Fiona replied.

“Let’s just forget...” Fiona’s voice trailed off. They returned to bed.

Fiona walked upstairs and was immediately stunned by a cold breeze. She ran downstairs. Standing at her sisters was Beatrice. Bella, Halloween tomorrow Fiona thought.

“Beatrice this’s Bella she...” Olivia was cut off

“No Olivia!” Fiona stopped penetrated by a cold sensation. She couldn’t speak. Olivia looked the same. Bella looked at her sisters. Olivia’s eyes went wide. Bella was fading, her eyes red. Fiona concentrated and slipped out of the icy grip.

“Who’s your sister” Fiona yelled

“I don’t have sister,” Bella replied. Fiona let herself be taken by the grip. Olivia slipped.

“Who am I?” Olivia questioned.

“The enemy,” Bella answered. Olivia dropped to the floor on her knees.

“Bella, I am your sister. Not the enemy. You must remember that,” Olivia said. Her eyes flashed her natural brown for a second but were eaten back up by the red. Fiona now slipped out knowing something that might save the girl.

“Ghost in my house. Ghost is a foe?” Fiona said. Nothing happened.

“Trying to rid us? Well that one won’t work.” Beatrice crackled. Fiona looked bravely into the eyes of the ghost. She tried to figure out what was wrong with the words. Olivia realized were the words came from. With a blank face, she started to mouth them and figure out what it should be. Fiona looked back at her.

“Help me!” Fiona yelled. Olivia continued. Fiona looked at Bella she wondered what could be wrong with her sister. Olivia looked confused.

“Don’t just sit there help me!” Fiona said again. Olivia looked up and continued to stare off into space. Frustrated, Fiona tried to hold Bella’s hand but her hand went through Bella’s. Bella jumped at Fiona. Startled, Fiona stepped back. Bella laughed. Suddenly Olivia jumped up. Wiping the smile off Beatrice and Bella.

“I know it!” Olivia exclaimed. She extended her hand out to Fiona who accepted it.

“Beatrice,” Olivia said addressing the ghost. “Friendship and sisters are such a wonderful thing. I wouldn’t want to lose it with either of my sisters. I know that I’ve put them both in danger with you. I don’t want that to ever happen again.” Olivia said. She looked at Fiona.

Together they repeated the statement.

“Ghost in my house. Ghost is the foe,” They repeated the statement many times. Bella looked at them and started to say it too, she was herself again. When Beatrice faded they knew they had done what many would’ve failed at. Because they were sisters.

# THRIVING

*Cristina Lindenberg*

My life has been made. My past, present, and future is a path of destruction. Flames fill my vision, and when the flames come, they come. Nothing will stop them. Believe me, I've tried everything. I don't know what they want with me, but I they don't want to negotiate. Those who have tried to protect me are gone. My ears still ring from their torched screams as they tell me to run. Whenever I close my eyes, I still see blood spattering. Any survivors or anyone who's heard of me call me, "The girl who never smiles." With every encounter with them, the little happiness or joy I ever knew is erased. Slowly, they're tearing me apart, bit by bit. Until there's nothing left of me; Until I no longer exist. Names have no more meaning. Memories and dreams mix and I'm losing myself to the darkness. There's not much time left and it will take a miracle to save me now.

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I'm in the Rocky Mountains, alone. I know it's not long now, I can hear them coming. I sit in a tree, waiting. What's the point anymore? If zombies were real, I'd be one. I'm practically living dead. I watch the fires draw closer and closer, and I resist the temptation to run. Flames crown onto the tree and I hopped down onto the ground. Flames surround me, and weird calm takes over me. 'Any last words?' I ask myself. My mouth stays shut. Between the scorching flames, I see them. The monstrous beings prowled the ground as I get my first glimpse of their jagged fangs, razor sharp claws, and blood stained fur. I take this in, only now realizing what I waited for. Realizing that I should have ran, that my past families would die in vain. My head whips around, looking for an escape that I know isn't there. The flames opened up and the most terrifying creature I'd ever seen came into view.

It was easily twice as tall as the others and towered over me. My mouth opened up on its own accord, "What do you want with me?" It growled started circling me. The gesture couldn't have been more clearer. I was backing up when it pounced. It held me to the ground and I, paralyzed, could do nothing about it. I started sobbing as I gathered my wits and struggled uselessly. I squeezed my eyes shut and saw my short life flash before me. All that was about to come to an end.

A single tear leaked out, shining like the midday sun, and in it held my spirit, my soul. My entire life seeped out of me as the tear hit the parched soil. The monster howled as I suddenly became a lifeless doll. I sensed it slashing me with its deadly teeth, but it had already done its job. I was gone, the day finally came when I no longer lived.

I should have felt relieved, but all I felt was sadness. Tragedy had struck, all of Colorado felt it. But I still wished I was there with them. The horror I saw, all of it, was apart of me. The death, the flames, the rush of terror. I only wish I was still alive, oddly. I wanted to survive. Even in the worst conditions.

I felt a weird tingling sensation, and gasped for breath and sat up. I could still see the scars where I was ripped open. It was then I knew they would be back. Now out for revenge. I smiled for the first time since they first came. Not only would I survive, I would thrive.

\*\*\*\*\*

The End

# ELEVINA ON ALLHALLOWSEVE

*Kalea ' Lee*

Elevina was a dark forest fairy. She wore a black dress with silver wings. A hood, dark crimson red, hung over her shoulders. Elevina didn't live in the normal forest someone would think. She lived in the small neighborhood the humans called "Huntington Hills" near the lake with all the fossils. She loved to play tiny, well known tricks on the children of the neighborhood.

As Elevina sat at her desk, carved into the huge, dead oak tree, she wondered. She knew that her favorite holiday was coming up, Allhallowseve. It was the only time of the year that she could play tricks on people and they wouldn't see her. Her outfit always fit right in with the dark streets, and the orange glow that often seemed eerie to Elevina.

A few weeks passed and Elevina wondered what tricks she could do this year. She had been living in the neighborhood of Huntington Hills for a couple of years now and she had always played the same tricks year after year again. She wanted to do something different this year. She decided to look in her old basket of tricks to see what she could find.

While she was looking, she heard voices coming from outside her door in the tree. Elevina looked through the small, translucent windows. Her windows were made from recycled plastic she had found in the forest, and she couldn't totally see what was happening. She was confused by the blackness and white lights shining in some spots but not others.

As she later figured out, she had her calendar set to fairy days and hours, not human. So, she thought it was three days until Allhallowseve, when actually it was Allhallowseve already! She hurriedly grabbed her hood and rushed outside. In her rush, she forgot her basket of tricks. But, she did happen to grab her rope lasso that was hanging next to her hood. She heard voices. She turned and saw three little kids running towards her. Elevina quickly darted behind a nearby bush and thought up a plan.

As soon as the parents had passed a few moments later, Elevina flew into the air and began gathering leaves. She carried as many as she could (which wasn't very many since she was so small) and flew up into the sky. She rounded up her lasso and stuffed the leaves under her hood. Then, she flew as fast as she could to catch up to the kids, who had stopped at a house just down the street. When she was near enough, she flew past them and straight to the next tree. She patiently waited until they passed her and then whipped her lasso against the tree bark, cracking it until a piece of bark came off. The kids stopped and ran back to inspect the fallen piece. Elevina had flown up into the branches of the tree and was cracking her whip to make leaves fall. Two of the kids looked up, then quickly ran away when they saw the leaves falling. The third kid had already stood up and was running to his mother. Elevina could hear them all crying. She snickered and flew off. What trick could she do next?

\* \* \* \* \*

A few hours had passed since Elevina had played the first trick. She had just about sat down when she thought of another trick to play. Before she did anything, she checked outside to make sure it was still Allhallowseve, which it was, and she headed on her way. First, she grabbed her hood, and lasso. Then she went outside and snapped off a few branches that looked like bony fingers. She flew into the nearest clump of grass. She had picked five, skinny, but strong branches from the tree and started to tie them together. She then remembered that she had some human gloves in her basket of tricks. She quickly flew back inside her tree and grabbed the gigantic gloves from her basket. Elevina dragged the gloves back outside and quickly put the sticks inside the glove's fingers. Then, she pushed a longer, thicker stick into the glove and tied that tight. She made sure she was able to hold the stick in her tiny hands and she set out for the closest house. She quickly pulled on her hood and flew behind the house's gutter. Waiting patiently was the worse part of her plan. She was used to waiting, but it always made her fidgety. She looked at the kids who were coming; they were a couple houses down, so she quickly flew out, into the night. She looked around her, over the neighborhood. Orange lights flickered around the neighborhood. Elevina always enjoyed the lights.

A few minutes passed and Elevina flew back into position. She picked up her stick, and waited for the kids to come. A few seconds, and the kids were knocking on the door. She quickly pulled her stick out into view, and controlled it towards the kids. As the door opened, she inched the stick closer. As soon as the kids had candy, the woman giving it out looked up and saw the hand. She screamed, threw the bowl of candy up, ran inside and slammed the door behind her. The kids all looked confused and then turned around, talking to each other. When they looked up, they screamed, and ran as fast as their little legs could carry them away, down to the street, and towards their mothers. They were obviously crying by the time they were there. She laughed, dropped the stick hand, and flew away.

Back at home in the tree, she pulled her hood off and hung it up. Elevina was so tired, but excited, and worried, and nervous. She just hoped it all went well. Goodnight from Elevina. Happy Halloween!

# THE 31ST OF OCTOBER

*Celestial Steward*

I woke to the sound of a thump outside my window, on the second floor of the house. Before I rose, I rubbed my eyes to help them adjust to the light. As I sit up I realize that I left my window open all night. My room was warm from the fall sun, but the air was misty and made the air chilling. Wrapping a blanket around me, I stepped out of my bed to look out the window, only to see a black cat with two yellow eyes, and I immediately knew the Halloween night would be fearsome and frightening.

I stand there, in the light of the window seal, and as I watch the curtains flail around me, I drop my blanket from around myself onto the ground, and allow the wind to wake me fully. My white night gown, and brunette hair flow through the room as a gust of wind is pushed from my window.

I turn around and rush down the hall, and onto the stairs, as I find myself running to the breakfast table where my family waits to eat. I sit, just as my mom places down a plate of pancakes, with a side of fresh berries. My father pulled out the 'Daily Newspaper', as me and my older brother fought over the pancakes.

"Hey! You can't have second until you finish your first serving!", I yelled.

"I can too! Do you know why? Cause I'm older than you!", exclaimed Dominique, my older brother.

I replied, "That still doesn't give you the right Dom!", Dom is the family nickname for Domingue.

"Oh, shut up Summer!", Dom yelled, sounding annoyed.

"Stop it you two!", my mother bursts in saying, "Now, eat your breakfast and take some showers before tonight! You must be great hosts to your guests."

"Yes mom.", we both said. We finished the meal politely and quietly not wanting to be disturbing. We were having a Halloween costume party for everyone in both our schools: Dom's high school, and my middle school, as well as all from our parents' work.

I finished breakfast first and grabbed a towel from under the stairs before heading up to the bathroom, where I locked the door behind me. I turned around to be face to face with some kind of inhuman being. It had the shape of a human but its body looked old as dust, and it was covered with some kind of see-through, black sheet over its self. It was floating, with no legs, but it had two long skeleton arms, and the black sheet was floating under it. I tried to scream, but as I open my mouth the thing closes it with its skeleton-like hands.

Imagine drowning in blood, or not being able to breathe, then mix it all in with fear and that was me at that point. I felt like I could never be happy again. It let go as the light flickered on and off, and in a flash it was gone.

Once it left, I fell to the ground with my back to the door as I cried and soon realized I could scream once again. It all happened so fast, and with my face turning red, tears streaming down my cheeks, and my screams echoing through the house my brother and parents immediately ran up the stairs to help me, but the door was locked. They knocked and knocked and I got so scared of them I crawled over to the other side of the bathroom, just seconds before my brother slammed the door open, only to find me on the floor.

I don't remember much after that, but I was told that I, Summer South, blacked out for the first time in my life. I was also told that what I saw wasn't real. I couldn't believe all that was happening to me in ONE day. I blacked out at nine a.m. and awoke four hours later, at one p.m.

When I woke up I was in my room, and when I asked my family they said I hit my head on the tub and passed out. Although I knew that what I saw was real, I chose to believe them.

I hopped out of bed and started putting up decorations.

"Hey, Summer, how big of a reputation do you think this will give us?", Dom asked as he pulled out streamers from a box.

"Who will get the reputation first? You, a ninth grader, or me a seventh grader?", I replied with a question, as I grabbed the streamers from his hands.

"Haha.", Dom said jokingly. There were a couple of laughs, but mostly hours of decorating and small talk.

## 2017 SPIRITED STORIES FLASH FICTION CONTEST

“Okay, time for you guys to put on your costumes for the party,” my mom paused in between, “and if you want to, you can go ahead and Trick or Treat for a bit.”

We looked at each other, “Yes!”

Racing each other up the stairs was fun, but only because I won. When I opened the door to my room I found my costume lying on my bed. I put it on and went to the downstairs bathroom to put on my face paint. In the end I was a zombie! Totally gory, and spooky as heck!

We stayed at the party, where I knew NO ONE for about 3 hours. It was 10 at night and we were all still up and partying, then my brother pulled me aside to go trick or treating!

As soon as I stepped out of the door I lost my brother and wandered around until I hit a small road called Columbine Ct. I was lost and decided to sit on the curb. I sat down put my head up then down but only to find the inhuman creature, which I still thought was a figure of imagination. But it wasn't.

Six weeks later, a girl named Summer South was reported missing on the news.

# UNDECIDED

*Avalon Berdzar*

One dreary, rainy Sunday afternoon, the whole world turned to darkness. All the color visible to a human eye turned to black. The beautiful sunset that covered the sky in Fort Collins turned into a dark blur. Nobody knew what was happening to this beautiful place.

The normal light mist of rain and partly cloudy sky covered the burning sun. As I ran along the Poudre River, the sky started to darken above my head. The beautiful white clouds darkened into rain clouds as it started to pour. My ear buds blocked the sound of heavy rain and booming thunder. I looked up at the dark sky and took cover under a big maple tree with vibrant fall leaves. Those red and yellow leaves turned to ash along with the green grass. This was only the beginning of it all.

I looked around me as the darkness was spreading around the town. It was like all the color was getting sucked up and leaving this world. I decided to turn around and go back home. I walked down what was once a beautiful, green neighborhood turn into a filthy place littered with darkness. I invited myself inside and noticed that the television was on and even that was drained from its color. I sat down on the couch and turned the channel. I stopped at the news channel and left the black and white screen on. "Every place in the dome has been drained from its color. Engineers around the world are still trying to figure out what is happening." My mom walked into the room and sat on the couch next to me. "What's going on?" I asked. "I don't know," she responded. "Nobody knows." I paused. I didn't know what to say. "Aren't you worried?" I asked amazed by my mom's reaction. "Not really. The dome has broken down before. Never like this but they will fix it."

Almost a week had passed and schools were re-opening. I walked to school on my normal route but something felt different. I turned the corner and saw the busy school. The bell rang and I hurried to the door.

After 4th period I walked to my locker and pulled out my textbook for 5th period. As I made my way to my math class the loudspeaker crackled. "All students and staff please make your way to the gym. This is an emergency." I turned around and saw student drop their books and run to the gym. I did the same.

The gym was crowded with confused students and teachers. Kids were talking about what kind of emergency this could be. Soon one of the teachers told the students to quiet down. "We have brought you here today because the dome is breaking," she paused. Students gasped as they heard the news. "The dome is caving in and there is no place to hide. Will everybody make their way to the basement." Students started to get up and run to the door. "Wait! Teachers, will you guide them down there?" She asked. Teachers were grabbing groups of random students and taking them to the basement. Nobody really knew what was happening.

In the basement, students huddled together. Some people were very worried about the situation while others had not really cared. Over in one of the corners, a big group of girls were talking about their plans after school. I on the other hand was a little worried for my family but also knew that the dome could not last forever.

Back in the early 1900's the dome was created. It blocked out everything that people didn't care about. The dome stretched to about 380 miles and covered all of Colorado. Most people like the idea. Not having to be a part of wars or any kind of conflict. But once you are in the dome, you can never get out. Once the dome was built, people got sick of the dome and wanted to get out. They were all stuck here forever.

"Student's." one of the teachers yelled. "The school district has decided that all the students are to be with their families. We will carefully move you to your families..." Suddenly, a big piece of broken metal fell through the ceiling. The girls in the back of the room screamed and all hid their faces in their hands. Students that were all cramped in the tiny basement all tried to reach the stairs to the upper level. Kids were getting trampled as they all tried to get up the stairs. Teachers tried to calm everybody down but not even yelling worked. As more and more people were escaping the bottom floor of the school, the ceiling started to cave in. Students were thrown against walls and falling on top of other students.

I finally reached the stairs as people were thrown on top of me. I fell over and tried to get up of the ground but it was no use. Nobody would stop and let me get up. I felt a hand grasp my arm and aggressively pulled me up. I didn't have the time to look back and thank whoever helped me. Pieces of metal, wire, pipes, and all kinds of other things were raining from the sky. I started to run, as everybody else around me did. I had to make sure my family was okay. I left the school campus and started running towards my neighborhood. All I saw was scrap metal and collapsed houses. My family was nowhere in sight.

Everything that this community had was lost that day and was gone forever.

# MEET YOUR MAKER

*Caleb Pisano*

One day at a house in an alleyway old town Fort Collins, there was a guy named Alex, he had lots of friends. Two weeks later on the weekend he arrived at home. He went downstairs when he heard a sound, and he saw green light. He took a peek on what was there, and he saw dolls that were alive. The dolls looked at Alex, Alex ran upstairs and the dolls went after him. Alex ran out of the house and the dolls destroyed the house. Alex ran to his friend's house to tell him what was going on. Alex and his friend Joseph went downstairs to go get weapons. Alex and Joseph went outside to battle. It was Alex and Joseph Vs 100,000 dolls that came to life. Two minutes later Lee and Bryce came to help, but the dolls piled up on Joseph, blood was leaking from Joseph's eye and his mouth. Also, Bryce got thrown into a pool of acid. Alex and Lee grabbed a flamethrower and lit the dolls on fire, but they were not dead, but the dolls were on fire. Alex and Lee ran to the house to hide. Alex and Lee threw rocks at the dolls so they would fall into a pit of acid and it worked. Once some of the dolls were in the pool of acid, more than 1,000 dolls were on the lawn. Alex and Lee looked at Bryce and Joseph's dead bodies and they were gone, and then they came back as dolls. Alex and Lee had no choice but to kill all the dolls including Bryce and Joseph. But Alex and Lee figured out that that was not Joseph. Joseph came back as a ghost and told them how to kill the dolls. They filled balloons up with acid and threw them at the dolls. The dolls got melted from the inside including Bryce. 2 days later after they destroyed the dolls Alex and Lee went inside to play video games. When Alex and Lee went inside, dolls suddenly popped out of the ground. Alex and Lee saw more than 100,000 dolls heading for the spooky house on the alleyway which was the dolls home. Alex and Lee grabbed their new acid gun they made that ran on oil. Alex and Lee went outside to defend their house. When Alex and Lee got to the creepy house and went inside. Alex and Lee saw Savannah, Rory, hanging from ropes above a pool of acid. Alex and Lee tried to save them, but there were too many dolls in front of them. Alex and Lee threw rocks at the dolls and the dolls fell in. Alex and Lee saved the girls. Alex and Lee became heroes. When the dolls come back, Alex and Lee will stop them.

## THE ALLEY OF POWER

*Hadley Newcomer*

"I sure do love a thick and creamy milkshake from Walrus Ice Cream." Paige said with a sigh. Paige's inventor brain was turning and Raelyn could tell, "I think they should make an ice cream that tastes like chocolate but has a bunch of vegetables in it."

"Yeah, I guess" Raelyn slurped up the last bit of her orange sherbert milkshake, "but I think I would rather just eat plain chocolate."

"Of course you would, but other people that want to be slightly healthier might like it," Paige defended her idea.

"Well, if someone wants to eat healthier than why would they be eating ice cream?" Raelyn said still trying to win the battle. The best friends battled over silly ideas all the time, usually resulting in the silent treatment.

"I guess you're right, you win." Paige said slightly disappointed. "Ready to go?"

"Hold on..." slurp, "Now I am ready, let's go out the back so that we can avoid the crowd." Raelyn replied. They walked out the back door, into the dark parking lot. They were walking to their car when Raelyn paused because she saw a bright light flash out of the corner of her eye. Raelyn walked around the corner to see where the light was coming from. Raelyn stopped and stood there in awe of the old alley that had now been turned into something amazing. "Wow!" Raelyn murmured. There were murals on either side of the alley illuminated by the cafe lights hanging above. To the side there were beautiful bike racks that looked like sculptures. Raelyn started to walk down the short alley when the lights started flickering. "Hmmm, that's strange." Raelyn muttered to herself. "Paige come over here." Raelyn shouted.

"Ok," Paige replied. Paige started to walk over to the alley. Raelyn continued to look around the alley when the lights flickered again. Though, this time the lights didn't come back on. Paige reached the alley and saw the murals, but didn't see it the same way Raelyn had seen it.

Raelyn spoke, "I am starting to get really creeped out."

"Why?" Paige questioned, looking back out at the parking lot. They stood in silence, until Paige asked again, "Why?" When Raelyn didn't respond for the second time, Paige started to wonder why she wasn't responding. She turned around and looked for Raelyn, but Raelyn wasn't there. Where could she have gone? Paige thought. Terrible thoughts about murderers and kidnappers started to fill her mind. Paige realized that she was jumping to conclusions too fast, Raelyn was probably just playing a joke on her.

"Ha ha sooo funny." Paige said sarcastically, "Can you please come out now, I'm getting cold." Paige turned around in a circle trying to figure out where Raelyn could be. She didn't find any places that would be big enough for Raelyn to hide in. She was staring at the bike racks when she heard a loud beeping noise. "What is that?" Paige asked herself. She looked out at the street and realized it was just a car. "Why am I so scared tonight?" Paige muttered. She walked down the alley and then back towards the parking lot. She studied each bike in the bike rack carefully, she got to a bike that had something on the seat. Paige slowly walked closer to see what was on the seat.

Paige got within a foot of the bike before she realized that it was a toy doll. Paige walked around the bike and she glared into the eyes of the doll silently. Paige heard a weird laugh of somebody who sounded like they were just around the corner of the alley, "Wa ha ha ha..." Am I starting to imagine things Paige wondered. Then, she heard a scream, coming from around the corner. Paige whispered, "This is so creepy."

"I know." A distant and unknown voice said. Paige screamed. She ran around the corner when the voice said, "Don't be scared, it's me Raelyn." Paige screamed again, but this time it wasn't because of the voice it was what she saw before her. Everyone that surrounded her was staring into the eyes of her.

Paige shouted, "You aren't humans, you're dolls." How? Paige wondered, she recognized each doll as a person that lived in the town of Fort Collins.

"What is happening?" Paige said in a frightened voice.

"Don't sound so frightened, The Forest Fighters have recruited us all to become her soldiers. They turn your soul evil by touching your skin." Raelyn said, creepily.

**2017 SPIRITED STORIES FLASH FICTION CONTEST**

“Somebody pinch me, I must be dreaming” Paige said before she registered what Raelyn had just said..

“Alright you asked for this,” Raelyn replied as she cocked her head to the side. Raelyn pinched Paige right in the middle of her arm.

“Ooooooww-wa ha ha ha,” Paige said in a dazed voice, “Let’s go find some more humans” Paige said. Paige and Raelyn walked out into the group of soldiers and marched along with them, down the road off to find more humans, roaring creepily.

# THE GHOST AND THE VOODOO DOLL

*Andrew J. Lewis*

Today I was walking out of the Old Town Library in Fort Collins when the doors flew open, by themselves! I was wondering how they did that, and then I thought, “Just wind.” But when I came outside, no wind... no rustling leaves in the trees... no sound (except for the tall kid quietly moving his chess piece across the giant chess board...) so I wondered, “How did that door open?” My thoughts quickly changed though, “No need to worry about this silly thing, I’ll just head over to Rocket Fizz!”

When I got to Rocket Fizz, it seemed very odd... but I didn’t know why. I looked up, and realized that the light was very dim; maybe that was it, but it still felt strange. Right as I looked down, I saw candy canes. I thought, “Candy canes on Halloween? How odd!” I thought about how much they stood out, like a shiny yellow pencil in a pile of plain, dark, black pens. Then, as I was looking at the candy canes, one flew up and hit the side of my head, knocking my head to the right. I watched it hit the ground, then, it slowly turned to a dark, murky, black candy cane. A second after that, I heard a crackling sound. I looked up to see the light flickering. A few seconds later, the light shattered above me as I stepped back. I was scared to death!

Meanwhile, the ghost was thinking, “That was fun messing with that little kid a minute ago. I love Halloween, because you can haunt and kill kids! Last year I killed kids with a knife. But this year I want to do something special. Hmmm, what should I do?” Then he looked over to see a little doll lying on the ground, and exclaimed, “I could make a voodoo doll!” A minute later, the ghost conjured up a voodoo doll. He chuckled as he thought out loud, “Now I need to plan my ideas on how to make it extra scary for the kids. I’ll put on some fake blood, and I’ll make some doors open and close. Then to top it off, I’ll rip out my eyes! My eye sockets will start bleeding, which will add the effect that I’m crying blood; scary! Then at night I’ll use the voodoo dolls on them!”

In the meantime, I ran home, still scared to death after what happened at Rocket Fizz. Right away I looked for my parents. I checked everywhere (but somehow forgot the basement). There was no sign of them. So, I went upstairs to watch YouTube on my tablet. The first thing I saw when I turned on my tablet was the face of a zombie with blood all over him, no eyes, and chunks of his face missing! I ran over to my friend’s house to see if they knew what was wrong with my tablet. When I got to his house, I rang the doorbell. Then, the doorbell slowly said to me, in a deep, scary voice, “I WILL KILL YOU!”. And right as the doorbell spoke, a smiley face drew itself out of blood on the door. I ran home completely frightened.

Once home, I remembered to check the basement, just in case my parents were there. I tried opening the basement door, but it was locked. So, I ran back upstairs to my bedroom to look for something to calm me down. I only got as far as my bedroom door when I heard a weird humming sound, coming from my room! I saw a blue light shimmering through the outline of my door. I trudged nervously toward the door, shaking and thinking that there must be something scary on the other side. I slowly and nervously reached out for the cold doorknob, grasping it, and slowly turning it. On the other side of the door was... a gun? In the house? On the floor? It was black with blue LED lights surrounding it. I picked it up. It felt cold and smooth, and it looked shiny and new. I set it back down and looked out the window... it was nighttime! Already? I got into my bed and tried to get some sleep. But then I heard a creaking sound. I looked toward the door and I saw it slowly open. On the other side of the door I saw a ghost!

But not your stereotypical ghost. He had long messed up hair and no eyes. Also, he was crying blood! He was wearing a black long sleeve jacket, with ragged holes all over it, and covered in blood. He had on black sweat pants and brown shoes, also covered in blood. The door shut, and he was gone. I jumped out of bed, grabbed the gun, and ran downstairs, following the sound of faint footsteps. Right when I got to the bottom step, I heard the basement door quickly open and close. So I tried opening it; it was still locked! So, the first thing I thought to do was to shoot it. I shot the door and it disappeared! As I ran through the doorway I felt a sharp pain in my right arm, like a giant needle stabbing me, but I had no time to look. I turned to the next set of stairs and felt the exact same pain in my left arm! When I got to the bottom of the stairs, I turned and saw the ghost standing right next to a pile of weird dolls. He was holding one and putting needles into it. “Ouch!! Oh, a voodoo doll... of me!” I shot my gun directly at the ghost and it disappeared! I defeated the ghost! All the voodoo dolls were gone too! Then I looked to the right, and saw my parents; tied together tightly. I quickly untied them. Boy, was I happy to see my family!

THE END

# THAT WEIRD HOUSE

*Brooke Golden*

## Introduction

My mom and I drive to the gas station all the time. There's that old, 1930's looking house. It's white, and the paint is so old it's peeling off. There's a sign that says Private Property, even though no cars are there, and no people are there. It's abandoned. But every time we go to get gas, I see it up the hill, a few yards from the road, and I always get a sinking feeling in my stomach, like something bad's going to happen.

I seriously don't know why nobody's torn it down yet. I can only imagine what's inside. Broken furniture scattered all over? Ash? Dead animals? 1930 figurines? Glass dolls? Ooh. Glass dolls are scary.

I am not afraid to go in there. And I will go in there. I only have to wait two years. I am thirteen, so I am driving in two years, so I plan to scout it out and see what I can find. If it's still here.

I can. I will. I am not afraid.

Two years later

I am going to the mysterious house today. I pull up into a nearby parking lot, because I can't pull into the house. Private Property and all. So I cross the street and sneak into the front of the door. I hear whispering. It sounds like one elderly woman.

After hearing this, people would call the police, or go about their day, or run, scream, or shout for help, waving their arms above their heads.

Me, however, will go inside. I anxiously open the door, that makes a silent, creeeeeeeaaaaaak. Wow. Did I just open up into a horror movie or something? Because I swear, in every single horror movie, a door creaks when you open it.

Seriously.

I hesitate, but open the door all of the way, not to find any old women, but broken furniture scattered all over the floor. I open a drawer to see many old figurines, and a small glass box. I open the box, and inside is a pile of ash. I open another drawer and there is one glass doll in there. I mean, I can picture, like, a gagillion creepy glass dolls, but this is creepier than I have ever imagined.

And I have imagined SCARY, SCARY glass dolls.

This glass doll has white skin, with bright pink cheeks. Her eyes have no pupils, or any color. Just giant black circles. She only has half of a nose, the other half looks like it was chipped off or broken by something. Her lips are light red, and she has only one ear, the other probably broke off too. Her hair is a bob haircut; straight bangs across the forehead, and the hair length goes just a little past the start of her ear. It's chocolate brown. She's in a red dress, ankle length. At the end of the dress and the end of the wrist length sleeves, there's white ruffles. There's also white ruffles on the collar, and a thin white bow around her neck.

Her shoes are an off-white, but they look like they used to be snow-white, which is now covered with dust and dirt. They strap from left to right. I turn her over and see a note.

Mary-

Happy birthday, sweetie. Mommy has to go, but I promise I'll see you real soon. This doll is named Martha, and I need you to take really good care of her while I am away. Love her, and keep her safe. I love you.

Mommy

I carefully set Martha down then I continue to scout out the house. I see dead mice everywhere. Whoah. I just got hit with thirteen-year-old deja-vue.

I take a small step toward the small kitchen, and I hear a creak; creaaaaaak, underneath my feet. I lift my foot and see a small hatch door. Before I can think, I open the hatch curiously. C'mon, I mean curiosity takes over your brain sometimes too, right?

“Cough, cough, cough... ACHOO!” Ugh. That didn’t feel good. It’s because of the 1,000,000,000 pounds of dust behind the door. No one has been here for at least over a century. I pull a flashlight out of my back pocket,(yes, I am always prepared,) and aim it inside.

“Hello!?” I yell. “Anybody in there?”

After I know it’s clear, I put a bandana over my nose and mouth and slowly creep inside.

Chapter three

When I take the first step down the stairs, I hear a snap, and I fall about fifteen feet to the ground.

“Ahhhhh!!!” I scream, and land flat on my stomach.

I slowly sit up and realize how lucky I am to be in one piece. I stand up and limp around the room.

Judging from my math memories, I think the room is about ten by ten feet. I aim my flashlight around the whole room. Just then, I hear a low whisper. I can’t make out what the whisper is saying, but it’s the same voice as the old lady when I arrived here.

I move in closer, and there’s a low moaning voice saying, “Maaaaarrrrrthaaaaaaa? Maaaaarrrrrthaaaaaaa.”

I turn around and remember I broke the ladder.

“Help!!! Somebody help meeeeeeee!!!” I scream as loud as I can.

“Dooooo IIIII knowwww yooooouuuu?”

“Do I know you?” I whisper, trembling.

“Nooooo... Myyyyyy naaaaaame iiiiiiis Maaaaaaryyyy. Doooo yooooou knooooooow Maaaaarthaaaaaa?”

“... Martha?”

“Yeccccsssss.”

“Uh, yeah, the doll.”

Just then, Mary comes flying through me, says something about me being a thief, or a murderer or something, and I fall to the ground. I see a small light, and then I stand up.

“Maaaaary? Whaaaaat haaaaappeened?”

“Whaaaaat doooooo yooooou meaaaaaan, ‘whaaaaat haaaaappened’? Weeeeeelcoooooome toooooo myyyyyy woooooorld. Yooooou’ll beeeee liiiiiiviiiiing iiiiiiin thiiiiis haaaaatch fooooooreeeever. Soooo geeet cooooozzzzzy.”

I look at my hand, notice it’s white, and I realize I am dead.

The End

## BEHIND THE DOOR

*Ella Anderson*

Behind the door, no one will know. No one should know. At least no one who does know lived to tell. This house is normal; the basement is normal, upstairs is normal. The upstairs first door on the right is where the normal stops. Everything behind that door is lethal, murderous, and ready for its next victim. My story falls, bleeds, dies thousands of times, but never would it let my soul die with it.

Alex and her family have started to unpack. Elena is in the living room with Aron pulling out all the baby gear. Alex's mom is in the kitchen with her father talking about selling their house in the "Big Apple". Alex is alone in her new room full of boxes all labeled with "Alex's Room". She would have labeled them more, but they had to leave in a rush. She had heard her parents say that their new house was sold for a cheap price. But Alex didn't understand why. The house was in really good condition and was beautiful. Her bed is not yet in her room, so she sits on the floor with her first box, pulling one book out after another. She has many boxes full of books. At her old house, she had a whole room full of books and only one place to sit, a huge couch that laid in the middle just waiting for her to come back. Next to the couch had been a small table always covered in books, note books, and pencils. Alex grabs her most worn book in the box, and settles in the corner.

Alex's mind drifts off to the memories of her old house that she is forgetting so fast. There were so many reasons to love this house, not so many people, old building, not to even get menschen on the mountains touching the sky that she can see from her new bedroom window. She also gets to go to a better school for her first year of high school. At her last school, someone had been arrested for breaking in and entering, but there were more scandals at that school than she could count. She is happy to not go there anymore. She also wasn't that sad that she had moved because her grandma still lived there so she still gets to feel the daily mist every once in a while. Suddenly, there was a light knock on the door.

"Alex? Are you in here? Dinner is ready." Her mom walks into the room and finds her daughter in the corner of the room asleep. She was so tired from moving all her boxes and some of Aron's yesterday that she couldn't stay awake. In the distance Alex could hear Aron crying, Alex shoots awake. She was used to having to wake up in the middle of the night to put Aron back to sleep, since her mom worked night shifts. As her and her mom are about to walk down the stairs they hear an ear-splitting scream from the first door on the right.

One month later...

The family had heard nothing behind the door since then, and they had also found out why the house was so cheap. It turns out that the house has had many people disappear behind that door, but the Homeowners Association had locked the door forever. Alex has now started school, her new best friend Brody. Brody is now over at her house they are sitting in front of the door while eating a snack. This would be the second time this week

"Thanks for having me over again. Your house is a lot easier to walk to," Brody says as he stuffs his face with a handful of crackers.

"I don't mind. Anyway, you always need help with your math, and I love helping you with math. Speaking of which, we should probably go do our homework," Alex says as she stands up.

"But it hasn't done anything yet," Brody says, knowing he won't win this.

"Come on. You know it is never going to do anything. You have come over twice a week for two weeks and have never seen or heard anything," Alex sarcastically says as Brody brushes himself off and stands up. The two walk down stairs to their backpacks by the front door.

"Ok, we are finally done what do you want to do for the next hour" Alex asks Brody tiredly,

"Stare at the door," Brody calmly states.

"Cool let's go."

Brody starts to rush upstairs with his notebook. He was using the door as inspiration to write a story. Alex follows Brody to the second floor. He sits down in the hall while she walks to her room to grab a book. Only one minute later Alex hears Brody yelling down the hall. She runs out of her room, seeing that Brody got curious and touched the door handle. It only took seconds for that door to start consuming him whole like a snake. Alex tries to pull him out but she can't! Her only option is to try to distract that door. She opens the door that somehow was unlocked, but instead of opening the door spits out Brody and

consumes Alex in a split second.

Alex finds herself in a small dark room. She can hear Brody screaming but can't understand a word he is saying. Just then she starts feeling her lungs chasing every bit of oxygen it can but is unable to reach any air. She can feel a pressing pain squeezing her chest. Minutes later, she surprises herself to feel she is still alive. She knows she should be dead by now. Thinking she only had seconds, she decides if she dies, she wants to die trying to be free. She pounds the walls around her, having little room to move. She can now see a light through an opening.

Am I dead?

No, I'm through the door.

# THE DARK SPACE BELOW

*Cadence Olsen*

They say she died, but no one believes it, no one wants to believe it, she is me. Not dead, not hurt, not even scared. Me, Emma Parker. I disappeared the night before my birthday. I didn't want to, and I don't know where I am. I live in Fort Collins by the way, Old Town is my favorite place to go almost every weekend. On the night before my birthday, I was in my room. Just reading. I had no idea what was about to happen after I read that last page. I was on the last paragraph, I was in suspense as of what was happening. I read as slow as I could so that I could save those last words. The last words, of the last book that I was ever going to read. Right now, I am writing this in my journal that I grabbed right as I disappeared. What took me? Who took me? I don't know. And I'm going to figure it out. Right now, you are reading my adventure I am having. I will take you with me every step of the way. It's September right now, the day? I'm not exactly sure. I have been here for a week, at least, I think about a week. I'm in a pitch black room, with food and water being handed to me through a small hole in the wall, I don't know if it's clean, or sanitary, but I eat it just to stay alive. I'm not dead yet at least. There are strange noises out from the door, and I don't know what they are from. Monsters? People? Aliens? Creatures? Other "prisoners?" There are screams and screeches coming from the halls. It's cold and dark in this room, it feels like we're underground. It smells rotten, but not like rotten food, something horrid. Something much worse than rotten food. In the wall on the right, there is a small hole. Not big enough to get through, but enough to put your hand through. I looked through that hole, and to my surprise, someone was looking back at me.

"Hi, my names Alex, who are you?" I was to shocked to say anything.

I stuttered out "I-I'm E-mma."

"Do you know where we are?" He asked.

"No, but I'm trying to find a way to break out and see if there are other's out there." I replied. As I scavenged the cell walls to try to find a way out, Alex also looked around his cell to see if he could escape. As I felt around the wall with the hole in it, I realized that it was weak and crumbling. I told Alex to kick it as hard as he could. The wall crumbled around us and I entered Alex's cell-cage area. We continued to kick the front wall, next to the door. We heard it crumble, and ran to the back of the cell to get away from the crumbling wall. We kicked just enough to make a hole big enough to get through. We wait until dark, to go out, that is when all of the guards are sleeping. As we sneak out of the cells, I hear a person saying something from behind the door in front of mine.

"Please, help me, they are going to kill me next."

"Who are they?" I asked.

All was silent and the person was quiet. I said " It is going to be ok, we will get you out of here soon." I walked out of the cell and it smelled more horrible than anything else I had ever smelled. It smelled rotten, horrid and disgusting. As we explored, there was a ladder, I climbed the ladder and to my surprise, We were in Walrus ice cream, one of the most popular ice cream places in all of Fort Collins. I quickly climbed down the ladder and ran down the hall. When I got to the end, there was a large metal door, I opened it, and Alex and I screamed as loud as we could. There was the rotten stench, there was all of those dead bodies, those ashes of the cremated bodies, and those poor kids. The kids who have died because of what these horrible people have done. The basement of Walrus was a crematorium! A horrible place. Alex went down the hall and realized that there were 127 people to be killed. We tried to make weapons and in the morning we were going to stand up to those who were killing all these helpless people. As we work we talk about what we think is going on.

"Do you think that they kill people and use it for their ice cream?" Alex asked. I laughed,

"No probably not." I replied to him. As morning approached slowly, but surely, we got ready to fight, and get answers from these killers. As the sun rose, They started to open cells and take people behind that large metal door, only to never be seen again. I stare at the people taking those children behind that door, I can't go after them and stop them, I want to, but I just can't force myself to do it. Alex is sitting in the back of the cell, just waiting to strike. I feel sick to my stomach. I can't do this. But I have to, I have to save those poor children. As I listen to those screams, I start to cry. I can't wait to stop these people who are doing this. I tell Alex that in a few minutes to be ready to run and open all the cell doors and lead them to safety. I run out and face them. I hold my weapon in my hands and run towards them, ready to fight. Alex goes and tries to open the doors, but they pull out a gun, and all goes silent.

# THAT NIGHT

*Kendall Walker*

It was a cold, dry, misty night in Colorado when kids and their parents were out trick or treating. When a young girl named Ashley was walking her dog in her neighborhood when she here's her dad "Ash come back here u got to stay home and give out candy to the kids" said her dad "ok" said Ashley as she runs back home. She grabs her over cooked steak and goes upstairs "Bye Ash" said her dad "Byee". She jumps into bed with relief that she will have a quiet peaceful night without her three brothers bothering her. She gets her phone and starts to call all of her friends when she hears a knock on the door she rushes downstairs to see three kids dressed as zombies begging for candy. She goes upstairs and begins to hear more knocking and pounding but she's to lazy and stays upstairs. 2 hours later.... Ashley wakes up from her long nap and still hears the knocking so she goes downstairs makes some popcorn and answered the door no ones they're.... Now Ashley is freaked out and hears her bedroom door close. She slowly walked up to her room and out of nowhere a concrete rock comes flying through the window.

The rock has a note on it that says "open your bedroom door " Ashley runs to the nearest phone and dials 911 ...disconnected.... "Ohh no" she hears something rumbling in her room she opens the door! No one is they're she looks behind her "ahhhh!!". " ha-ha I've got you should've just left the situation alone" 1 day before.. Ashley saw her friend ella being teased by a bunch of guys she goes up to them and say leave her alone and gets a teacher they all got suspended for 2 days. That night her and her friend put rotten eggs all over his car and house, and took a bat to his car and destroyed it. "I'm so sorry please leave me alone!! " No your gonna get it" he takes a gun and shoots her. "Ashley baby were home Ashley" her parents and her brother walked in to find Ash on the floor bleeding they call 911. When the police got there they took the bodie and drove away. Her parents sobbing "Hey do any of u guys know who might of done this?" Says the officer "No" says Ashley's parents. The police look more into the case and found fingerprints on the girl's neck they soon 2 weeks later found out that these fingerprints belong to briar walker the guy who was at Ashley's house that night. The police chased down briar and arrested him for murder and assault of Ashley. He was sentenced to forty five years in South Town prison and fined 2 million dollars to the family. But a couple weeks later the family started to see or hear Ash like a ghost. The family got so freaked out they moved to NewYork to live their lives and try to get over the murder and Ashley.

## MY STOKER

*Cadence McLaren*

“Chloe, Ruby want to hang out in old town late tonight!?”

“dude I will be their” said my best friend Chloe

“Ok me to only if we don’t do anything bad ok!?” said Ruby

“Cool be at my house at 8pm got it” I said

“We’ll be there!” they said at the same time. The bus ride home was boring more than usual. When I got home I raced to my room and played on my computer and phone also I played with my new puppy before they came.

“Hey! You ready!!” said Chloe “heck ya I am!!” I said

“Ya I am too!” said Ruby so I told them what I was planning to do in old town tonight then we left

“Now it is getting late remember to be safe, don’t talk to strangers, and call me if anything bad happens.” said my mom

“I know I know” I said sometimes she really annoys me by babying me. Then she drove off and we headed to BEN AND JERRY’S because we were hungry. When we left the restaurant, you could say it was only 9pm and it looked like it was 12 at night a lot and I mean a lot of weird people and they seemed I don’t know drunk I guess where outside.

“Let’s let’s go call your mom right now” said Ruby

“No don’t let’s see what happens” Said Chloe

“Ya I’m with Chloe sorry” I said to ruby

“Ugh fine but if something happens it’s your fault.” Ruby responded as we keep walking around some man who looked super drunk on something approached us and asked if we were lost he said

“Hi girls are you lost I know a good place to keep you for the night.”

“Um no we’re not lost but you should get lost!” said Chloe and me.

“Ya” said Ruby we started to walk away but then we looked back and he was following us so we started to walk faster and he was still following us

“Run!!!” I yelled so we bolted and made a sharp turn we started to head to Chloe’s house because it was the closest to us when we got there I didn’t see the man but the door lock was broken and the door was kicked open

“That is so weird!”

“do you think you dad lost his keys again??” I said

“Maybe!?” said Chloe so we went in and the house was totally trashed there was broken glass the table was flipped over and all the doors were open

“Wow this is not normal!!” said Chloe

“It was probably your dad getting mad at something” said Ruby

“No, this place looks like it was robbed” I said in response we heard a loud THUD and then we heard it again

“Let’s hope that’s your dad!!” I said

“No, I just remembered my dad is out of town he left this afternoon.

“Then who or what was that....” we heard footsteps on the stairs getting closer to us.

“HIDE!!!” we whispered to each other in hide behind the couch. Then we saw the person who was chasing us how did he get here I thought

“Where are you!?!?” he said, “Where are you!?!?” “WHERE ARE YOU!?!?” he said that about five getting louder each time until he was yelling it and flipping things over. He went into the kitchen

“Run for the stairs!” I whispered so we ran and tried not to make a sound but ruby ran into a table and screamed

“ooooowww!!!!” “SHHHHHHHH!!” was my only response then we ran for the stairs and he followed us

“I got you now!” he said corning us I grab a bat and hit him in the knee he fell to the ground we ran but the man grabbed Chloe’s foot and pulled her toward him tripping her ruby ran back and then I did ruby stepped on his hand and he let go of Chloe in pain

“GOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” I yelled we made it seem like we left the house but we hid under the stairs in a compartment it was really cramped and we were in there for about two hours then we were safe and called my mom who drove us home and we told her what happened then we got to my house and when we opened the door we were all paralyzed in fear of what we saw he was there and he said

“You can’t escape me I know where you are before you even get there you are not safe anywhere!!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” we all screamed and ran to ruby’s house no one was home and the house was lock

“Phew he must not be here!!” Ruby said unlocking the door we went inside and locked the door we looked around and the house was clean and quiet then we turned around and saw him at the door

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” we tried to run but we were all stuck in place then my mom dropped on the floor dead

“MOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!!” I yelled then he hovered over us and all I could feel was unbearable pain and all I could hear was screaming then it all went black. Now me, Chloe, and ruby are all trapped in a prison cell. It is dark cold and sometimes you can hear the spirits of the other kids that had been trapped in here before us. It is lonely but sometimes there are rates coming in and out of the cell. We get on meal a day and it is the same thing every day just some weird looking frozen rat about a year old. We are just trapped in here forever and ever never-ending darkness silence sometimes I feel alone because me and ruby and Chloe are so far apart from each other but after 2 years you get used to being alone. Sometimes I wonder if anyone miss us then I think maybe no one even knows we are missing...

# THE OLD MAN

*Jacob Dinwiddie*

Jaden awoke one morning and walked to the bakery down the street. He thought as he walked through the door about how he had been craving the snack all morning. He gave the cashier his money and was handed a light brown pastry, with a smell that seemed to come from the heavens. The pastry was hard to chew but was worth it. It reminded him of the determination that needed to be carried out through the day to achieve his goals and rewards. As he was struggling to chew the heavenly food, a young boy came up to Jaden and asked, "Have you heard about the old man?" in an ominous voice.

"No...?" Jaden said, questioning the boy's sanity. "He just moved into the outskirts of town. He is pretty creepy." The boy said. Jaden had no such suspicions that an old man could be that creepy, so he shrugged it off as a figment of the boy's imagination. Then he kept hearing of disappearances throughout Fort Collins and Loveland. It was in the papers, on the news, and buzzing throughout town through conversation. He started having suspicions that it could be the old man, since he moved in just a few days before, but he once again shrugged it off. Then he couldn't find his mom, no matter how hard he tried. He looked for days. Nowhere to be found.

Then, Jaden was hit with a wave of clarity. It is the old man. All the signs aligned perfectly. He moved in, people started disappearing, and then his mom disappeared. Jaden was awestruck, and was so livid that he didn't stop to think that going to the old man's house was a bad idea. He ran with blind anger towards the old man. He entered the mountains, and started climbing. As he was wandering through the forest he found trails of dead bodies and blood pools.

Jaden became horrified. Some of the people he knew. And then he saw his best friend Ash. He fell to his knees. He started sobbing. He remembered all the memories they had together. He remembered going over to his house and having s'mores in his backyard. Jaden was melancholy, but he knew he had to keep going. Eventually, he came across a little cabin with boarded up windows and signs everywhere that read "Stay out!"

He broke through the door and saw dead bodies hanging from the ceiling by nooses, and bloody handprints and blood writing that read "LEAVE, DON'T COME BACK". He ran up the stairs and found his mother hanging by a noose right in the center of the room, dead. He was aghast. He was already sad from seeing Ash, but his sadness was multiplied tenfold. He started weeping and wailing in the middle of the rickety shack. The person who gave birth to him was dead, before he even turned 16. "Well, at least I got to be her son for 15 years." He wiped his tears, but his eyes welled up again, and he kept moving.

There was a wooden door that seemed to lead to the bathroom. He opened the door and it was pitch black. He flicked the light switch, and there was a dead body in the bathtub that seemed to jump out at him from the previously pitch-black room. There were more bloody handprints. He turned on the sink so he could wash the blood off his hands, but only blood came out of the nozzle. He left the bathroom in disgust. There was another room upstairs, but he was too horrified to continue. He ran down the stairs to the backyard. He heard moans of pain. He looked down to see a person lying on the ground with a gunshot through their arm.

"Help me..." He said weakly. Jaden immediately helped him up by his uninjured arm. He wrapped the man's arm with a cloth he tore from his shirt. "My name's Johnathan." "What happened?" Jaden asked him. He tried to kill me... I NEED revenge on that sick man." Said Johnathan. "Me too... Let's work together." They bolted upstairs and entered the last room. There was a chandelier that was lying on top of a dead body, as if it crushed the poor person. Then they saw a chair with someone's head sticking out off the top, as if someone was sitting there.

They turned the chair around thinking it would be another dead body, and they were correct, or so they thought. They saw the old man with a gun in his hand, a huge gunshot hole right in the middle of his chest, and his eyes all white. "Looks like someone already took care of him." Jaden said to Jonathan. They turned around to exit the room, but then they both felt cold hands wrap around their necks and were asphyxiated to their demise.

# THE DEPTH OF THE DARKNESS

*Shelby Eley*

One cold and rainy day in mid-October, 1996, the leaves stopped falling and the barking of dogs came to a halt. The town fell silent for a moment, the buzzing of the cars all around were blocked out, the rustling of the fallen leaves turned into a peaceful hush. The drab sky above softened within, changing the clouded hue to a beautiful royal blue, then to a inky black all within a matter of seconds. With no sense of sight, I didn't want to just stand there in the blackness so I ran along the narrow, road-side trail avoiding the grass and roots using only the flashbacks from months ago.

I knew that if I wasn't careful I could fall and not be able to find safety for whatever was coming because in my gut I knew something bad was progressing in the darkness and I had to hide. Even though I didn't know what was behind the horrid sky, I kept thinking that it was a U.F.O or alien spaceship. Once I thought about it, I knew it definitely wasn't a U.F.O. because how would a U.F.O. even get in the dome? It was most likely just a mechanical problem within the lighting system in the dome.

I had heard of this happening, when someone tried to escape through the DO NOT ENTER door. My had mom told me about how when she was six this happened and immediately after all the lanterns fell dark an announcement came on the intercom telling everyone not to worry and that the felon responsible for the lighting malfunction had been executed.

I thought about this as I ran down the path towards Evelyn's house. It was about 20 minutes until I finally got to Evelyn's house and when I knocked on the door Evelyn's step-dad answered and welcomed me in.

"Hello, Grace" he said awkwardly. "Evelyn, Grace is here", then he bellowed up the windy stairs leading to Evelyn's room. Their house was filled with half burnt candles, it smelled like you just walked into a essential oil store that carried the most delicious smelling oils.

"Hi! How are you doing Mr. Pelrks?" I answered back in an overly cheerful voice. I guess I was just excited to be in a house, with light.

"Alright I suppose, how are you doing?"

"Great, ummmm... is there a phone I could use, I think maybe I should call my mom"

"Sure, right over here", he pointed to an old rotary phone on a small wooden table behind me.

"Thank you"

"Of course"

I called my mom and as I was explaining that I was safe at Evelyn's, Evelyn came hopping down the stairs two at a time. My mom said I love you, I replied with a love you too mom, then hung up.

"Hey Grace!"

"Hi Evelyn, whats up?"

"Not much."

I'm very hungry, I thought right before she offered me a snack. It was like she could read my mind.

"So, have you heard anything about the blackout?" I asked her after we were sitting on her kitchen counter eating pretzels and cream cheese.

"Yea, actually, somebody tried to hijack the computer system and apparently she found something out so they have to keep everything black for a few days so she can get the correct alternation in her brain."

"Wow, seriously?" I asked, surprised.

"Yea, wouldn't that suck, to get your brain wiped clean just because you saw a few government papers or something!"

"Yea", maybe it was something more than just papers though."

"Oh my gosh! We should try and figure what she saw!" We said in unison.

We asked her dad if we could go out and explore and he let us, he said we could as long as long as we had flashlights.

We followed the skinny trail that took me to Evelyn's with only the low glow of our flashlights. We turned left about halfway along the path and then took another left after that. I had walked this trail a thousand time so I knew exactly where we were going, we would end up at the Spring Canyon Park in the west part of the giant dome covering Fort Collins. Once we got to the park, Evelyn and I had developed a plan. We would go to the giant's foot and see what we could see from there, after that we would check all the bike racks for any bikes we could use to get around faster. Then, we would bike around the sides of the dome to see if we could figure anything out.

We hadn't seen anything from the giant's foot but were then successful when we found seven bikes we could use. We finally decided on bikes with baskets so we could take our coats off because it was getting extremely hot in here. After we had been biking along the edge of the metal enclosure for what seemed like 100 miles but was probably only about 25, we stopped and looked around. We were in Old town by the train tracks and it was getting hotter by the minute.

Evelyn and I thought we heard something in an old abandoned coffee shop so we went in, thinking it might have something to help us with our mystery. We found nothing, in the coffee shop, in the gift shop attached to the café, nothing. Then, I saw another door on the opposite side of the gift shop that led to the old museum. I asked Evelyn if she had checked it yet and she shook her head.

I went in and she was right behind me when I opened the door to the outside. We were in Laporte. The streets were buzzing with cars and the air was cold and refreshing. A wave of heat came from behind and the dome turned into a humongous fireball.

# THE SIX-FOOT OWL OF TERROR

*Annabelle Beatty*

On one sunny afternoon with grass still damp from last night's rain we ate. We ate that grass. It was sweet. It was fresh. It was very clean — and full of flavor.

We are rabbits. My older sister, C. College says that we are eastern cotton-tail rabbits, and our Latin name is *Sylvilagus Leporidae*. We rabbits aren't cute country meadow rabbits that are in a danger of predators galore. We are suburban common rabbits under (some) protection of (mostly) intellectual giants. They are called "humans" or "people". Some scream at us, (the littler ones) but they mostly don't notice us. We find that they are the smarted of humans because they at the Library. I'm called Harmony, that's the exact Library that we live near to. My older twin sisters are Libi and Brary. The oldest is C. College. A good bit away there is an area where my Aunt Peakey lives. She just had her first daughter, Little Bear. My parents are Front (Mom) and Range (Dad, and brother to Peakey)

The nights are getting colder; the mornings are chill. Only in the afternoons can you tell that it is very late (but still) summer, or at least Indian summer. We don't like fall, because one: More big, fast, car things two: The predatory birds are looking for a big meal before flying south three: The squirrels act up more. We are toughening up because 'Lil Tot's "Story Time" started up again for fall. We bunnies endured the piercing screams of so-called toddlers "big time". — a phrase we hear adults say often walking out of the Library on "International Nights". Our friend Union squirrel — a master of languages, talked with some birds who saw a threat, a sign that read: "Wanted: Black cat around the area, green eyes, Male, responds to humans when they call out, "Fluffy" or "Fluffy—Boy" not known to hunt but will if desperate, Reward". On the night of this news the squirrels, the "some predator's dinner" birds, and we rabbits did not sleep well. One critter representing each species was on watch. Most of the squirrels were up and scratching in their trees. We rabbits didn't think much because those squirrely squirrels were always having "Social Revolutions" or whatever they called it. Before I fell asleep I heard foot steps I never heard before. I looked around for Union squirrel, but she wasn't around.

On the morning after the cat poster event and with Story Time about to start I began breakfast. I grazed. I was at this patch of grass by the place where I was named, Harmony Library. I was several feet away from the bushes. A grown rabbit would have ventured further, but I am a child. Just then I heard loud, irregular, earth shaking foot steps, like a human's. I looked up and nearly wetted myself. There stood a 6-foot OWL! A predator! I had only seconds to live, knowing this was a life—or—death moment. I froze, running away was just plain stupid at this time. The last thing I wanted was to be swallowed whole and end up in a clump of fur and bones, an owl pellet. Before I froze I flicked my signature fluffy white cotton tail to warn the others. Two seconds went by. It was going to attack! I was at the mercy of the owl, and I was hoping a human would come to my rescue. The owl slowly walked closer, it did not fly and dive. It smelled more like a human than an owl. Its wings were weird. It lifted its head off. It looked like a full-grown-girl human.

The children's librarian was outside and asked the bird-human, "Percy Shrieks, are you ready for Story time?" The bird-human answered, "Yup, how 'bout lunch after?" Eek! I shrieked, I didn't want to be somebody's lunch).

"At that new restaurant?" she continued. (Whew! I thought).

Then I smelled cat. The Mascot turned and said, "Mr. Henry Fluffy-Boy you are wanted at home."

Union Squirrel reappeared the next day, the cat didn't eat her and it never came back.

The End

## BLACK SHADOW

*Lily Bunnell*

The night was as cold and dark as Jack Frost's heart. It felt like it was a nightmare at pitch black midnight. A sliver of moonlight and the Devil's laugh brought forth the Black Shadow that only comes when it's hungry for fear and every 100 years. It will leave when it has all the fear.

It was a late night at Rollerland for P.I.E Middle School. "I am so happy we are out of there." Savannah said.

"Me too. Can we get some food now?" Michael asked.

"We just ate!" exclaimed Hanna.

Suddenly, they heard a sound in the bushes. "Did you hear that asked?" Hanna asked.

"I think so?" questioned Michael.

Next, they heard stomping in the grass. "Now we know that there is something out there." Savanna said in fear of whatever was in the bushes.

"Let's go get it." She said confidently.

"No!" the girls yelled in unison. "If we don't get it then who will?" asked Michael.

"We can call the police." replied Hannah.

A couple of minutes later when they found a signal Savanna called the police and said, "Help we are at Rollerland Rapid City, SD 4925. There is a mystery figure in the bushes. We don't know what it is? Please help!"

Once the Black shadow heard that he found someone to take his place, he made a noise like one million spirits crying in fear when the three Black Shadows took shape. Hannah and Savanna at this point turned into the Black Shadows. They were so mad they could not wait until the next Friday the thirteenth in one hundred years.

# AGES 13-15

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FIRST PLACE WINNER

**AMBER ALERT**

*Carrie Carpenter*

The garish grating of the siren blared from some unknown source, startling her from her peaceful slumber with a string of expletives. Groggily, Mary stumbled out of bed, her foot snagging on the bedclothes which were strewn haphazardly across the floor. Cold marble and a peculiar sense of vertigo slammed into her figure, and it was hours before she woke again.

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Her stomach was pressed into the floor, causing each breath to burn like a bitter punch to her gut. Bile welled in her throat and she gagged at the putrid taste. The siren was louder than ever, a grotesque symphony of brass that threatened to deafen her. Sighing in defeat, she pulled herself to her feet, surveying her dark surroundings in slight confusion. Why am I on the floor?

She remembered and hissed in pain at the recollection.

Click. She jabbed the power button on her cell phone pressing OK at the notification in angry red that floated upon the screen.

2:08 A.M. AMBER ALERT. Two dead. North Lemay Avenue. Suspect average height female, blonde, orange shirt.

Good heavens. She rubbed her eyes. That sort of thing never happened in Fort Collins. Completely alert now, she scrolled to the other notification from that night.

12:02 A.M. AMBER ALERT. Three dead. North College Avenue. Suspect average height female, blonde, orange shirt.

Though they were certainly frightening, the notifications were impersonal. There was a very slim chance that anything could befall her personally. Besides, the police seemed to have an exact memo on this criminal; she would soon be caught. Still, one could never be too cautious in the presence of murderers. Mary tiptoed shivering through the darkness of her apartment and bolted shut the front door. For good measure, she also closed and locked the windows, sighing a little at the absence of the city noises that helped her to sleep. Without them, the only sound from the room was a faint ringing in her ears.

A peculiar aspect of life upon this earth is the nighttime. Man requires light, thirsts for it without fail, as surely as he eats and breathes. When all is shrouded in the gloom and mystery of shadow, every breath is a threat, every heartbeat a warning of some indefinite, intangible thing. Before him is a chasm, behind him a hell from which creep forth creatures and demons that no one will ever behold with his own eyes. They are magnified to enormous, grotesque proportions in his peripheral vision. He wishes to glance behind him, even for an instant, but is terrified of doing so. He is in the presence of the infinite; he wishes for nothing more than to curl up inside his bed, which bears the warm imprint of where his body lay only a few moments ago, inhale the familiar scent, and pull the bedclothes over his head.

So Mary felt in that moment-- suddenly afraid to move an inch, for fear that something terrible would befall her.

She counted her heartbeats.

Onetwothreefourfivesix-- they were increasing exponentially in pace.

She made up her mind.

With inhuman speed, Mary flew through the void of the corridor and launched herself with flying steps into the tangled mess of sheets upon her bed. The quilt she pulled up from the floor onto herself, burying her face into it and savoring in the warmth and security that permeated her being.

When the next Amber Alert screeched an hour later, Mary reached with practiced movements to her bedside table to shut it off. Her hand fumbled through empty air. She could not quite reach it; she leaned forward a bit more and rolled unceremoniously off of the living room sofa.

What?

She flipped on the light switch indignantly. How had she ended up over here? Limping over to the source of the sound, she snatched her cell phone from the kitchen counter.

3:52-- AMBER ALERT. Six dead on South Timberline. Suspect average height female, blonde, orange shirt. All residents

advised to lock doors and relocate to secure locations immediately.

Oh Jesus. She clawed her head in a crushing grip, scanning the now-brightly-lit room with renewed terror. What if... But there was no way for the murderess to enter her apartment; she had locked everything securely. Hadn't she?

As though drawn by some unknown, devilish force, her eye rested on the front door. It stood there as it always had; solid, impenetrable wood... but...

There.

It was unlocked; she had known it would be, known by some terrible instinct that had gnawed inside of her like a thousand black tongues of flame licking at her heart. Patches of red pooled around her vision; she tasted blood and absently realized that her teeth were piercing, dagger-sharp, into her lower lip. She raised her hands and they were coated in that same crimson substance which ran down her face. Where was that screaming coming from? Oh, yes, she was making it. She had forgotten...

Mary turned and there was a woman staring at her through the window. Her hair was long and blonde and her shirt the hue of Hell's flames and Mary was not surprised, only frightened beyond imagine at the fact that she was about to die.

"Get away from me! Get away!" she shrieked, her heart palpitating so rapidly that she could not even feel her chest, acid rising up in her throat.

"Get away from me! Get away!" the woman responded in time to Mary, and then she remembered that her apartment was on the third story of the building and that the woman was only a reflection anyway.

Oh. How silly of Mary to forget that she had a sleepwalking problem. She threw back her head and laughed until the blood ran from her throat and when the police broke down her door the next morning they discovered another corpse in the living room, a halo of blonde hair fanning around her head. Amber Alerts chimed all over the city.

SECOND PLACE WINNER

HELLO

*Victoria A. Vidaurri*

Hello, who is this? Never mind, I don't care. Stop reading this story if you don't want to meet him!

Matthew, that's his name. Or at least that's what he told me. I had checked out a book from a local library. I don't remember the title or cover or what it was about. All I know was one moment I was on my bed and the next moment, I wasn't.

My home is in Fort Collins, Colorado, this was not Fort Collins.

I was inside a rickety old house. Now, my mind sometimes goes wild, but this was different. I wasn't hallucinating or dreaming or imagining. I was there.

Footsteps sounded. A boy, wearing a white clown's outfit yellowed from age with frills around the neck and wrists, dashed into the house's front room where I stood. His greasy hair was slicked back. His dewy green eyes shifted uneasily about the shadowed room. He didn't seem to see me or even know I was there. Suddenly, the sound of strained giggling broke through the house.

"Moonlight?" the boy called warily.

The giggling seemed to be coming from above. Across the dark room, faintly lit by filtered moonlight, a pair of boney, white feet dangled over the last few stairs leading up to the second story of the house. Footsteps sounded from next to the stairs. The figure of a boy emerged from the shadows. His black hair was puffed up and a strip on the left had been dyed mint-green. He was wearing a black overcoat and in his right hand he was holding a rope taut to the point of breaking.

"Barnard?" exclaimed the clown boy.

The young boy looked at him blankly.

"Where is Moonlight!" hissed the clown boy.

"Oh, her?" Barnard looked up at the ceiling and then at the stairs. "She's in a bit of a tangle at the moment."

Barnard let go of the rope and Moonlight's body came crashing down the stairs, her face making an excellent thud on the wooden floor. The boy opened his mouth to scream, Barnard frowned and the boy seemed to freeze. Moonlight's head jerked upward and she giggled, a hollow, rasping giggle that made my spine crawl. Her body twitched convulsively about and looking closely I saw the rope was fastened around her neck. She had apparently been clawing at the rope, for her neck was scratched and bloody.

"I can't breathe!" she giggled. "I can't breathe!"

Shrieking these last words hysterically, her head dropped back onto the floor and she went still. Barnard raised an eyebrow, looking slightly amused.

"My job is done. Good day."

He turned and walked out of the room. When Barnard had gone the clown boy unfroze. He fell to the ground and stared in disbelief at the lifeless white body. Turning, he looked at me.

I was sitting on my bed, staring at the same boy still in his clown outfit. Only now he was older, in his late twenties. On both sides of his face blackened thin lines, which had not been there before, ran down from the midsection of his forehead to the middle of his cheek, ending in ink black droplets.

"Hello," he said quietly. "I'm Matthew."

"What was that?" I cried. "Was it a vision or something?"

"No, you had a glimpse into my past. I am a thought. So was my sister, Moonlight, but many said she was a bad thought. They sent, Barnard, to eliminate her," Matthew shook a little as he spoke. "For in order to be a new addition to my slaves, you had to learn a little bit of me, my story."

“Leave me alone,” I begged.

“No, you’re my slave now. You shall write and the people shall read. It’s the only way I can travel around in my new form of thought.”

“What kind of thought are you?”

“Fear, but I am fraud fear. I cause fear that is, like my deceased sister, nonexistent.”

“I don’t want to be your slave! Go away!”

“The other thoughts forced their fears upon me! So, I became a figment of the imagination that specializes in causing fears that aren’t really there. They burned these marks onto my face so that all that saw me would think me a disturbed horror. But they pay for it every day. They may be called, ‘good thoughts’. But only the truly good thoughts can withstand me, the others are nothing more than worthless thinking. That is why my playground has become so large, people have forgotten good thoughts. So now I rule over man!”

He stepped towards me shaking with anger.

“Tell me how ‘the monster under the bed’ came to be or ‘the monster in your closet’ or ‘monster in the basement’. How did all those authors such as Stephen King or R. L. Stine get their ideas! How do you think clowns even came into existence as a fear? It was me!”

Shrieking like his deceased sister, he fell over laughing.

“But it’s wrong to cause people to be fearful,” I interjected.

Matthew sat up.

“True, yes, it is wrong, but people are so stupid. They fear what is not there, more than what is. How long will it take them to realize stupidity will eventually destroy them? They need to learn their lesson!”

From that day on, Matthew lived in my head as a thought. Though I refuse many of his ideas, I tinker with fears just a little. I’m his slave and (if your still reading) you might be too. For Matthew dwells in the imaginations of all writers who spill horrors into their books. Where is he now? He is in my head, waiting for a new victim to look at my story and become another slave. Read these words and he will not hesitate.

So say hello...

## THIRD PLACE WINNER

**THE LAKE THAT HELD REBECCA***Emma Beatty*

Pale, cold light shone dimly through the dusty attic windows of Rebecca Clark's house. This room, where Rebecca and her mother had ventured, contained what most attics do: dust, cobwebs, and endless cardboard boxes, with an occasional forgotten relic, (too large to be boxed) gracing a dead end in the twisted maze of clutter. Of course, how could it be known what might be found in a mess like this? Another question: what should be found in a mess like this?

To curious young Rebecca, it was experience. The lives of those recorded in history excited her restless mind, and this curiosity gave her the idea to become a historian. As she roved her excavation site, dust-cloth in hand, searching for discovery, maybe in the tattered curtains here, or the rusted skillet there. She would gain experience soon enough. She was unknowingly being lured toward it, through the poorly-lit labyrinth of what to her was priceless treasure, to the darkest corner, where what she would unearth would give her a chance to step back into history, or rather, fall into it. The remaining glint in the tarnished metal latch of a trunk, looking older than anything Rebecca had ever seen outside a museum, caught Rebecca's eye.

"Mom, look at this!" she whispered excitedly.

"Hmm?" her mother responded absentmindedly, not stopping her dusting to look. The trunk opened with surprising ease, as if it had been waiting to be opened. Out of it came a few orphan shoes, so full of buttons and holes that that Rebecca didn't realize they were shoes at first. Next came several articles of long-dirtied clothing, apparently thrown in by someone long ago; they were not put away to be stored themselves, but perhaps were used to help store (and conceal) something else. At last, the trunk was emptied, except for one thing. A book lay askew, upside-down, and forgotten, at the trunk's musty bottom. Rebecca eagerly began to read.

This forbidding old volume was a diary, which chronicled the escapades of two girls, Phyllis Clark, and Rebecca Owens, whose names excited Rebecca because she had heard them when the family tree was brought out. One was her ancestor, and one was her namesake, she had learned from her grandmother. The diary told of how they moved to their town. It had both of their accounts, and Rebecca thought she had found something museum-worthy. However, the peculiar thing was, in the book's margins, in the old Rebecca's handwriting, there were strange verses of poetry, such as the first one,

"Reader, this is what must come true,

/the contents of this book must interest only you."

Sure enough, whenever Rebecca tried to show anyone the journal, they always seemed to think it dull, so she gave up trying to get them interested. Even so, her own interest kept her reading.

That night, she read,

"The further into this book you pry,

/the wetter you are and the more I dry."

Before falling into a deep sleep. She found herself on the attic floor, and spotted the trunk. Suddenly, water started coming from it, first dripping, then pouring out at her. Water was also dripping from everywhere else in the room, washing away the attic and revealing a cold, dark nothingness. Rebecca was in an abyss where only she, the trunk and the inky black water existed. Then, out the diary flew from the trunk, in possessed assault, for her face. As she screamed in fright, she awoke, and was startled not only to find the book on her face, but also that she was just as wet as she had been in her nightmare. I was only sweating, she thought.

The following day, she strolled from her home to the nearby Old Town Library. Curiosity undaunted by her eerie dreams, she brought the journal. Under her favorite tree in the park nearby, she read a fascinating part about the girls herding sheep near a lake. Then came another set of queer verses:

"With each page you soon shall see,

/this book is a record of our history."

Rebecca's head dropped sharply against the tree as she dropped into an even deeper sleep than before. The dream replayed,

but more vividly. This time, she could feel the frigid water, and, by a dim glow, her surroundings appeared to be that of a bottomless lake. When the diary flew, the flailing Rebecca struck furiously, and awoke. She was as wet as a drowned rat. It hadn't rained in weeks, and the sprinklers hadn't been spraying. Rebecca didn't have time to puzzle over it, and had to leave. She started to run, but everywhere she looked, she saw inky puddles of water. Still spooked, she ran faster, until she and regained composure. She was nearly home, so she took out her new obsession. She was on the last page. Rebecca was shocked to read that her namesake was drowned in the very lake she had been herding sheep beside earlier, and Phyllis had written a lamenting record of this. Beneath this, oddly, was more of what Rebecca thought were the first Rebecca's verses.

“ A switching of places soon shall be,  
/the ironic replacement of you for me.”

Rebecca fell out of consciousness and into a large puddle she hadn't noticed before. Now dream was a misnomer; her nightmare was a dark, wet world that ought not be. The diary flew to the hands of someone else, missing Rebecca's face. This someone was another girl, pale, thin, and contorting madly. Rebecca swam after her, but the girl beat her to the surface. In one last struggle, Rebecca fought wildly with the figure, and seized the book.

For the last time, she woke, sprawled out, now oddly dry; the book lay ruined in her hand. She sought comfort in her reflection, but saw the face of the defeated below. A cold wet hand reached out toward her from the puddle...

# COLD JAMES

*Miles March-King*

Bazille is so cute when she sleeps. Like a bunny. I think it's awesome that I get to cuddle with her for this long. She drove us all the way to Fort Collins without any breaks, and she's exhausted. Barely got us to the parking lot of the hotel. The Elizabeth hotel, I think. I kind of forgot.

Bazille suddenly shakes awake and picks up the bedside phone. "Hello?" she says warily. I listen to the muffled sounds of a man talking, and Bazille's face slowly drains of color. She gently sets the phone down, and swallows hard.

"The phone didn't ring," I say. "Why did you pick it up?" Bazille looks at me like I'm crazy.

"That thing rang, Ezra."

Bazille stiffly gets out of bed and walks to the door. "Where are you going?" I ask, but Bazille shakes her head and leaves. I get up to follow her, but I freeze. Almost literally. The air turns as cold as a deep freezer in the middle of winter. I shiver so much I think I'm having a seizure. And then, just like that, it goes away. What was that? Its sixty-five degrees outside! I mean, September isn't exactly a fiery inferno, but it shouldn't freeze you when you get out of bed.

I shiver one more time, and then run out into the hall. The stench of liquor fills the corridor and pours into my lungs. I make my way down the hall to the elevator. Then I hear howls of agony. I run down the stairs four at a time. Another hallway. The screams are louder.

I run into a large room, the hotel restaurant, I think, and hear more shrieks of terror. I search the room, which doesn't have any people in it, by the way, at 4:00 PM. Actually, I haven't seen anyone on my trip downstairs. The eerie silence gets in my head, making Bazille's shrill cries more defined. I whip around to see red stains on the carpet, heading out the door I came in through. Blood is splattered all over the floor as I run up the stairs.

I follow the trail of blood back to my room. The door is already half-open when I smash through. The lights are flickering, and the smell of liquor is strong here. Bazille is lying on the floor, face down. I frantically flip her over, and see that her throat had been slit. Her eyes are glazed over. She lies limp in my arms.

As I sob into her neck I desperately try to think what might have happened. I come away from her body just enough to see a crumpled, browning newspaper clipping sticking out from the collar of her shirt. I scan her body for other clues about her death and spot a dusty liquor bottle sitting next to her hip.

What does this mean? I touch the whiskey with my fingertips, and the sudden cold buckles me. My knees collapse underneath me, and I fall to the floor. My movements seem slowed. In my hand the bottle shatters because of the sudden temperature change.

"Give me my bottle!" a voice shouts like an adult-sized baby. A slash across my face brings me to my senses. I get up to my feet, getting beat upon and cut by an invisible knife. I run out of the door, stumbling and tripping as I go. The sounds of something running behind me keep me moving. I glance behind me multiple times, but see nothing.

I practically fall down the stairs. A woman goes to help me up, but I get up myself and run out of the front doors of the hotel, shoving through a large crowd now. I struggle to make my way through the mass of arms, legs, bodies and talking heads. Where did these people come from? There was no one a few minutes ago! The sounds of scampering behind me have stopped, and I take a breath. No one is outside. What is going on?

I take a second to catch my breath, and when I take in my surroundings, the shadow of a man, hanging in midair startles me. My feet move before my mind tells them to. But I have nothing to run from. The man is hanging from a lamppost, wearing a trench coat, with a bottle of liquor coming out of his pocket. The pocket itself is dripping blood.

In my horror, a cold wind blows through, and a small piece of yellowed, old paper settles on the concrete. I glance one more time at the body to make sure it's not going to suddenly chase me, and scrape the paper off of the sidewalk and read it as fast as I can, the wind picking up now.

A sharp arctic gust of air blows through my hair and my body goes numb as I try to comprehend the words on the paper. What just happened? How?

# THE TALE OF THE DARKENED DAY

*Autumn Lerdal*

The day didn't quite seem right for a young girl named Rose. Rose had beautiful blond hair and green eyes. She knew that something was about to happen that wouldn't be good. As she got up out of bed, her mom knocked on the door and asked if she was up and getting ready for school. Rose answered yes and then went over to her closet getting ready for her first day of school. She could tell that she wouldn't like this school at all. She was going to go to school in

Fort Collins at Cache La Poudre.

As she walked into the kitchen her lights dimmed and then became brighter. What was going on? She turned around and looked to see if anyone was around her, but no one was there, not even her mom.

"Mom, are you there?"

There was no answer. She ran outside, it was like a ghost town. She ran down the street, no one was there.

Rose was terrified, she didn't know what was going on.

Then she heard a noise coming from a house, her house.

She ran back to her house and screamed through the door to see if anyone was there. Then she heard a strange voice say, "Welcome to your worst dream Rose!"

She looked everywhere but couldn't find where the voice came from. Her heart was beating as fast as a plane going top speeds in the air. She was scared and no one was there to comfort her. Then she heard the voice again saying the same thing coming from her bedroom. She ran up there and sitting up on her bed was a man that smiled when he saw her.

He had a dark black suit on with a blood stain by his tie. His hair was dark black. He had red eyes. He was the creepiest guy Rose had ever seen. She knew that he was up to something.

She started to back away but he told her that he didn't want her to leave, then he waved his hand and the door shut and locked itself. Rose was so scared her hair stood up on the back of her neck. He smiled and told her that this was just the beginning. He stood up and told her that by the end of this that she would die and he would be the most powerful man in the world.

She tried to run but she couldn't because her feet were glued to the floor. He walked over to her bed table and grabbed a bloody knife with a sharp edge on it. He started to walk toward her and twisted the knife in his hand. He told her his name was John and he was not sorry to do this. Finally, she got her feet free and ran to the door trying to open it but she then remembered that it was locked.

She ran to the window but saw spikes close by it. John was getting closer and closer with a huge grin on his face.

She knew that she wouldn't survive this, but she had to try to live. Then suddenly, another man jumped in through the window with a knife in his hand he looked just like John.

She didn't know if she would live.

As he started to walk toward her they all heard a noise.

A noise of something trying to break through the barrier and save her. Finally, a girl jumped into the window and ran towards both Johns. The two guys stood their ground and ran toward her.

All of a sudden BAM! There was a jolt of light then everything went dark around Rose as she passed out. She awoke in a dark room. Then the same girl that she thought saved her said "I have been waiting to meet you Rose!"

As Rose looked around but couldn't see who said that, and why were they holding her hostage. The woman told her not to worry and that everything was going to be all right. Rose was terrified, she didn't know who that woman was and what she was going to do to her. Then the woman walked out from the shadows to let Rose see her face. Rose was horrified, it was her mom! Her mom told her that she was sorry to have to do this to Rose and then darkness spread around the room, leaving Rose to be asleep forever!

The End

# GHOST TOUR

*Seth Bylund*

The date was October 26th, 2017, and I had just purchased my tickets online for the Fort Collins Ghost Tour. I had purchased them for October 27th, at 7:30 pm. Apparently the time when the ghosts came out, according to the website.

Many of my friends had done it and had said that it was just some old basements and graves from unnamed and unknown people from a long time ago. But being the writer that I am, I had to check it out, and who knows, maybe something exciting would happen.

I had been waiting at my laptop, thinking of what would happen, all day on the 27th. Just waiting for 7:00 which is when I would get off and drive to the Old Town parking structure on East Mountain Avenue. When the time finally came, I was waiting and ready to go. I must admit, I was a bit scared, but not like scared-scared. Just anxious and excited I guess. Being a Friday night, parking was hard to find and I ended up driving around for a bit, but did eventually find one. I walked into the group which was right next to the Juszak realty. There was about 20 people in the group and 10 or eleven of them were children and most of them were crying or telling their parents they didn't want to go because they are scared.

Right at 7:30, Gary, our tour leader, emerged from behind the building and the only work he said was "follow". I was sure that he had to say that, because if he didn't that would be weird.

We followed him for probably 3 minutes until he stopped at a staircase next the Old Chicago. He then proceeded with his prepared speech about how we were heading into the basement of the restaurant and how someone died when they were building and the workers say this and the customers say that and security cameras have seen this blah, blah, blah. The basement itself was boring and I snapped a few pictures hoping to get something interesting to write about. The rest of the tour was just some graves and nothing too exciting. I can see why they said it wouldn't be fun.

When I got home I downloaded the pictures on to my laptop and scrolled through them. I saw nothing. Until I looked closer. In each place that we went to I took two pictures and each time something was different in them. Sandbags had moved, I was wearing a different shirt in a mirror that I took a picture of. And that is when it started happening.

If I wasn't already creeped out enough, the power went out right after I saw the last picture. There was no bad weather and there was no reason for the breaker box to go out when I checked it. However, there was a slip of paper that I knew wasn't there before. "Watch your back" it said. Right then I started hearing heavy footsteps coming from behind the garage door. They were getting closer. THUNK, THUNK, THUNK. I was panicking and I didn't know what to do so I opened the door leading to the backyard and ran. Ran and ran for as long as my legs could take me. But now I could feel that someone was watching me as I slowed down at the edge of the woods. Now I could hear someone hitting their hand with something. It sounded like a bat. I didn't know if I should run or should I hide or should I-

Before I could finish my thought, I heard "Duck". It didn't register and before I knew It I was being hit with a bat, falling hard and blacking out.

I woke up in a strange, dark room with only myself. It was so dark and so quiet, it was like I was in space. It was then that I heard a ragged, heavy sounding voice. "Do you know who I am?" before I could answer "Do you know who I am?" I tried to answer but right before I started talking: "Do you know who I am? Do you know who I am? DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM??!" He was getting louder and seeming more upset. Then I heard a flurry of footsteps and looked behind me, and I saw the scariest thing that you will ever see.

He had 3 legs and 4 arms. His skin was blob-like and runny. It was dripping where he stood. The thing had one large, yellow eye with 5 snaggleteeth and a large growth coming out of the side of his skull. He was 7-foot-tall and when he opened his mouth to speak, slime from his skin ran into his mouth. That alone was enough to make me gag, but he smelled too. Bad. Like rotting fish and soured milk had a baby. He told me that he was the all-powerful Thing.

He whipped his arm around and gunk went all over me. I guess that means that it was time to run. But when I ran, I ran full speed into a wall. I hit my head very hard, and when I woke up, I was back in my bed again. It was like nothing had happened. The power was back on and none of the pictures that I took were on there. Except for one that I hadn't taken. It was the Thing holding my phone taking a mirror selfie. Etched in the mirror was "Watch you back." I went up to my bathroom to look, and there it was. And then, like lightning, he was out from behind the shower curtain and an axe was coming down on me. Then everything went dark. I came back as a doll. I didn't know how I knew, but I knew. I knew that I was to kill anyone that got in my path of world domination.

# TIMELESSNESS ITSELF

*Sedona Dionne*

It was a cold and dark night. A storm rumbled, pouring out its tears for all to see. A woman stumbled around, searching for her car. She slipped and fell, landing hard, crying out in pain. That's when she saw it: a single, blood-red book shone against the dark pavement. An instant later there was a scream that shattered the night. Then silence--except for the incessant patter of drops. The book slowly dissolved. I shook my head and carried on. Sleep came instantly.

The next morning on the way to work a crowd was pushing as if to see something. I hopped off my bike and wove through the crowd to find the source of the commotion. At the front of the mob, policemen scurried around like ants. Lights flashed everywhere.

"What's going on?" I asked a bystander. I had to shout to be heard over the din.

"A body was found this morning and all the surrounding businesses are closed for the next few days. That's it I know." He spat on the pavement and walked on, cavalier to the whole episode.

The newspaper that night had the full story of the body they found:

Late last night, Rachael Livinsky, a fashion designer, was murdered in the Foothills Mall parking lot. She was the manager of the store, Beauty and Boutiques. According to her husband, she had stayed late to finish designing a new skirt. She never returned home. Later that morning, in a state of extreme anxiety, her husband called the police who found her body. An anonymous source told the Coloradoan that her heart was torn from her body and laid beside her. Her hair was as white and translucent as glass. A recent photo shows Mrs. Livinsky's hair chocolate brown. Details such as her hair had fallen out and turned to a pile of ashes that blew away in wind remain unconfirmed by police. The police have no suspects and the investigation is on-going.

I shuddered and set the paper down. Poor woman! What a horrible way to die, I thought. The next day the headline screamed: Another Body Found! Possible Serial Killer on the Loose.

The article said the victim was a teenager who was walking home from a softball game. She was found in much the same manner as Rachael. The Coloradoan stated (again from an anonymous source) that her heart was nowhere to be found and all of her hair was missing. She was completely drained of blood. The man who found her body, Bill Gavica, said, "It was a horrible sight. What kind of person does that to someone? It's appalling." The police will be holding a press conference to assure the citizens of Fort Collins they are committing all their resources to this investigation. They are also asking for the public's help and to call the police department with any information.

That night as I was closing my blinds, a flash of color caught my eye. On the pavement outside my house red books lay haphazardly about. Suddenly, the books blurred together in a whirlwind in the center of the street. They then traveled to the trunk of a nearby car. In the driver's seat the form of a man appeared. The shape opened the car door and began to walk towards my house. It stopped about 50 yards from me, stared and then vanished. I shook my head to dispel the vision. That wasn't real, I tell myself. It's the murders getting to me.

I make myself a hot chocolate and head to bed. I flip on the light. On my bed was a red book: a blood-red book. Fingers trembling, I grabbed the book. It opened up by itself and the pages began to flip. They stopped. Five words written in blood stood out: I'm coming for you. The words began to run together into what appeared to be a pool of blood. I screamed and threw the book out my window.

That night I didn't sleep. This is not happening, I thought. I'm being paranoid.

I woke the next morning with a scream: I'm next!

To shove these fears aside I set out for a walk--in a wooded glade behind my house. The birds sang sweetly. The wind blew contentedly. The trees cast their leaves, keening, to the breeze. A flash of red. I stumbled and fell. Hands reached out and caught me at the last minute. I opened my eyes ready to thank my rescuer, but what I saw made me wish I had fallen. The being's face was a blur of fluttering pages. Somehow lips formed and cracked. Fangs protruded, white as a pressed sheet. The being's eyes' opened. For the merest fraction of a second, I fell into those boundless and eternal eyes. Then, my soul cried out the identity of this never-ending, malevolent being. Hypnotized, the words "No, never" left my lips in a strangled yelp.

"The design," the being whispers.

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He leaned forward and bit my neck. I opened my mouth to scream but nothing came. My eyes close to an endless darkness with no beginning and no end.

# THE KIDNAPPING OF RADCLIFF JOHNSON

*Brennen DePriest*

“Wha- Wha- what’s going on?” I said. “Be quiet. You mustn’t be too loud. You won’t want to alert the Guard.” I heard a voice say. “Guard? What guard? Where am I? Who are you?” I had absolutely no idea what was going on. I was asking questions to learn more information. Not to anger anybody. “My name is Lindsay. I’ve been captive here for 3 years. I have more freedom than the others. How can I help?” I was hoping I could learn more. Where am I? Who is holding us here? But most of all, why me?

I just didn’t understand. So many questions in my head, with nobody to answer them, except for Lindsay.

“Hey kid, what’s your name?” asked Lindsay.

“Radcliff, Radcliff Johnson. My friends call me Rad.”

“Well, I don’t believe we are acquainted, nor are we friends, I believe we are far from. Would you like me to call you Rad?”

“I don’t mind. If we are both going to stay here, we might as well be acquainted.”

Boom! All of a sudden, the door came flying open and a man burst through the door.

“Get up! Now!” Said the mysterious man.

As he said, we both got up. I was afraid that maybe he would get mad and do something. I was guessing that’s what my time would consist of for the time being. Just do as I was told, and maybe I would be okay. But, I didn’t just want to be “okay” I just wanted to leave this place.

--Two months pass--

It’s been about two months since I’ve been trapped here. The place is near resemblance to a doomsday bunker. Everything is organized. We wake up at 5:45 giving us 1 hour before breakfast at 6:45, lunch at 12:15, dinner at 7:05, and a before bed snack at 9:15. The day always ends with a 15-minute hangout time. Since I’ve been here 10 other kids have joined in my room.

Our living quarters consist of 8 bunk beds. We only use 6 of them because there is only 12 of us. It isn’t the best living situations, but it’s much better then it could be.

Friday December 10th, 2010

“Rad, wake up,” Lindsay says. Awakening me.

“What’s wrong L?” I ask.

“Listen, I’m tired of being here. I just want to leave. Me and some of the other kids just want to leave. We are planning on escaping.”

“When? How? Where will you go?”

“We have been hiding food in our beds. All we need is a car.”

All of a sudden one of the other kids, I knew as Tyler, piped up and said “I know how to get one. Over the weekends the patrols are lessened so they can help unload the delivery trucks.”

“That’s good we can use that to our advantage. Would you like to go with us Radcliff?”

“I mean, I would love to.” I said. I was ready.

The next Two hours were spent packing, clothes, food, supplies, anything we could get our hands on, we did.

“We will need to run down the open corridor, to the left, through the cafeteria, where will be leaving out the back door. Is everybody ready?”

All at once, “Yes!”

--One hour later--

“Here we go.” Lindsay said. I didn’t know what to do. I was nervous, scared excited, all at the same time.

“3, 2, 1... GO!”

It started as a jog then a sprint. We ran down the hall. Past all the rooms, the guard stations, check-in stations, into the cafeteria. But I had no idea what was on the other side, nobody did.

“Hey! What are you kids doing?”

We all went at him not thinking. It was my personal favorite guard. They all called him “Johnson”, I knew him as my brother, Jeffery.

You see ever since we were kids, my brother Jeffery was never home always running away, only for 3-5 days at a time. After his 4th time though, he didn’t come home.

We all thought maybe it was because he just didn’t want to be here. But I was the one always let on his secrets. He loved it at home, his sense of adventure was what ruined it. My parents wanted him to stay home, do chores, don’t leave, no friends, straight A’s only. Jeffery failed every class, dropped out of high school. It was a sad thing.

I didn’t know what to do.

“Just go!” Lindsay shouted. So we kept going non-stop.

But then we reached the back door, and got to that truck. Unscathed, nobody missing. All 12 of us.

--4 years later--

It’s been 4 years since that day I escaped that horrid place. I’m 17 now. Every day I can’t help but think about if I went back to help Jeffery. I guess I’ll never know. Life is full of choices. Make sure you aren’t like me. Don’t end up at your brother funeral and forget that you were the reason a bullet killed him. I, Radcliff Johnson, am the reason my brother ended up dead, and am the reason Fort Collins, Colorado’s obituaries has one more entry.

Lily Patrick, 14 Years Old

Phone: 970-213-1640

“Play Time”

Once there lived a Woman and her son who was 9 years old. The woman’s name was Mallory Thana otherwise known as Miss Thana and her son’s name was Ben. They both lived happily in Brownsville, Oregon until one day Miss Thana lost her job working at the local elementary school. She decided to move to Fort Collins, Colorado in a condominium complex on 301 East Magnolia Street. She thought there she could have a better life, afterall her son never had any friends back in Oregon. Once their plane had landed in Colorado they took a taxi to their new home. The ride was long and boring, images of the new apartment blurred in Miss Thana’s mind as Ben lay sleeping on her lap.

“We are here!” Shouted the driver as he pulled up in the driveway.

The house was displeasing to look at, the brick looked as though it had been chiseled off with rocks and the roof was old and cracked.

“Ben wake up!” She exclaimed handing the taxi driver his money. When Ben awoke they both grabbed their suit cases that contained all they had and headed up the stairs to their apartment. When they arrived they were greeted with a musty smell and dust everywhere.

“Oh I want to see my room!” Ben exclaimed.

He ran down the narrow hallway and turned right to find a small room with a small bed and a box in the middle. Interested Ben opened the box and find toys! He laughed and started playing with them. Miss Thana just shook her head and said,

“Ben it’s time to go to sleep now we have a big day tomorrow.”

With that said they both went into their rooms and fell asleep.

That night was dead silent. The whole apartment stood still nothing moved except the slow rhythm of Miss Thana's and Ben's breath. That's when she heard it, the whisper.

"Want to play?" A voice echoed at the foot of Miss Thana's bed. She woke slowly her eyes fluttering open.

"What?" Questioned Miss Thana's yawning.

"Wanna play? It's time to play!" Whispered the voice knocking on the bed.

"No no, Ben we can't play now." Miss Thana turned over waving him off.

"I said it's time to play." With that footsteps erupted from the hallway.

"IT'S TIME TO PLAY! IT'S TIME TO PLAY! IT'S TIME TO PLAY!" Screamed the voice repeatedly. Miss Thana arose from her bed and slowly crept down the hallway as Ben screamed.

"Please stop!" She insisted, but as she walked down the hallway she saw Ben sound asleep in his bed the covers blanketing his body. The voice was not Ben's. Suddenly Miss Thana tensed up then the screaming stopped. "This has got to be some sick dream." She said to herself rubbing her eyes. Suddenly a head popped up from behind the wall.

"Hello," it said. She could see the outline of the figure its eyes wide and mouth stretched out almost too far.

"I told you it's time to play Mallory, but you didn't listen." Whispered the raspy cracked voice.

With that the figure ran away and the dead silence filled the room once again.

Miss Thana was shaking rapidly a cold seat had erupted on her forehead when it happened. The jack in the box, one of the toys found in Ben's room, started playing its tune. It was slow and anticipating moving from one point to the next in jagged rhythms.

Miss Thana immediately ran into Ben's room and started to shake him.

"Benny? Ben I need you to wake up now. It's time to wake up!" She went on her knees proceeding to shake him. The music played on.

"Look, you have to see how it ends." Echoed the raspy voice behind Miss Thana. She turned around to find just the music box sitting in the middle of the room. Slowly the door creaked close. The last note faded almost as if it was sinking into the darkness. Miss Thana was frozen in panic too scared to even move a muscle.

She sat there the darkness consuming her, the anticipation biting at her, then she felt it. Right in front of her the breath of another. All she heard was laughter, cold icy laughter. She screamed and sprinted out of the room into hers where she promptly hit her head on the dresser and became unconscious.

Miss Thana awoke the next day in her bed not sprawled out on the floor like she has been left last night. She sighed a breath of relief, it had all been a dream or so she thought. She ruffled the covers beneath her when she heard Ben in his room. She smiled, he finally woke up.

"Snip snip snip!" Ben giggled. "Snip snip snip!" Miss Thana arose from the bed and headed towards Ben's room to see what he was "snipping". As she turned to see she was both confused and horrified. There Ben sat in his pajamas cutting family photos, but he wasn't just cutting them randomly he was purposely snipping out Miss Thana in every photo he could find.

"Ben what are you doing!" She yelled.

"I'm sorry mommy, Tim just says we won't need you anymore." His voice sounded different.

"Oh! I forgot! Tim says it's time for you to play Mommy." He whispered. Miss Thana's stomach dropped but she held her head high.

"Fine let's play." Seconds later Miss Thana died. Which is ironic because the name Mallory Thana means unfortunate death. Turns out the apartment complex Miss Thana and Ben planned to live in was a former hospital where Tim Platte had his final resting place. It was said Tim was seen running around the hallways asking patients to play even after his death. When they said yes the patients would die right away for the only way to play with Tim was to be with him. To die.

# SISTER

*Natalia Contreras*

Last year my older sister went missing for a month. There was a police search and everything but no one found her. We waited and waited. Then on May 27th 2017, there she was, in our house, sitting in bed reading a book, smiling and laughing. After that, she was acting perfectly normal. It's been several months since she came back, we still have no idea what happened to her. She is in therapy now, but whenever anyone asks her anything about her going missing, she just stares blankly at the wall. She's gotten worse. Her behavior keeps getting more and more bizarre. I thought that time would heal her but it's not. Lately it's like she's not even the same person. She is always staring into space and singing to herself. A few weeks ago, I walked in on her singing and painting a picture with her blood. She had been digging a needle into her arm and letting the blood drip onto her picture. I told my parents but they didn't believe me. They actually think that she's recovering. My sister is not my sister. She's a stranger. The person that is living in my house right now is not the same person who I used to play freeze tag with. Nobody believes that something is wrong with her. I would know. She's my sister. I know more about her than anyone.

The next day I see her outside petting Sam, our dog. I listen. She's having a conversation with Sam. I can't hear what she's saying because it is in a low whisper but she keeps glancing around like she's afraid that someone might be watching. She stands up to go, but as she does, something falls out of her pocket. It's a piece of paper I think. She scrambles to pick it up and then walks inside. I quickly run from the window as she walks towards the door. She enters and walks toward her room. I don't want to be here alone in this house with her so I jump on my bike and head to the park.

A few days have passed. My parents have to leave for two nights for a family emergency. I begged my parents not to leave me with her but all they do is tell me to call them in case of an emergency. They leave.

It's 3:00 am. I'm half awake. I hear a thump. I ignore it. Another thump. I sit up in bed and walk out into the hallway where the thump is even louder. I walk over to her room and slowly open the door. There she is, sitting on her bed, staring at the wall. Then all of a sudden, she starts violently shaking and her hair is completely covering her face. I watch in horror as suddenly she runs out of the room, slamming me into the wall. I stand there shocked as she runs off into another part of the house. I run after her screaming her name. Everything is silent. I slowly descend the stairs to the basement and make my way to my parents' room. I hear heavy breathing as I creak open the door and see her crouching on my parents' bed with a knife in one hand, sawing off her own fingers.

# THE BLOB

*Sarah Lencioni*

Warning from the author

“This story has a some bit of gore and blood along the line with an man eating blob so if you not want to get scared please have an adult or friend with you at all times. Anyway I hope you like it and you have been warned enjoy the story. “

In Fort Collins Colorado there were two groups one were call “The Freedom Fighter”, a small group of three boys named Damien the leader, Sawyer the funny one and last there is Joe the powerhouse. They live in a treehouse near their homes as friends. Then there’s “The JOCKEYS” a big group of bullies that pick on people anyway they want because they are rich. The two groups hated each other then one day the whole world would come into the hands of “The Freedom Fighter” to become heros and save the world from an... ALIEN INVASION!!!

The day started like no other for the they go to school study and then leave and on their walk home to the treehouse the bullies would follow them in their blue lamborghini throwing junk that them. “Why in the name of heck do they do this to us?!” said sawyer with his hand over his head still walking down the street with his friends. “ Well Sawyer to be honest we have problems with them.” Joe answered, “Come on guys we can lose them.” Damien said with pride right when one of the Jockey threw a bottle at Damien’s head. “Owww! Dang it you idiots that hurts.” Damien said in anger turning around ready to fight, along with his friends.

Then all of a sudden the lamborghini turned into a girl’s body and started to devour the bullies. “OMG wha what the...!?” Damien said in shock as the friends saw in horror as the slime girl devour all the bullies that were in the car!

Then when she was done and showed her real form in front of them she smiled and burped then walked off. “Let’s get the heck out of here!!!” the three screamed and ran for the treehouse that was in their backyards when they got inside they locked it, shut the windows and made sure that they weren’t followed. “What in the name of god was that!?” shouted Sawyer like he was scared out of his skin. Joe yelled back “ I don’t know why are you yelling oh wait now i’m yelling!”

“SHUT UP!! The both of you!” yelled Damien to the both of them in fear as they pecked out their window. To find the slime girl was in Damien backyard on the lawn! “How do we get rid of her???” Sawyer said Damien spoke “I don’t know I might ask her to leave.” “You’re crazy she would kill you!” the both said in fear.

Then later say four minute or so Damien came out to see me staring at him why`ll sitting on the grass he sat down and then the slime girl spoke... “ Hi i’m Sarah I think you’re nice along with your pals as well.” she said while looking close into his eyes. Damien answered in fear a little bit “Nice to meet you Sarah i’m Damien you saw my pals Sawyer and Joe may I ask will you eat us?” she said “ What no.” Damien sighed with relief “ thank you so Sarah where did you come from and...” “Okay come done first off i’m not from earth i’m from a different planet.”

“Second is the real reason I came to earth is to tell you that you and your friends are the only ones to save your planet because my home planet leader called “THE BLOB” wants to destroy earth to end the human race!” Sarah said with a sad look on her face and what she said started to happen a large group of UFOs came to earth and started to attack setting everything on fire!!!

“Oh no it the whole fleet!” Sarah said while panicking Daimen called Sawyer and Joe to set a plan to save the world along with Sarah’s help inside the treehouse they made a plan to save earth. Sarah told them if they kill the leader the battle will be over and if they lose GAME OVER! So Sawyer, Joe and Daimen made a giant slingshot and shot them self up to the commander’s ship to stop the invasion. They fell through the roof of the battleship and landed then met face to face with the BLOB

Inside the UFO was very creepy it had Blood, guts and brain trapped in jars and in the middle of the room there was a throne and in that throne was the BLOB a big mess fat slime that looks like a king. The blob spoke ... “ Hello boys it’s a great pleasure to meet meet you in person.”

“We’re here to stop you along with ending this invasion and save planet Earth.” Daimen said with his friends by his side in fighting stances The Blob got up and made an angry face then the Freedom Fighter along with the blob went into battle!

On Earth Sarah got kidnapped and was sent to the ship back on the ship Sawyer, Joe and Daimen were out match then they saw Sarah with a knife at her throat by a guard. “ You see kids you can’t defeat me” Said the blob another guard broth back a bottle that said “ WATER” “Sawyer Joe remember how we steal things?” Daimen said with a wink in his eye they answered

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“Got it” and the three of them attack at the same time to the guard making it fly in the air break along with spilled all over the king it started to kill him then a huge explosion happened the planet was saved the {Damien, Sawyer and Joe} along Sarah landed back in the backyard and everything was back to normal.

THE END

## IS ANYONE THERE?

*Ella Pilon*

It was a cold winter day when Aubree's phone rang for the first time. Aubree was sitting in La luz in n Fort Collins with her friend Melina.

"Do you think that your brother will ever come back from New York?" Aubree said to Melina.

"I don't know. I don't even know if I care anymore." Melina responded. Before Aubree could respond her phone rang.

"Hold on one sec let me take this." Aubree answered the phone only to hear raspy breathing and nothing else.

"Hello!?" Aubree said. She got no response so hung up the phone and her and Melina went home.

The next morning when Aubree woke up she checked her phone. She had six calls from the same number. She just ignored it and went on with her day.

"Hey mom." She said coming down to eat breakfast.

"Hey sweetie. How's Melina?"

"Good! Hey mom can we call the phone company?"

"Yeah. Why sweetie?"

"Well I have just been getting some weird phone calls lately." Aubree said.

"I bet it's nothing though."

Aubree and Melina went to Starbucks. When Aubree got another call on her phone.

"Hello?" Aubree said. To her surprise the voice said something back to her.

"Meet me at the Avery house at nine tonight." The phone hung up. The voice was rough and raspy, and sounded like something was gurgling in his throat. Aubree went pale.

"Melina, will you come to the Avery house with me tonight?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"Well you know how I've been getting these weird phone calls? Well the person finally said something and he said to meet him at the Avery house at nine."

"Ok yeah I will definitely go."

The girls decided to go home and then meet again at the Avery house. Aubree brought a backpack with a knife, some energy bars, and her phone. Melina and her got in the car and drove to the Avery house.

"Ok lets go," Melina said. The girls walked up to the door to find that the door was already opened they entered the house.

"I'm glad you came." The voice said. The girls were shaking with fear neither daring to move. When the person reached the bottom you could finally see his face. It was scarred and was red. The girls finally moved forward.

"What do you want with us?" Aubree asked.

"Oh I just wanted a friend." The girls turned to leave but the man is swift and blocked their exit.

"Oh no you don't get to leave yet. Come upstairs." Tentatively the girls went upstairs. Once the girls were upstairs they heard a ghostly scream. Mellina looked behind them and saw that the man had locked them in a small room that she hadn't even noticed that they had walked into. The man started to laugh and then all of the sudden it just stopped. The door squeaked open. Walking out of the room the building's temperature had dropped about five degrees. When the girls started walking toward the stairs they were pushed back by a force that they couldn't see. They were pushed back against the wall in the small room.

“Ow!” Melina exclaimed. The door to the room slammed shut. The room started to fill with water.

“What the heck!” Aubree screamed. Both girls ran to the door pulling and pushing trying to get out. The door would not budge. By then the water was almost up to the girl’s knees. They continued to push at the door. Until the water was up to their necks when the door just fell open. Yet when the girls looked back there was no water and their clothes were completely dry. Trying to rush down the stairs the girls were yet again greeted by a surprise. The stairs were falling in on themselves. At the bottom was the man. Instead now he looked transparent.

“Good luck.” He said laughing.

Realizing they weren’t going to be able to get down the stairs they found a window they agreed to go through, but the window was locked. They heard music and dancing outside of the room they were in. Walking back into the hallway they found about twenty people dressed and dancing to music from the fifties. Trying to walk through the crowd back toward the stairs they gained only about an inch. The ghosts started grabbing at them trying to pull them into the ground. The only way to get past the ghosts was to dance. So the girls joined together and danced through the crowd. This got them to the stairs much faster.

They looked down the perfectly intact stairs in awe. The music all of the sudden stopped the dancing stopped and the Avery house just looked like the plain old Avery house once more. No dancers, stairs, and non odd transparent men. Rushing down the stairs the girls didn’t care to look back at what once was a party. Only focusing on getting out of the house. On the last stair the girls let their guard down thinking that there wouldn’t be anymore obstacles. Then all of the sudden the man appeared out of nowhere.

“Man you guys sure did better with my traps then everyone else who had come here did. This is them,” the man said. He then pointed his fingers up when all of the sudden there was a picture of two young girls sitting in chairs in the basement staring at nothing. Unmoving, and lifeless. It took Aubree a moment to realize that they were dead.

“Just let us out of here already, we passed all of your tests.” Aubree said.

“What would be the fun in that?” The man asked. The man disappeared.

The room started to move and swirl throwing the girls all over. Ghosts appeared in their faces yelling at them to help them. Until the room stopped. No one moving, no one breathing. The ghost reappeared picked up their bodies and flew to the basement. Set them up in a chair and smiled. He shut the door and went upstairs. Went to his bed and waited until next year.

# THE FESTIVAL

*Kya Tracy*

“Do you guys want to go get some food?” Taylor said. “Sure, I want a burger does anyone else?” I suggest. They all agree, so we hop on our bikes and leave Tour de Fat to head to Big Al’s. After we order, we find a booth to sit in as we sip our milkshakes. “What are your guys plans for Halloween?” Lily asks. “I’m going to a party” Tiffany replies. “I’m babysitting” Taylor says. “I’m planning on watching scary movies! What about you Tegan?” Lilly says, “I’m not sure what I’m going to do yet” I reply. Our food comes, we gobble it down, and then head outside. Tiffany suggests we go get our nails done.

Since we had nothing else to do we headed to the salon. “Oh my gosh they are so pretty!” Taylor says while holding my fingers in her hand to examine. “Thanks! I really like yours too.” “Thanks!” She replies. We head out the door only to notice nobody is there. Not just near us but anywhere. All the people from the festival, walking around, talking, driving. They were all gone. “Woah this is weird.” I say. “Yeah I’m leaving” Lily whispers followed by lots of “me too’s”. I was the only one who didn’t carpool with anyone so I say my goodbyes and quickly scrambled to my car. I pulled out my keys as quick as I could, dropped them a couple times, but then managed to open the door. I tried to start it. It clicked. I tried it again. Nothing. I looked up to see my visor mirror light on and it clicked in my head that my car had died. ‘shoot!’ I say to myself. I got out of my car and started to walk around to find someone or to get cell service.

The wind shrieked and the crisp leaves started to dance. Then I heard something. Something horrifying. I turned slowly to see where that horrific uproar came from, only to see something worse than the sound itself. Terror tore through me like lightning. Crossing the streets in the opposite direction from me were people. But they weren’t people at all. They had been at one point but now they were are ripped up and bloody. Most of their bones were completely exposed. Their blood curdling screams could haunt any child for the rest of their lives. The only thing that made them different from what people would call a zombie, is that they were walking fine. They didn’t limp nor did they fall.

Horrified, I ran. I ran and hid behind my car just in case I had to run somewhere else if they found me. I was in front of The Rio and looked at myself through the glass. I had engine oil smeared on my face from making a quick turn into hiding. I started to drift off a bit. I had been tired from a sleepover the night before and started to think about that.

When I came to, a body was hanging over my head from behind me. Its flesh torn and it’s hideous teeth almost making a smile while it stared at me through the glass. I turned slowly to see blood dripping from it’s petrifying mouth onto my white shorts. It mumbled in its unnerving tone and pounced at me. It’s claws throwing themselves at me like a tiger that hasn’t eaten in days. The others heard the ruckus and they all came sprinting at me like elephants stomping over each other, running like their life depended on it. They just kept coming and coming.

I sprinted to the tallest building I could find, which was the First National Bank. I slammed the doors shut and slid a bookshelf in front. While running up the stairs I saw a window from the corner of my eye and ran to it. Outside the creatures were starting to pile on top of each other, clawing at the stone. Shrieks coming from their dislocated jaws. The door was completely covered so there was no way out. I continue to run up the stairs and exit through a door at the end of the stairway to the roof. I stand there. The wind howling. The zombies looked like vines crawling up the sides of the walls. There was no way out. It was over.

## THE USER

*Paige Armstrong*

I am not any normal teenager. I am not the kind of person that you see on TV making everything perfect for themselves and themselves only. If they wrote this they would say, "Hello. My name is Ashley. I am in my freshman year of high school. I go to Fort Collins High School and I have many friends," But as I said before I am not the kind of person who would brag about their life goals and achievements. Let's cut to the chase, people call me Ash, and by people, I mean the people that I see in the hallways and remember my face or the same shoes that I wear every day.

The reason I am writing this is because the other day something terrifying happened, and before I die, I want the world to know. The story will begin at my last period on Friday, August 8th. It was study hall. In study hall, I don't ever do my homework, during this time I check Instagram and Facebook. On Facebook, someone requested to be my friend, I didn't know who the person was, but I let them befriend me anyways. They viewed all my videos and pictures of my family, my school and friends. They liked all the photos that I was in.

I realized what the user was doing was creepy, so I followed my gut by unfriending them. Everything was fine for a few days until I got a message from the same user. The message said, "I was wondering why you un-friended me? I understand that you don't know me, but I think you're really HOT! ;)" I felt very flattered, so I said "Thanks :)" Before I got the message, no one had ever called me hot. But I didn't befriend the user. The user sent messages everyday sending details about what I wore and how I looked. The user had gone too far by sending pictures of me, and then pictures of my house. So, I blocked the user.

I thought the user was done with me, I thought I would never hear from the user ever again. I went by with my normal business for a few days. I didn't tell anyone about the user, because I felt I didn't need to. But then during passing period, when everyone in the halls were at their lockers talking, rushing to their next class. Everyone was moving, but this one man, he was just standing there. He was staring at me! He was wearing a long, brown trench coat, with what seemed to be a brown top hat. I couldn't see his face or the color of his hair because of the amount of clothing he was wearing, and the glare of the sun was blinding me. I stared at him for a while trying to figure out who this person was. Then the bell rang and everyone ran to their classes. After I opened my eyes the man was gone.

"Who was he?" I thought during my whole class period. If I told my parents they would get too worried about me. My parents are already very over protective and would keep me locked up in the house for days. But for all I knew the man could have been looking at someone else, and was a parent. Ever since that day I saw the man almost everywhere I went, he was watching me! I decided I needed to tell my parents before the man did real damage to anyone I cared about, I told myself that once I got home I would tell them. But I never got around to it, I never got around to it for days. The man had seemed to be less timid, he seemed to get closer, use to the fact of being around me. I didn't know what to do or think, all I knew was that I needed to stay close to my friends and family. About a week later at night, I could feel his presence. So, I looked outside my window. He was right there outside of my house staring at me! He did this for many nights, he was coming to my home and coming to my school. This kept going for weeks!

October 15, 2000(a few hours ago), I went over to a friend's house, the house with a purple exterior and a turquoise door. I had not seen the man all day so I felt safe at my friend's house. And for the first time in a month I was checking my phone constantly. I got a text from my best friend, who was currently sick, saying, "Hey what are you up to?" and I said, "Just hanging with the girls! :) How about you?" I felt bad that she was missing out, so my two other friends and I took a selfie to send to her. My phone downloaded the photo she sent, but the photo was not of my best friend! The photo was the man in front of the unique colored turquoise door! There was something in his hand! We wondered who was the last one in the doorway. It was me, and I forgot to the lock the door! My friends looked at me and knew exactly what I was thinking, about the door being unlocked, about what the man was holding and how we were going to die tonight. We were on the ground floor. As the front door creaked open we sat there petrified. The man was in the house, with something in his hand!

The rest is history, it's in the past. But I want the world to know that the deaths of my friends are my fault, they died because of me and I will die too. Before I die in a matter of seconds I want my family and my best friend to know that I love them, and they need to stay true to who they really are.

**UNKNOWN***Olivia Vance*

Friday 16, 2009

3:47 am

It was Friday; of course, you know that. Things aren't going well, the noises got worse, the feeling of someone behind me and following me is getting worse and worse. Wherever I go, I can feel It following me. I don't know how to tell you what it looks like, because I don't even know what It looks like. I can feel it. Everytime It comes near, there's no more wind, no more sounds, I can feel its presence all over my body, and the constant whisper of "They are coming." If I'm at school, everything goes quiet. I look out the window and everything stops. Nothing moves. Sometimes a spider crawls along the window or ground right in front of me. It's terrifying to even think about what might be coming. Who's coming for me? What's coming for me?

Yours truly,  
Bella

"Bella! Hey Bella! Wait up!" I turned to see Damion calling out to me. He always fancied me and I knew that, but I wasn't into dating. I was more into finding out what's coming for me.

"Hey, Damion," I bluntly responded, as he caught up to me. "I was just on my way to Berry Blendz, wanna join me? I'll pay." Damion asked. He always wanted to take me somewhere after school. I thought about his offer. This wasn't a date I hope.

"Sure, but it's not a date." I looked over at him and his lips curved into a smile.

"Awesome, since were going as friends, why don't we play 20 questi-" Damion began, but everything went quiet. It is here. Not with Damion, I don't want to put him in danger! I looked around, everything silent, I turn to look at Damion, he wasn't there! "Damion! Oh no!" I shout. I stand in the middle of the street and check my surroundings, listening for any movement. A loud noise comes from behind me, I turn around. There stood hundreds of people, they all looked.....dead. "H-hello?"

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"Bella?" I opened my eyes to look directly into Damions worried face. "Hi." I sat up and looked around, everything was normal.

"Are you ok? We were walking and you just randomly fell to the ground. I was scared that you died or something." He rubs his hand on the back of his neck, a blush spreading on his tan cheeks.

"I'm fine. Let's go get those smoothies. I'm quite parched." We both laughed as Damion helps me up. We began to walk. I feel a cold breath breathe down my neck, and a quiet whisper that said "not too long....".

\*\*\*

Over the past few weeks, things have been the same. Damion and I have become best friends and I was planning on telling him on what has been going on. I was afraid he wouldn't want to be friends though; he may think I'm a creep or something.

It was after school and we always walked to Berry Blendz after. I waited by the flagpole like everyday, it was 15 minutes and Damion still wasn't there. I started to become worried. I was going to call him when in a distance I heard the school doors slam open and close. I watch Damion walk all the way to me, anger written all over his face. He walked right past me. "Damion!" I called out to him in the middle of the road, but he didn't turn around. "What's going on?" I caught up to him, he was walking super fast. "

"Nothing Bella! Just leave it alone!" He began to jog. I stood there, watching him run away from me as if I was something awful.

As I stood there, the wind began to pick up, my long curls began to move in sync with the strong breeze that swarmed around. The little touch of small raindrops splattering on my bare skin. The clouds grew dark and I knew I should've gone home, but I couldn't get my feet to move. I just stood there, like a lost puppy.

The trees began to rustle at a high speed. In the distance, I could see a faint figure standing, holding a box. It began to slowly come from the trees. It was tall and lean. It's back was hunched up, it had no face. But for some reason I wasn't scared, I

didn't run. "You don't run. Why?" the tall figure stood there and I could feel its eyes burning into my face, even though its eyes weren't there, i could feel them. "It's coming soon, you must be ready, it never leaves without its prize." handing me the box, I could feel its invisible eyes burning into mine. Then the tall figure walked back into the trees.

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Thursday 16, 2009

3:47 a.m.

It's been a month. Nothin

I was writing in my journal when a light tap came from my window. Without hesitation I stood and opened my blinds to see absolutely nothing, that's what frightened me the most. I watched out my window, waiting for any sign of anything. Nothing. That's when everything stopped. Nothing happened. Everything was black. As soon as it began, it ended.

\*\*\*

It's been three years since the nothingness. Damion and I were now sophomores in high school. We were walking to Berry Blendz, like we used to in middle school. I hadn't had the nothingness in so long, I forgot how it felt. Until we got to Berry Blendz. We were waiting in line when it happened. Everything went silent, all the people disappeared. I walked out of the store into the street. All the cars were gone.

As soon as it stopped, I was in the middle of car wrecks and people screaming. Cars were on fire, there was a hole in the middle of the ground, right where I stood. I looked at Damon and he was looking at me with fear written all over his face. What have I done?

# BLURRYFACE

*Jayda Beaner*

Tyler Joseph was diagnosed with schizophrenia just a few weeks ago, though he has been experiencing the scary mental disorder for two years, and he has never once learned how to stop or control it. He lives on the outskirts of Fort Collins, Colorado, which only makes his situation worse.

He stood up shakily, ragged breaths racking his body. It didn't seem real, what he had seen. A demon, without a face. Tyler risked a glance at the digital clock, the neon red numbers blinking at him. It was unplugged, reading 12:00.

Tyler shrank back into the corner, sliding down the wall and hugging his knees tightly, staring in front of him. No matter how much he willed his limbs to move, his eyes to sweep around the room, they didn't listen to him. He was frozen in place, staring at the specter that glared at him with a wicked smile. His breathing was fast, he was beginning to hyperventilate. Tyler's body began to shake uncontrollably from the fear, his eyes glued to that one spot.

Terror coursed through the brunette's veins, his bloodstream beginning to boil. In front of him stood something. Something that Tyler couldn't identify. It's clothes flowed behind it in drops that looked like blood. Though it was wearing all black, a black hoodie, black skinny jeans. It's face, it looked like static. Tyler could almost hear the noise of the static face, his eardrums screaming.

It stared at him. Stared into his soul with glowing red eyes that looked like blood. It's voice was deep, so deep that Tyler could barely hear it.

"Tempted by control. Controlled by temptation,"

Tyler began to whimper from the fear, on the verge of screaming as tears ran down his face.

"Stay low, they say. Stay. Low." the specter moved closer to Tyler and the brunette huddled into the corner, though he was already squishing himself. The oxygen in his lungs completely left as the specter spoke again.

"My name is Blurryface," it kneeled down and moved closer to Tyler, whispering in the brunette's ear.

"And I care what you think."

Tyler full-on screamed and scrambled away from what is now known as Blurryface, jumping onto his bed and clutching a pillow. But Blurryface just followed the brunette, it's head tilted to the side creepily.

"L-Leave me alone." Tyler whimpered, shaking. The figure was the scariest thing he has ever seen, the way the face had been structured, the way it's clothes drape off of him like blood. Especially the way it's eyes were bright red, resembling a demon.

Blurryface just laughed, a laugh that sounded like the static from a tv with no signal. The tears pooling down Tyler's face streaked his cheekbones, glistening trails.

Tyler kept hallucinating, now not only seeing Blurryface, but another figure. It was all white, it's eyes were just empty sockets and bright red eyeshadow lined the place where it's eyes were supposed to be. Tyler shivered as this new figure walked up to the brunette, stopping right besides Blurryface.

They both smiled wickedly. "Meet SpookyJim." Blurryface growled. SpookyJim smirked, and Tyler just whimpered.

Blurryface took a step closer to Tyler. "W-Won't y-you tor-torture someone e-else's sleep?"

"No." SpookyJim growled. They both lunged at Tyler, and the brunette closed his eyes.

Only to open them again, seeing the sun streak through the curtains. It was only his schizophrenia.

## LURKING IN THE WATER

*Sinead White*

It was a beautiful summers day at Horsetooth Reservoir. The reservoir was completely filled to the brim with people ecstatic to watch the solar eclipse. That's the day when everything started to become strange around here.

"Why did I have to come?" I asked my parents.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!" My parents screamed in unison.

I rolled my eyes and looked at the water instead. That was more interesting to me then the stupid solar eclipse.

I swished my toes through the water, daydreaming of paradise. I imagined I was in Hawaii sleeping in a hammock, but something brought me back to reality. I felt something move through the water near my feet when I saw something. A lurking shadow creeping up the water that looked right about ready to snatch me up. My heart jumped out of my chest. I leaped out as quickly as possible to save myself from the alarming figure.

"Did you see that!" I screamed.

No one was paying attention. The eclipse was apparently more important than me almost being dragged down.

The sky had a dark glow to it and the ground had bizarre waves of smoke crashing down over it. It was starting to get super weird now.

"Listen to me! I saw a..." I continued trying to explain.

But I was interrupted by a screeching cry come from a little girl standing 20 feet from us. She was being dragged down into the water.

I race towards the girl and try to pull her with all my strength to save her. I hold on for as long as possible, but I quickly let go when the black figure jumped out of the water. It wrapped both of its long arms around her. It felt like everything happened in slow motion. It gave me an awful scowl as it came out of the water. It's unearthly red eyes pierced through my soul. He grinned ear to ear with its crooked teeth.

"You're next," It mouthed.

I was paralyzed. The next thing I knew it chomped down it's teeth onto the girl's head and hauled her into the water. I yelled as loud as I could and without thinking jumped into the water. I swam to the very bottom but instantly regretted my decision. The dark figure was already finished with his meal. It then stared me down and swam straight towards me. I lost all my breath as I screamed with all my might. I reached my hand out of the water but I fell unconscious just as my head was come up. The last thing I saw was the dark figure wrapping its sharp claws around me. Engulfing me into inescapable darkness. I thought my life was over.

I coughed up what felt like 10 gallons of water and awoke to the bright sunlight. Over me was my mom drenched with water. She saved my life, but how?

"We are never coming back here again!" My dad sternly yelled.

From that day forward, our family would never go back to that ghastly reservoir. The same went for everyone else because the reservoir is now closed forever. But then school started.

It was the first day of school and I already forgotten about that horrible day until my friends brought up the incident. I muted out the whole of the conversation except for one little snippet at the end.

"We are going to the reservoir after school," Lilly said.

I felt like I was going to faint. The world started spinning at 100 mph. I was gonna throw-up.

"NO! Please don't!" I pleaded.

"Why wouldn't we? There's a ghost there!" Chloe said.

I was very reluctant about going. I kinda had no choice when my friends all dragged me there right as the final bell rang. I was already in a cold sweat just thinking about it.

Haunted memories started to flood in when we got the beach. The figure popping in and out of my mind. I was a deer in the headlights. I wanted to stay as far away as possible.

My friends urged me to come in but I immediately refuse. I'm not stepping one foot in there. I never told them what happened. They don't know that I was there to witness the incident.

Chloe, Lilly, and the rest of my friends were enjoying the water. I was in the parking lot at the top of the mountain side. I sit in the car with my headphones on a quiet volume just in case. I thought I would be ready for anything.

I hear a uniform scream from all my friends and I sprint down to the water. I was already too late. All my friends were lying on the beach covered in blood. I sprint up back to the car but my attention is quickly taken. On the ground in my friends blood was a message.

"I told you, you're next," the message said.

I stop in my tracks. The figure knows I'm here. I can't hide from it. I rapidly jump in the car and with no hesitation drive off. My heart was racing and my foot was to the floor. The next thing I knew...

The creature jumps onto my windshield. I jerked the wheel and swerved off the road and into the water. Everything froze in the middle of the fall. I gaze into its eyes and stared directly at my terrified reflection. It growled with its blood covered teeth. I felt nauseous, dizzy, and weak all at once.

We finally crashed into the water, knocking me out immediately.

I later woke up at the bottom of the reservoir and was taken over by fear. The spirit circled around me getting closer and closer. It was waiting for me to wake up so it could watch me suffer. I can't breathe. I've used up all my air. The figure finally lunges towards me.

Then complete darkness.

## IT'S BEHIND YOU

*Sabra Smith*

We were staying at the Helmshire Inn for a couple days, it was like a pit stop before we started to travel again. When we dragged our luggage into to the inn we noticed no one was at the front desk. My dad rung the little bell laying on the counter, it took a while before we heard quiet rustling and an old lady walked out, she flashed a smile at us. We all grinned back, my dad set up our room and we were handed the keys to room 319. When all squeezed into the tiny elevator with our big bags it creaked and slowly climbed up the levels. The steps we took out of the elevator felt like they sank in the old carpet it made me cringe inside. My mom turned the key in the knob and the door creaked open we were immediately hit with a gross smell like a rotten egg luckily, we were only staying here for two nights. My dad and mom pretending like nothing was wrong but my sister and I looked at each other with the same look. We put our luggage on the beds I could see that the sheets were stained, it was going to be a long night I already hated it here.

I was the last person to get into bed so I was responsible for turning off all the lights. There were the bathroom lights then the tiny living room lights and lastly the bedroom lights. It's not like it was difficult it just made me anxious turning off the bathroom lights and the living room were no problem since the bedroom lights were still on. It's like an Olympic race I was ready to run I had one foot in front of the other. Hardly a millisecond passed when I turned off the lights and I was bolting towards my bed which was not even 10 feet from the light switch I literally jumped into bed pulling the covers over me. Like always nothing happened and I fell asleep in the rotten egg smelling room perfectly fine.

The next morning, I woke up to the same weirdly yellow stained sheets. I yawned which was a mistake since the smell of the room hasn't changed one bit. I get out of bed without hesitation itching to get out of the place I changed into clean clothes. Popped a piece of mint gum in my mouth since I was not staying another second in that room brushing my teeth. My parents and sister had already gone downstairs for breakfast. As usual I was the last person leaving. When I was stepping out of the door a shiver ran through my body the fresh air giving me chills. I walked down the stairs since I don't like the inns elevator. I already saw my family sitting together my parents faking their best smiles trying to make the best of it. I chuckled and sat next to my sister and choose not to eat anything. We just walk around the town looking at the different buildings. The sun's rays are fading as we start heading back to the hotel.

When were back in the stinky room and as usual I was the last person to get to bed. I turn off the bathroom lights and realize I didn't brush my teeth yet. I turn the lights back on and look in the mirror there was a figure behind the shower curtain. Curiosity getting the better of me I swing the curtain to the side. No one was there like I suspected. I turn back towards the smudged mirror and look up. My eyes widen as I can't speak anymore. It was behind me.

# AGES 16-18

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FIRST PLACE WINNER

**THE HUNTER**

*Natalie Freeman*

---1---

The hunter awoke, shivering frantically. His teeth chattered and his joints felt welded together with the cold.

The fire had gone out.

The blue of early dawn shone meagerly through the ice-encrusted windows, wrapping the cabin in a gentle shade of blue.

Dazed, as if the bitter cold had beaten his very senses into numbness, he stumbled from the bed, and shuffled over to the stove. He fed some logs and crumpled paper into the gaping mouth of the stove and grabbed the faded matchbox off the stool sitting next to it. He gingerly slid the box open, breathing a sigh of relief that fogged in front of him as he grasped one of the few matches remaining. He raked its head against the coarse side of the box, and was greeted with a hiss: the match exploded into life.

Shaking—from the cold and the excitement of survival—he sacrificed the wood to the feeble flame, praying that it would light and save him. The flames kissed the paper, enveloping it in its warm embrace that spread throughout the stove. Once he knew the fire would not desert him, he slammed shut the gaping jaw of the stove, and went about to coaxing life into his arms, which fell heavy and dead against his sides, hanging from his figure like a pair of lifeless hangmen swinging gently in the breeze.

Gradually, the fog cleared from his mind, and his movements became less sluggish, and more articulated. He took control away from the puppeteer of cold death.

The cabin itself was filled with a warm flickering glow as he made his favorite dish: a hearty stew his mother used to make—filled with root vegetables and chunks of meat. He had only made a few alterations to the original recipe.

Filled with soup—warmed inside and out—he prepared to meet the cold again.

The hunter grabbed his deadly longbow resting against the far wall. His quiver of bristling red arrows soon joined it as he slung both over his shoulder. He searched for his last piece of gear, cursing under his breath, frustrated as to how he could lose something in such a sparse space.

He first searched around the table, pushed up against the foot of his bed, where he ate and wrote. His journal lay in the center, splayed open, revealing his anorexic handwriting, scratched deeply into the paper from his focused writing. A single page did not rest on either side of the book, but rather stood tall in the center, suspended by an unknown force. The light from the fire cut through it, revealing these dark marking on both sides of the paper, packed tightly, page after page after page...

Distracted he began flipping through it, skimming a few passages. Aside from brief, daily passages about the general events and seasonal changes, his journal was filled with eloquent and detailed entries of his exhilarating hunts. The page his finger now rested on detailed a particularly memorable chase he had with a beautiful, brown-haired animal with long, muscular legs—one he had almost lost in the chase because she was so fast, but he had more familiarity with the forest. He remembered cornering her, shooting her with his bow, but missing his target, hitting her in the flank. At first, he had felt remorse for causing a beautiful creature such pain. He tried to use his knife to finish the deed quickly, but she had put up an unexpected fight—lashing out, delivering a cruel kick to his face, which had broken his jaw.

In the end, he finished her, took all the meat he could carry, as well as a trophy, so he could hang it with the others. He had stumbled home, and attempted to reset his jaw, but it never healed right. Mulling this over, he absentmindedly ran his fingers over his left temple, feeling the knot of scar tissue and twisted muscles underneath it, continuing down through his thick beard to his chin, and back up to the right side, feeling an abrupt and sharp change of angle in the bone that ached with pain due to the cold.

A deep moan startled, throwing him back into reality. His heart quickened, and he slammed his book closed—jerking his head to look behind him, worried a phantom was peering into his book, his memories, his secrets.

Alone. He was all alone. A sigh of relief escaped him—it must've been the old bones of the house shifting, or a stray tree

branch absentmindedly running its fingertips along the rooftop. He laughed at himself: here he was, paranoid like a madman; but he supposed anyone could go mad in such silence and solidarity—if you were out here long enough.

The light of the fire had been replaced by the morning sun, peering through the left wall of the cabin. This warm light began to illuminate the wall opposite to him with a soft glow. It was devoted to his trophies. He had mostly collected heads, as well as a few skins he used to keep himself warm. He used nearly every part of the animals he hunted, letting almost nothing go to waste; and had a deep respect to these creatures: their life gave him life—keeping him warm and fed. The heads were mounted and hung in ordered rows, their glassy eyes shimmering, almost as if they were filled with tears. He loved when the light shone in their eyes: it gave them the appearance of life, as if these creatures were sticking their heads through holes in the wall to peer in at him, the rest of their body protruding outside the cabin.

The fire had died down, reduced to glowing embers. He hadn't noticed the regular popping and crackling of the consuming flames had ceased, creating a deafening silence within the cabin. He fed the flames once more before leaving.

Wait. What was he doing before? He knew the answer, it was in his mind—behind his eyes—trying to claw its way out. He massaged his temples, pressing them harder and harder in frustration.

The knife. He was looking for his knife.

His knife wasn't here.

It must be in the shed.

He put on his thick fur hat, concealed his twisted mouth with a red cloth tied around his head, shoved his feet into his tough boots, and grabbed his wool gloves. He also took a lantern, stealing some life from the fire to light it, and looked back. Their glassy eyes stared at him, following his every move—appearing attentive and concerned.

“Don't worry,” he thought to himself, “I'll be back...maybe with another to join you.”

He turned his back on them, and slammed the door closed.

It was so bright. Snow blanketed the forest floor—reflecting the morning light—sparkling like countless shards of glass. His breath curled up in front of him, golden and shimmering, he looked up, watching it rise, and disappear, following the same path as the smoke rising from his chimney. He looked up; there was a blanket of clouds heading west towards the sun, preparing to smother its golden light.

His cabin was in a small clearing. Trees surrounded him on all sides, standing tall, shielding his little patch of civilization from the rest of the wild forest.

He looked down again, and began walking through the snow, a satisfying crunch greeting him with each step. He walked towards his small shed behind his home, its door barely poking out between two huge trees. He struggled with opening the ice-encrusted door; he threw himself against it one, two, three times. It burst open, and he went tumbling inside, landing face down on the cold floor. He lay there for a moment, seeing if any bones or joints would scream out in pain. Nothing. He chuckled to himself, somewhat embarrassed at his clumsiness. He pushed himself off the floor, turning around to grab the lantern he had set down in the snow before wrestling with the door. The shed was windowless, only lighted by the doorway and the lantern.

But at that moment, the clouds enveloped the sun, stifling its light. Now, the world was awash in a grey glow—the brightest light coming from the lantern in the hunter's hand. His eyes took a few moments to adjust to this newfound darkness. He hung it on the hook above his head.

The shed was small. Four steps from the door, and he was at the table on the far wall. Three steps to his left or right brought him to the other side of the shed. This shed was where he gutted his hunts, salvaging the meat from them, or created his taxidermized masterpieces that kept him company. That's why the shed stank of blood and rotting flesh. No matter how much he scrubbed or cleaned, some mark of the animal would remain, hanging in the air.

He looked under and around the table where he prepared the meat from his hunts. Dried blood stained the surface of the table a dark rust color, barely visible in such a dim light.

Gleaming bright against such a dark stain—unsheathed—his knife reflected the firelight, grinning menacingly with its sharp teeth. He grinned back. At last!

He quickly stowed the knife in its sheath, strapped to the outside of his right leg. He snuffed out the lantern, leaving the shed doused in darkness.

The hunter looked up. He wouldn't be seeing the sun for the rest of the day. Sighing, he left the shed, the clearing, heading towards the trees.

He finally started his journey into the woods--and so the hunt began.

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The hunter knew there were some creatures in his area, but had not needed them, because he had plenty of dried meats from a bountiful summer. But this supply had dwindled, and it had become a necessity.

Soon, he found signs of life: tracks, broken twigs, and disrupted areas of earth. He followed these deeper and deeper; he could feel himself getting closer and closer.

Then, he saw her, letting an involuntary gasp escape his lips: it was a white doe. Her pristine coat was void of all color. If she hadn't been moving, he never would've seen her against the ivory snowfall.

He watched her for a bit. Her purity made her seem delicate—fragile. Each movement was filled with grace and beauty.

She was the most astonishing thing he had ever seen.

She was digging in the snow, looking for small treasures: roots and edible plants that could survive the cold.

If he got any closer, she would see him and bolt. He retreated, looping around, hoping to take her down quickly—catching her by surprise.

He made a wide circle around, momentarily losing sight of her. His heart quickened, afraid he might lose her. There she was, unaware of his presence, unaware that this would be her last day—her last moments in the sun.

The hunter pulled his longbow over his head, and loaded a piercing arrow, his fingers running over the blood red fletching, and coiling about the bowstring with a deadly grip. He crouched, hiding behind trees, advancing closer and closer, until he was ready.

He stood tall, stepping out from behind his hiding place. She was still looking for edible roots, digging into the earth; she now had a sizeable amount in her basket. He was close enough to hear her singing quietly while she scavenged. He drew his bow, aiming at the center of her back. He put one foot back to stabilize himself; but he stepped on a twig, a sharp snap ringing out.

She had stopped singing, and swiveled around to face him. He stared into her luminous eyes, which gradually filled with fear as they continued to gawk at each other in silence. She started to take low, shallow breaths—the adrenaline had taken hold of her.

She was going to run.

He drew back, aiming at her heart, but she bolted at that moment, running behind a tree, which took the arrow meant for her—burying itself deep in the bark with a loud thunk. She took off, snaking between the trees. He chased after her, losing more and more ground.

She would've escaped if she stayed in the woods.

But she continued to run towards the clearing, and started through it. He stopped, loaded another arrow, and drew back, taking a deep breath to quiet his racing heart. She had almost reached the other side, when he took aim and fired. This was his last chance. Luckily, he hit his mark.

She could barely keep up with her own feet. She had never run so fast, or been so terrified. Her heart pounded in her ears, her silvery hair whipped behind her. She dared not look back.

She was almost there, hoping to find some salvation. Then an arrow sprang from her thigh, having torn through muscle and bone.

She fell, crying out in pain. She looked down, blood pulsing from the wound. She had broken the arrowhead off when she

fell, ripping her flesh even further. She ripped the body of the arrow out the other side.

There was so much blood.

She looked back. The Hunter had stopped running, and now walked slowly—purposefully—towards her. She couldn't stop, but she couldn't run. She stumbled to her feet, screaming in pain. She leaned against the tree, and began to move forward, stumbling, falling against trees, tripping over brush. Each step was agony.

She looked behind her.

He was still there, getting closer with each step.

She thought he was a myth, a ghost, something only found in the most twisted of nightmares. She had ignored the warnings; she thought they were simply the ravings of a madman.

She fell, sliding down into a small gully. Groaning in pain, she tried to move. Looking for a way out, she saw a thick tree root, protruding from the earth. The soil beneath it had eroded away over time, leaving a hollow space.

She still had time.

She ran her hands around the wound, coating them in blood. She clawed her way up the other side of the gully, which was much less steep. She put one, two, bloody handprints on the trees around her. Then, she slid back down the gully, scrambling to hide. She covered her mouth with both hands, to muffle her breathing and stop herself from screaming. She bit into the palm of her hand, tears rolled silently down her cheeks, from the pain and fear. The metallic taste of blood filled her mouth.

She heard the rhythmic crunching of snow underfoot. Then, silence. She strained her ears...she could hear him breathing deep, calm breaths.

Then, he began chuckling to himself.

"Valiant attempt," he said.

She heard him slide down the gully. She closed her eyes—her body shook with a racking sob.

"You made it much farther than the others. You even kept your wits about you, trying to lead me off on a diversion. And a good one, I might add. You didn't even scream; most of them scream."

She heard him move. She squeezed her eyes shut, not wanting to look into the face of the monster. She felt his warm breath on her chilled face.

"You can open your eyes now. I know you want to scream. Don't hold back on my account, just let it all out."

She opened her eyes. He was kneeling in front of her. The Hunter smiled menacingly, his twisted grin revealing his jagged teeth. A flash of metal caught her eye.

The knife cut through the air drawing a wide, gaping smile on her neck. She clawed at her throat, gasping for air.

"It's a shame. You had such a nice singing voice. At least I can keep your beauty. You are such a beautiful white doe."

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The Hunter emerged from the shed, his hands stained red. He had finished preparing and storing most of the meat. He took a bit back to the cabin for dinner. He fancied more stew tonight, he could see if she tasted good, despite being a bit too lean for his liking.

The warmth from the fire greeted him in a warm embrace, like an old friend. He hadn't realized how cold it had gotten outside; he figured a storm was coming.

He made dinner, and, sitting at his desk, wrote down the events of the day, enjoying bites of stew in between his furious scribbling.

Once he was done with that, he turned around to face the opposite wall.

In the center, the newest addition to the collection, was his white doe. Her luminous, blue eyes stared at him

absentmindedly, her silvery white hair hanging down in long waves. Her pale skin brought out the ruby in her lips, which he had carefully colored in by hand. He held her gaze for a while, the hunt running through his mind. Then, he perused his collection, going from face to face, awash with nostalgia from his past hunts throughout the years.

Twenty-seven pairs of eyes looked back at him—all of them belonging to women who had found themselves in his forest, those who had fallen prey to The Hunter.

SECOND PLACE WINNER

# I WAS APART OF THE BEGINNING OF THE END

*Kailey Shay McClellan*

The chance to start over was one of the best things that could have ever happen to me. However, I've been in Fort Collins a year and everything has only gotten strange. After the ruling that everyday would be Halloween, or what was supposed to be like Halloween, I guess everything had changed. But why here? Why now?

It started with the wall. That was the first sign. They built a wall around the whole city. They made it happen fast, so that Halloween Everyday could begin.

After the wall was up, it stayed Halloween for months, but at some point it stopped. The lights ceased and everyone stopped using their cars. Trick-or-Treating stopped. It wasn't because candy stopped being available, but the tradition became scarcely done. And eventually, everyone stopped leaving their homes.

I stopped leaving my house.

The superiors developed a distribution system that made food and services available. A crate is delivered for food and you send out bags of your clothes to be cleaned. Things like that.

Each week.

We should have paid more attention, but nothing seemed too out of place. Then again, we should have looked up whether or not concrete walls were going to be built around the place. Select roads and suburbs were excluded, but many families didn't have the choice. I certainly didn't. I had just moved here, my mother had no idea.

I had no idea.

No one knew about the injections.

No one knew about the beginning of the end, at least the end of Fort Collins.

I don't know if it was a government thing or if it was state mandated. All I know was that I avoided the injection, somehow.

That strange blue liquid they shot into everyone's arm, it didn't do any good. What else can I say?

Whatever it was, the injection, it made everyone love the changes. It was like a big dose of happiness and encouragement. And yes, it made their emotions change or inflame, but the health declined. I mean, soon after injection day, they fell in love with Halloween, but it didn't make anyone look any prettier.

Infact, everyone's skin started turning green. It was a slow degression in pigmentation, but it became apparent after a few months. Alongside that, everyone's eyes became yellow. It didn't matter if your irises were blue, brown, that strange green-blue mix. It all was gone and replaced with bright yellow. And to top it all off, everyone's hair has just started to fall out. Their nails too! The smallest tug on a lock of hair and it pulls out easily.

My mother has it, whatever "it" is. She's green, her eyes are yellow, and her nails are all gone. I don't believe they'll grow back. Same with her hair, what she has left of it. I've been trying to keep it on her head with glue, but something about the adhesive won't stay stuck to her skin. I'm trying so hard.

She's also becoming unresponsive. She moans. Words are almost unrecognizable. She'll say hello, but it comes out as "her-ho." She also tries to say my name, but letters are put in that aren't even there. She drools sometimes.

I'm scared she's turning brain dead.

She moves. She walks. She can wave and kick. She can even pick objects up. She tries to cook all of the time. I've have to restrict her from that, though. I can't watch her all of the time. I'm also scared to bring her near fire.

I think I'll have to turn off the gas soon. She can still turn the burners on.

The fog has returned. I don't know if it's real or generated. I don't know how that could happen, but it must have something to do with the recent cloud coverage. Yes? No? I don't know! Maybe!

All I know is that when the fog comes, it's as if everyone is irritated. It's as if they can't stand the fog, like it's messing with their brains, whatever is left of them. They claw at themselves, whether it be their clothes or their skin. They're also louder than usual. The superiors sent restraints in the deliveries. Do they really think I'm going to strap down my own mother?

I'm starting to get an idea of what's happening, not that I haven't been trying to figure it out since the beginning. But now that I've had a good look around, it's starting to fall into place. The walls. The injections. The ruse.

This is some brutish experiment. We're not allowed to leave these walls and everyone is brain dead. But above all, they're all dangerous! That must be why we were given restraints, to keep everyone in. But why would they do this?

Is the rest of the state like this? What about the country or the world? Is this an airborne infection? Is it in everybody even without the injection? Is this how the end begins?

I have to restrain her! This could be deadly. Where did I put those restraints?

Who's at the door?

Was that gunfire outside?

What's happening? Where do I go? What do I do?

Do I answer the door or get the restraints first?

Well, she was resting last I checked, so I can answer the door. I can do that. But what if that's more dangerous? What if the gunfire is right on the other side of that door?

I open the door, and I can't believe it.

I'm pushed down harshly, not a word said. Just the stomping of heavy boots.

My vision is blurred. I hear a short ringing. And when I come back, I can't protest. They have guns and I have nothing.

But before I can get the first "no" out of my mouth, the shot has fired.

And the shot missed my mother, and that only made her more irritated than before.

And then I couldn't stop anything.

THIRD PLACE WINNER

COUNTING TO MY DEATH

*Jamie Graywolf*

Eighteen is the age they tell you resembles freedom. Does it though. Yesterday was my eighteenth birthday, and I didn't feel any more freedom than I had before. Time, I thought, it just takes time.

Fort Collins, my home town, was going to be in the state newspaper. Everyone was joyous of this because we weren't in it all that often. The paper never announced the story to us though. Later to find out, it was never printed. Everything went on from there as normal. I had school the next day, and there wasn't a murmur about the paper anywhere to be found.

It was my senior year of high school, and I had gotten an internship at the local newspaper, The Coloradoan. Only citizens from our town could apply. They said it was just protocol, and left me to do my work. We were in four by four cubicles with about twenty in the room. The girl next to me had a stern look on her face. Her face reminded me of something I had seen on TV before. Then I realized she had the eyes of snake, those beady yellow eyes with a sliver of black. Something that came to surprise me was that she looked as if she was a mutant, an animal, looking for her next prey.

I returned the next morning, and there she was again. She seemed to move in perfect motion with my movement. I was called to meet the CEO, Francis Delany. I walked into his room from the elevator, and my eyes were in awe. There in front of me stood a 4' 8" man with arms as wide as a small tree limb. This man was in charge, I thought, how could he of all people be in charge?

I had been asked to go down to the printing room. No one had heard from the workers down there for days. Everyone they sent down there said everything was ok, but still no answer came.

That evening I started down the elevator to the basement floor. The elevator went down and down cracking with every level it passed. It came to a stop, and the doors opened. The elevator hadn't come completely down, so I walked off then fell to my knees. It was quiet down here. Why was it quiet? Delany had told me everyone is hustling down there, and to only disturb them if they weren't busy.

I walked forward after I arose from the floor. Around the printer I had found a giant puddle of what seemed to be red gooey blood. I walked further into the depths of the basement. At the end of the hall I had found an office with a flickering light. Boom, boom, boom I heard behind me. I started running back toward the elevator only to find the snake eyed girl behind me.

There we were face to face with just an inch between us. I stepped back and gulped in fear. My hand trembling, my eyes frozen, and with the sudden urge I began to run. My best bet was the light office ahead. I approached the room, and slammed the door behind me.

One, two, three, four I counted the steps in my head. I turned around only to find a pile of dead bodies at my feet. I grabbed one of the bodies and began to throw it against the door when I noticed the holes in this man's leg. Holes as wide as a pencil with blood still spewing continuously. The bodies I had thrown against the door seemed to keep this thing, creature, demon from getting in.

I stayed there for about twenty minutes until it all became silent. I peeked through the blinds to see nothing. Nothing means no trouble, I thought, no trouble at all. I decided to make a run for the elevator. One, two, three, four I counted again in my head. Then, I burst out the door only to hear a hiss behind me. My heart seemed to be beating in my head at that point when I finally reached the elevator.

Up the elevator went to the top floor where Delany's office had been placed. One, two three I began to count the floors in my head. Finally, a ding woke me up from my panic state, and I walked forward. There she was the lady whose cubicle was in front of mine standing next to Delany. This time with the eyes of the human. I began to speak, but my mouth had seemed to be out of service.

"Yes" Delany yelled. I began to speak about the down stairs, and what I had found. He deemed it was just in my head. I had come up with this crazy tale just to get in the newspaper. The lights flickered and then it went dark. Down below I saw a newspaper with the words I had said written on it. I looked back up only to see those two beady eyes in front of me. She grabbed me, and struck with her teeth. There I laid on the floor lifeless, and wiped from the earth as if I was never there.

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"Goodbye, I love you" was the last words to be spotted from my mouth. One, two, three, four, goodbye world.