



INAUGURAL
SCARY STORY
WRITING CONTEST
2023



**PORTLAND
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

Portland Public Library hosted an Inaugural **Scary Story Writing Contest** in 2023!

The contest was open to anyone who is eligible for a Portland Public Library card, though a card wasn't required to enter. Entries were submitted to two categories: one for teens (ages 12-19, or sixth grade through twelfth grade) and one for adults (over age 19).

Congratulations to this year's winners!

ADULTS CATEGORY WINNERS

FIRST PLACE

Cynthia Farr-Weinfield, *The Beam*

SECOND PLACE

Silas Leavitt, *Ana Nana and the Missing Sheep*

THIRD PLACE

Elizabeth Glisic, *Come Find Me*

TEEN CATEGORY WINNERS

FIRST PLACE

Nora Baldwin, *Untitled Thriller*

SECOND PLACE

Sophie Madsen, *Sam—A Scary Story*

THIRD PLACE

Kamila Kollarcikova, *The Invisible Thing*

HONORABLE MENTION

S. Donnelly, *Walk of Death*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beam.....	2
Ana Nana and the Missing Sheep	4
Come Find Me	8
By: Elizabeth Glisic.....	8
Untitled Thriller	11
Sam—A Scary Story	12
The Invisible Thing	16
Walk Of Death.....	18

The Beam

By: Cynthia Farr-Weinfield

Anya froze with the mug halfway to her lips, coffee gently sloshing. It was there again. The patch of warm, morning sunlight seemed to sparkle and undulate on the tan tile floor of the kitchen like a living thing.

On an impulse from Anya, she and her wife, Magritte, bought the rundown Colonial era house last year and had been steadily renovating it, replacing the roof and flooring, repainting walls and finally, putting in new, vinyl windows. This window in the kitchen was the very last old one and they had agreed to keep it for a while longer.

The beautiful, ancient glass was rippled and flawed and made for interesting views when looking out at the gardens. And once in a while, in the early morning this happened: the moving light.

“What causes that?” Anya whispered, leaning forward on her chair and then getting up to move closer before the phenomenon ceased. It never lasted long. The only sounds were of birdsong outside and her own breath.

“Mags, c’mere! It’s happening again!” She called. Magritte called back unintelligibly from the other side of the house where she had been showering.

Anya stared, transfixed, at the shifting, almost staticky patterns within the beam of light. She stretched one trembling hand out to touch it and then pulled back when it appeared to almost shift towards her hand. “What the fuck?”

Without giving a moment’s thought, she splashed half of her coffee into the beam and watched as the liquid simply ceased to exist. “What the-?” She gasped. “No way!” A single drop of coffee had made it through and sat, glistening on the tile just beyond.

Anya stepped forward gingerly and reached out her hand, hearing Magritte walking through the house toward her, whistling. “Mags come see this!” She yelled before thrusting her hand into the beam.

Amazing: the light felt like warm seltzer water on her hand, bubbly, effervescent and somehow deeply pleasurable. She wriggled her fingers, liking the way the light made the skin look. And then, without warning, she was pulled through into the light.

Magritte ambled into the kitchen still toweling her damp hair a moment later, and asked, “What is it, love?” There was no sign of her wife other than the mug that lay on its side by a sunbeam in the center of the room, coffee puddled around it on the tile floor.

“Anya?”

* * *

Ana Nana and the Missing Sheep

By: Silas Leavitt

Ana Nana wasn't her real name, of course. She used to be called Diana, but after seven kids (alive, as she preferred), two husbands (deceased, also as she preferred), and innumerable grandkids, her name had evolved. She took the change very seriously. Visiting Ana Nana meant she fed you within an inch of your life. People came to drink tea, eat food liberally slathered with butter, and gorge on homemade cookies until they had to be rolled away.

For her outsized presence, Ana Nana was a short woman, only five feet tall, and nearly five feet in circumference. She often told people "I'm built like a top, and I'll spin till I drop," and never were truer words spoken. If she wasn't carding wool or knitting, she was taking care of her myriad grandchildren, and if she wasn't doing that, she worked out in the field with a small flock of blue-ribbon sheep.

One of whom was missing. Ramses III the Great, her prize-winning ram.

This wasn't the first time. Anyone who's worked with sheep knows that the only life forms more determined to off themselves were guinea fowl and toddlers. If Ramses didn't get himself stuck under a fence, it was under a hedge, in a bog, or once, inexplicably, in an open field.

Of course, the last time Ramses got stuck, he hadn't left a trail of blood. Also, it hadn't sent the rest of the flock scurrying to the barn to huddle together amidst the comforting smells of hay and manure, and to peer anxiously out the doorway like a bunch of frightened, well, sheep.

This could not stand. Ana Nana had driven the last wolf pack out in a flurry of single combat, a blueberry pie, and a call to Barry, a neighboring farmer who raised dogs. She could handle a sheep stealer.

Ana Nana grabbed her stoutest cane, her stiffest cloak, and her meanest sheepdog and set forth. The situation grew complicated when the dog refused to follow the trail, backing away with its tail between its legs. She left him behind, grumbling to herself. No matter, the only things that could deter Ana Nana was running low on wine or when the Google read "internet connectivity problems." When that happened, she called her grandsons.

She trudged down the sloping lea of her pastures, towards the dark wood nestled in the hollow below her farmhouse. Ana Nana hoped whatever creature had done for Ramses hadn't gone too far in.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, she found what she sought just a few paces in from the shadow of the tree line. Ramses' remains rested amongst the gnarled roots of an ancient oak, twice as far around as Ana Nana herself. The body lay in a black pool of bloody mud and viscera, which is why it shocked her when it shuddered and rose to its feet as she approached.

“BAA. I AM SHEEP. BAA,” the corpse said.

Ana Nana hadn't seen such a blatant lie since her blueberry-stained grandson blamed her missing tarts on his sister. She peered closely at the creature. Ramses' coat looked clean (for a sheep, which was to say, filthy), but his legs were both thinner and thicker than usual, the original flesh and bone paired away and transmuted to shifting, ebon shadows. Ramses' eyes stared up at her with sepulchral flames that burned with the warmth of frostbite.

After much deliberation, she said, “I see that. And what a wonderful sheep you are.”

“BAA,” said the creature that was definitely not a sheep.

Ana Nana narrowed her eyes. “Should we... go back to the barn?”

“BAA,” said the creature. **“I MEAN YES, I MEAN BAA.”**

“Just so you know,” Ana Nana said, “Sheep bleat. They don't say ‘baa’”.

“Baa,” bleated the creature.

“Exactly.” Against her better judgement, she turned her back on the creature and started wending her way back up the hill, the being shambling after her. Ana Nana opened her mouth to point out that sheep legs did not move back first, then front, nor did they have more than four, but decided better of it. If she stopped to point out how many ways the creature could improve its sheep behavior, they'd both be there all night.

“What do I call you?”

“AM SHEEP, CALL SHEEP.”

Ana Nana glanced back at the creature.

“Baa?” It went.

“Very well, Ramses. Come along.” She continued into the sunlight, the creature staggering back and forth at her heels. Ana Nana wondering if the sun would affect it, but it stayed close to her shadow, while at the same time the sun went behind a series of clouds, each one appearing and dissipating before the sun could clear it.

When they reached the top of the hill, Ana Nana headed straight towards her house.

“BARN?” Said the creature. She turned in time to see a matte black tongue dart out and lick the creature’s sheep lips.

Ana Nana shook her head. “Don’t you remember? You’re a special sheep. I feed you dinner in the house.”

“Baa.” The creature nodded, following Ana Nana into her house. When it entered, her electricity sputtered and went out in a shower of sparks. No matter, she had a gas range. She seated the creature at the kitchen table – a very disturbing process that reminded her sheep didn’t bend that way and busied herself in cooking dinner.

With the freezer out, she grabbed most of the meat she could find and fired up the broiler. Lamb sausage, lamb chops, lamb ribs, all slathered in olive oil and rubbed thoroughly with butter. To keep the creature occupied, she set a single chocolate-chip cookie and a glass of milk in front of it. Dozens of tiny hands slithered forth from beneath the wool to seize the cookie. Ana Nana banged the pots extra loud to cover up the slurping noises.

“MORE?”

“That depends”, Ana Nana said. “Cookies are for truth-tellers.”

“Baa?”

“Not this time.” She took her oldest cleaver, with its cruel, sharp edges of black iron and handle of silver and slammed it into her chopping block with a meaty thunk. Gripping the handle, she turned to glare at her guest. “Are you an eldritch beastie beyond mortal ken who eats cookies and minds his manners when he’s a guest in this home, or are you a passed your prime ram ready to be turned into glue?”

The flaming eyes stared at her. Ana Nana stared back and gripped her cleaver tighter. Slowly, the fire warmed, the shadows brightened. Two ghostly hands slipped out from beneath the sheepskin to grip the knife and fork.

“More cookies, please.”

“That’s what I thought,” Ana Nana said, fetching another cookie from the jar. Now let’s feed you up. You look like you’re skin and bones.”

* * *

Come Find Me

By: Elizabeth Glisic

“What were you doing in the basement last night?” The mother asked her over breakfast, each word like a tiptoe into a minefield.

“What? What are you even talking about?” Mallory glared back past a limp curtain of dark hair, almost surprised at the sharpening edge she noticed building in her tone each time she addressed the woman who bore her. The mother’s thin lips pinched together, but she didn’t raise her eyes from the bowl of stale bran flakes before her.

“Well, I heard you stomping down there again last night, and I’m just saying that you should stop. The stairs are old and steep. It’s not safe.”

“Oh, right,” Mallory spat the sarcasm-drenched words at her. “You’re definitely a mother that is so worried about safety.” The dagger hit its mark, and the mother stood up from the table so abruptly the chair legs screeched against the worn wooden floor. The bowl made a hollow clatter as it was tossed into the sink. She heard a snuffle escape from behind the mother’s turned back. Mallory almost felt bad.

The truth was, Mallory *had* been in the basement last night. She just had no recollection of how she had gotten there. Her night had been filled with unsettling dreams of being summoned, the suggestion of a cold hand encircling her wrist and tugging. But that part was almost certainly a dream. The reality was that she’d been waking up in the basement for the past two nights. In the pitch dark. Standing in that cold, dank space. The space she intentionally avoided. She shivered there alone, and yet not alone. The dead stillness pierced by the sound of her own panicked gasps, and perhaps someone else’s breath as well. Both times she had scurried back up to bed and tried to forget. Just as she had forgotten so many things.

It hadn’t always been just Mallory and the mother. There had been a father, and a sister. Oh, her precious little sister Aurea, so sweet and perfect and golden. Aurea had golden hair. Hair that trailed behind her as she frolicked, and haloed into a shimmering cloud around her little face when she jumped on the trampoline in the backyard. Both sisters had been born with those glorious golden locks, but only the youngest had retained them. Mallory’s hair had slowly darkened, starting from the scalp as if dull and ugly weeds were taking over and pushing out that

blonde botanical wonder. She remembered her father shaking his head and saying it was a shame. She didn't even know what that word meant at the time. But she was sure whatever shame was, that it was hers.

Her father left after Aurea disappeared. One day she was there, bouncing on the trampoline in her white dress and golden ambience, and the next she was gone. There had been search parties, flyers with her smiling face stapled to telephone poles. Everyone assumed some weirdo had taken her. She was, after all, in the backyard by herself. Mallory knew this because she had seen it from the window. Aurea looked happy, she assured her parents afterward. They had stared at her, and Mallory wondered if that wasn't the right thing to say. She kept waiting for the father to take her on his lap, and twirl her around like he used to do with Aurea. But he didn't, and eventually his sadness over the loss of his golden girl had driven him away.

Now it was just she and the mother left. They lived in a white farmhouse with a small plaque that read "c.1861" next to the front door. Her parents had loved the "vintage character." Mallory mostly groaned over the creaky floorboards and the strange smells in certain corners. The house did have a fair share of hiding places, though, which granted a certain appeal. Hours of hide and seek were enjoyed. "Come find me!" Aurea would squeal to Mallory, who usually complied. Mostly for the discovered nooks and crannies the house allowed her to find along the way. An extra closet behind a bureau in the guest bedroom. An entire hidden room in the basement below the addition. The old stone well. Mallory wondered what other secrets would be revealed to her if she lived in the house alone. If the mother was gone.

That night she slid into bed, and told herself she wouldn't wake up in the basement again. Clearly just a silly fluke. It had been years since that other thing happened, and it was all in the past. "That was then and this is now", she whispered up to her ceiling. She wondered if the mother suspected anything. If her unwanted trips to the basement would drudge up any questions. She shook off her frown and shrugged. The past could always repeat, she thought and giggled. It had worked so nicely before. Mallory closed her eyes, and snuggled into the comfort of her warm blankets. She opened her eyes, and she was standing in the basement.

Her bare toes felt numb on the dry packed earth, as if she had been rooted in the spot for hours. Goosebumps covered her exposed skin. This hidden room had no cement on the floor, just dirt so dark it was nearly black, compressed by thousands of steps pounding it down over a

century and a half. The silence was so complete, her gasp of surprise resounded like a roar. A sliver of light seeped through the crack in the door behind her, illuminating the circular cover in the center of the room. The wooden door that covered the ancient stone well.

Mallory had discovered the hidden room with the well years ago. She had kept it to herself. That was, until she had shared it with Aurea. She turned to leave the room and scramble back to the safety of her bed. But behind her she heard the creak of a rusty hinge. She turned to watch in horror as the well cover inched open on its own. A shadow on the edge, *could those be fingers?* She shook her head. *I'm dreaming*, she pleaded. She closed her eyes, willing herself to wake up and put this terrible nightmare behind her. The scuffling of little feet echoed around her. She opened her eyes and the well gaped open before her, waiting.

She forced herself forward to close it. It could not be left open. It held too many secrets. Then, Mallory heard it. A tiny peal of laughter, echoey and distant from down below. When she was within arm's reach to close the door, she planted her feet but somehow didn't stop moving. Some uncontrollable urge compelled her to approach the edge. "Come find me," a whispery voice tickled her ears. With increasing panic, she fought against limbs that seemed no longer hers as they moved forward on their own. She didn't want to look, but found herself leaning over the edge to peer down into the well. She winced at the smell and could make out the faintest outline of small bones at the bottom, surrounding a white dress. Then two small hands pushed on her back, just as she had done many years ago, and down, down, down she fell.

As she plummeted down, her eyes were drawn upwards by a hazy glow. A small face, translucent and resplendent with golden hair, grimaced at her over the edge. "Found you first," it whispered. Mallory's cry for help was cut short by a terminal bang of wood on stone.

* * *

Untitled Thriller

By: Nora Baldwin

Chirp, chirp, chirp. The birds. They tried to warn me. I should've listened to the birds.
Crunch. Suddenly, the chirping stops. I get out of bed, the covers sliding off my bare, cold legs.

The morning sun shines through the leaves of the tallest trees in all the woods, right to me, like a lighthouse, warning a ship before it crashes into the rocks. Warning a ship before it's swallowed into the deepest, darkest parts of the unexplained abyss. The sun. It tried to warn me.

Breakfast time. Eggs sizzling, the pop of the toaster, the little whistle in your ear as you heat up the stove. I go out to my garden. I just need some herbs. *Clip clip.* The shears cut easily through the thin, weak roots supporting the sprig of rosemary. As I'm heading inside, I hear the wind whispering in my ear. It's trying to tell me something. It's trying to tell me to run. The wind. It tried to warn me.

I go through my daily routine, feed chickens, eat lunch, take nap. It's all the same, day in and day out. But today I did it all with a deep, sinking feeling in my gut. Even my body knew. Even my body tried to warn me.

But it's not until the sun has set, the water is calm and the trees are still, that I figure out why. Why, it seems, everything is warning me. Why everything has been trying to tell me to run, run far away and never look back.

I'm walking down a dirt path, my bare toes catching on roots as I trip through the dark night. I stop when the earth under my feet changes from muddy ground to soft, dewy grass, still wet from that day's rain. I can feel it. The woods are listening. The trees thumping heartbeats, the flowers sweet, sing song voice, The grass whispering as it dances in the soft spring wind. It should be a comforting feeling, but as I stand there, the hair on the back of my neck stands up and I can feel my heart beating faster as it pumps ice cold blood throughout my body. Panic sets in as I run through the woods, trying to reach home. But I never do. It starts to become obvious as I begin to see the same twisted stump, the same scraggly bush, the same constellations. I can run faster, but I'll never escape. The woods have swallowed me whole.

Chirp, chirp chirp,

Crunch.

Sam—A Scary Story

By: Sophie Madsen

It started small as most things do. Just a small seed. Like a little-harmless yellow flower that was carelessly planted in the backyard. But what sometimes fails to be considered is that plants can overgrow. Spreading to everything it sees, and eventually killing everything it touches.

It all started with a text message. An unknown number, asking me how I was, “Hello Cora, how are you?” I looked at the message with a puzzled expression.

The person who messaged me was not somebody I knew. So, I clicked on their profile to get a closer look. When I opened their description, I saw pictures of a boy with bleach-blond hair and a big smile. He was about my age and lived around the same area as me. And his name was Sam.

After a long pause I decided that his pictures looked real enough. So, I texted him back. I wrote, “Hey, Are you, Sam?”

After the message was sent, I thought about all of the things I had been taught about online safety. Thinking things like “What did I just do?” and “This goes against every rule I believe in!”

But, I waved those thoughts away and decided I would be okay.

Little did I know, how wrong I was.

A few hours later, Sam finally responded to my text message. I jumped as my phone buzzed in my pocket. The message he sent back to me read, “Yes, this Sam. How are you doing today, Cora?”

I responded with “I’m feeling good. What about you?”

We texted one another back and forth for the remainder of the day. I found out his favorite color and foods, what his favorite color was, and even found out that he went to a school in the same district as me! Our conversation was so engaging that we finally had to call it off at midnight because Sam had a soccer game in the morning.

I went to bed with a new-strange curiosity building up inside of me. It felt good to have someone give me their attention. I fell asleep with a smile on my face.

The next day, Sam texted me around Breakfast time. He said, “Good morning Cora!”

I looked at his text as I poured my bowl of cereal. My big sister Mya looked at me as I smiled at my buzzing phone. She raised one eyebrow towards me, and grabbed my phone. “Who’s Sam?” she said with a smirk on her face.

Then, she began to type with a mischievous look on her face. I blushed as I tried to snatch my phone from my sister’s hands. As soon as I saw the text message she sent to Sam, I cursed my lack of strength. She wrote, “Ur Cute” with a wink emoji.

As soon as I saw his text bubble appear, I felt my stomach drop. I glared at Mya and said “Why did you do that, jerk?”

She winked at me and said, “Lo Siento”, but I don’t think she was very sorry at all.

I yelled out in anger as I walked away from Mya.

Later in the afternoon, Sam texted me back. He said, “Do you actually think I’m cute? Because I think you are”

I blushed and looked around the living room. I saw my Mom listening to some Facebook videos on full volume. I didn’t want her to know about Sam, so I ran up to my room. My heart was beating so fast from a combination of running up the stairs and Sam calling me cute.

I walked over to my bed and sat down. After gently sitting myself down on my bed, I responded to Sam. My reply was, “Yes, I do.”

Even though I had only seen pictures of him, he looked cute enough. And personality wins over everything, right?

That night, I stayed up all night texting Sam. *Little did I know that that was the last time I would ever be able to do anything by myself.*

The following weeks went by in what felt like an instant. It was as if texting Sam had brought me into a never ending loop of days. Spinning around me like I was on a merry-go-round. Soon, all I felt like doing was texting Sam.

No more school, or eating or going out with my friends. Just Sam.

I started acting less and less as the Cora everybody had known. I was more irritable, I would lash out, yell, and break things if I didn't get my way.

However, this was not the worst of things that I got roped into because of Sam.

One night I was in my room angry because my Mom said I had to shower, when my sister came in. Mya came up to me with warm eyes and a tired expression. She walked up to my bed where I was laying down and started to stroke my matted-down hair. She said to me in a calm voice "I know that you like to text your new "Boyfriend" Sam, but this has gotten out of control Cora" She shook her head.

I didn't respond.

"My advice to you is to give Mom your phone and never text him again."

At the time I thought she was crazy, but I wish I had taken her advice in the end.

She looked at me with her now-watering eyes. Then she whispered with a small voice and said "Please?"

I looked at her, enraged. Something started to bubble up inside me. Like I was a bone about to break, like an overflowing sink. I was about to blow.

I grabbed Mya's wrist away from my hair and twisted it until she screamed. Then, I pushed her away from my bed. "I will never listen to you ever again! I'm leaving you!"

Then I kicked Mya and grabbed my phone. I sneered at her as I saw her lying on the floor, clearly hurt and deflated. I stepped over her and went into my bathroom, making sure the door was locked. I then grabbed my phone out of my pocket and texted Sam. I said "Want to meet outside of your school? If so, I can be there in an hour."

A few minutes later, he answered with one word. The one word that changed my life. The singular seed that planted yellow flowers over my grave. "Okay."

I read his message and excitement started to shower over me. I got myself ready, and packed my bags. I was prepared to never see my family ever again.

On my way out, Mya and my Mom tried to stop me, but I just shook them off and continued to walk.

“Mi vida!” my Mother Exclaimed. “Please don’t leave us!”

I wish I had never exited my home. I wish I had never started walking the path to that unfamiliar school. I wish I had listened.

When I made it to the spot where Sam was supposed to be, nobody was there. Then, I heard the gentle padding of footsteps, followed by one man in all black walking towards me. When he was about ten feet away from me stopped in his tracks and said “Cora?”

I felt shock and adrenaline wash through my body like a wave. That man was *not* Sam.

I started to back away slowly, trying not to alarm the man. Then, I dropped my bags and started to sprint. I ran as fast and as hard as I could. But, my body was too weak from refusing to eat. My bones, brittle. My stamina, low. Without any strength, was soon caught.

The man scooped me up, bound my hands and feet with zip-ties, and covered my mouth with heavy duty-black duct tape. “I love you, Cora.” He said to me with a grim-malicious expression on his face.

He then put me in the back of his small, red car. One tear left my eye as I realized my horrible mistake.

That was the last time Cora was ever seen again.

* * *

The Invisible Thing

By: Kamila Kollarcikova

My parents went away for the weekend. So my brother George, our dog Alex and I stayed overnight alone for the first time. Which for me, considering I'm fourteen and my brother is only seven, means I'm in charge. Now I was the big sister and that meant responsibility. It was getting dark and it was time for George to go to bed. He is quite a coward and doesn't want to be left alone. So I read him a bedtime story and slipped out when he was half asleep. Alex got comfortable in his bed and I was about to start a movie. Suddenly I heard a scream.

I ran to where the scream had come from to find out what had happened, and halfway there I met a frightened George. He was clutching his teddy bear in one hand and began to press towards me. "Andrea! Andrea!" he shouted at me. I was glad he was okay. He was just scared. So I replied with a gentle voice, "Calm down. It's okay, just tell me what happened." He told me he heard some noises and he didn't know what it was. When I asked him what type of noises they were, he said, scratching and rattling. He talked about demons and ghosts and refused to go back into his room. I had no choice but to explore his room myself, to prove to him it was nothing. I went inside and turned on the light. Then I quickly checked the room. I was looking for anything that could cause the noise George described. I checked the bed, the closet, and finally the window, but everything seemed to be normal. I went to tell George that he was probably just having a bad dream and that his room was perfectly fine. I took him and put him back to sleep.

When I returned to the living room, I realized that Alex was no longer in his bed. I looked around the room. There was his empty bed, the TV was turned on on the movie selection page, and then I noticed the crumpled carpet in the direction of the kitchen. As I was getting close to Alex's bed, from where it's possible to see directly at the glass door to the garden, which is right next to the kitchen, I saw Alex motionlessly sitting by the door. In silence, he was staring into the garden, with his eyes sharp and focused. His regular breathing made me feel the tension in his veins. Something is up, I thought to myself. Something is going on and I don't like the taste of it. I forced myself to step up to the glass door and look into the garden. I looked into the gloom. A long hose was rolling on the ground. Several of George's toys were thrown on the shortcutted grass, and two watering cans and unused flower pots were placed by the corner of the fence. Yet, nothing I saw was out of the ordinary. I turned back to Alex, "Come on you crazy dog, stop staring like that! There's nothing there." But I knew it was me I was trying to convince.

I finally got to start the movie. I brought some snacks from the kitchen and sprawled out on the couch. I fixed the crumpled carpet and turned up the volume because I didn't want to worry about the

"invisible thing" in our garden. I also snuggled under the blanket. After a few minutes, even Alex joined me in his bed next to the couch and everything seemed to be just fine. Then, a loud noise came from the garden. My back received a cold frost. It was the sound George was talking about. I immediately stopped the movie. I wished it wouldn't be true. Alex's head turned towards the glass door. We both listened intently. Silence. The same type of silence as before.

After a while, I recovered and gathered all the remaining courage. I got up from the couch and started my way to the glass door. The watering cans and flowerpots were scattered but I didn't see anything to indicate how it happened. Darkness and fog made the visibility difficult. I couldn't see the hose and George's toys were hard to see. But, on the right side of the garden, I saw an old water tap, from which a drop of water dripped from time to time. Alex barked loudly. He ran, rolled up the carpet and started jumping on the glass door. I couldn't see it! "What is it? What is it, Alex?" I yelled at him. I searched the entire garden with my gaze. Then, finally, there it was. I saw a medium-sized dark spot crouching near the pool formed under the water tap. It had a small dark face, sharp white teeth, and a bristling body attitude. Alex barked loudly again. However, I just replied with relief, "Shh, it's just a raccoon."

* * *

Walk Of Death

By: Sage Donnelly

October 31st, 1999, 8th grade, my friends and I were considered “too old” to go trick or treating but too young for any parties. I grew up with Evan, and Emily because our parents were best friends. They wanted us to help them hand out candy to the kids. But we decided to beg them to let us go to the Halloween carnival in our town, renowned for its spine-tingling scares. Unbeknownst to me, this eerie adventure would take a terrifying turn. The three of us got ready together. Wearing our group costume as three blind mice, we scurried out of the house after our parents took our pictures on the dim front porch. The air grew heavy with anticipation. It was a foggy evening. We walked half of a mile to the festival entrance. First we went through the corn maze, then we ate some caramel apples, and talked to some kids our age. They dared us to do the creepy walk through the woods and told us there are legends some people never made it to the end. Evan and Emily are dare devils so they forced me to come with them. With each step, my heart raced, a mix of fear and excitement coursing through our veins. The winding path led us deeper into the darkness, surrounded by grotesque decorations and eerie sound effects. It honestly was scarier than I expected, given the fact there were young kids at the carnival who would probably end up going through the walk if they had not already. The flickering lanterns cast eerie shadows on the path, making it difficult to discern what was real and what was an illusion. People dressed as killers, wolves, and vampires would pop out of nowhere every 15 to 20 feet. I felt a surge of unease, but brushed it off as part of the immersive experience. After all, this was just a Halloween walk, right? As we continued, the atmosphere grew more sinister. Whispers brushed against my ears, sending shivers down my spine. The scent of decay permeated the air, and the distant wails of tortured souls echoed through the trees. A few times I could've sworn I saw children run in front of me and disappear. My heart pounded, but curiosity kept me moving forward. Although I felt the urge to stop and turn back, Evan and Emily were not going to let that happen. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the shadows, dressed in a cloak. Their face concealed beneath a mask, eyes gleaming with malevolence. I got so startled I stumbled back and fell down a hole. Feeling like Alice in Wonderland I sat up dizzy. I could hear my friends screaming down to see if I was okay. I had fallen pretty far down onto solid ground, so my back and head were aching. To my surprise, a flashlight that was already turned on was a few feet away from me on a table covered in cobwebs. I shot up and grabbed the flashlight.

Unsure if this was just a crazy addition to the walk I started searching for a chair to stand on to get out, a little girl popped into my peripheral vision, but when I turned towards her she was gone. I lurked around the corner just to find a hidden door, slightly ajar. Against my better judgment, I pushed it open and stepped into a room bathed in an otherworldly glow. My eyes widened in horror as I realized I had stumbled upon the lair of a deranged killer. Before I could react, the door slammed shut behind me, sealing my fate. The masked figure I had encountered earlier emerged from the shadows, wielding a gleaming knife. Their eyes burned with a sinister delight as they lunged towards me, their intent to claim another victim. As the blade pierced my flesh, a surge of pain shot through my body. Darkness enveloped my vision, and my last breath was too short to respond to my screaming, terrorized friends I could hear directly above me. My life was extinguished, becoming another ghostly legend within the haunted grounds. And so, dear reader, be cautious when venturing into the realm of the supernatural. For within the twisted corridors of a haunted Halloween walk, the line between entertainment and true horror can blur, leaving unsuspecting souls to meet a grim fate.