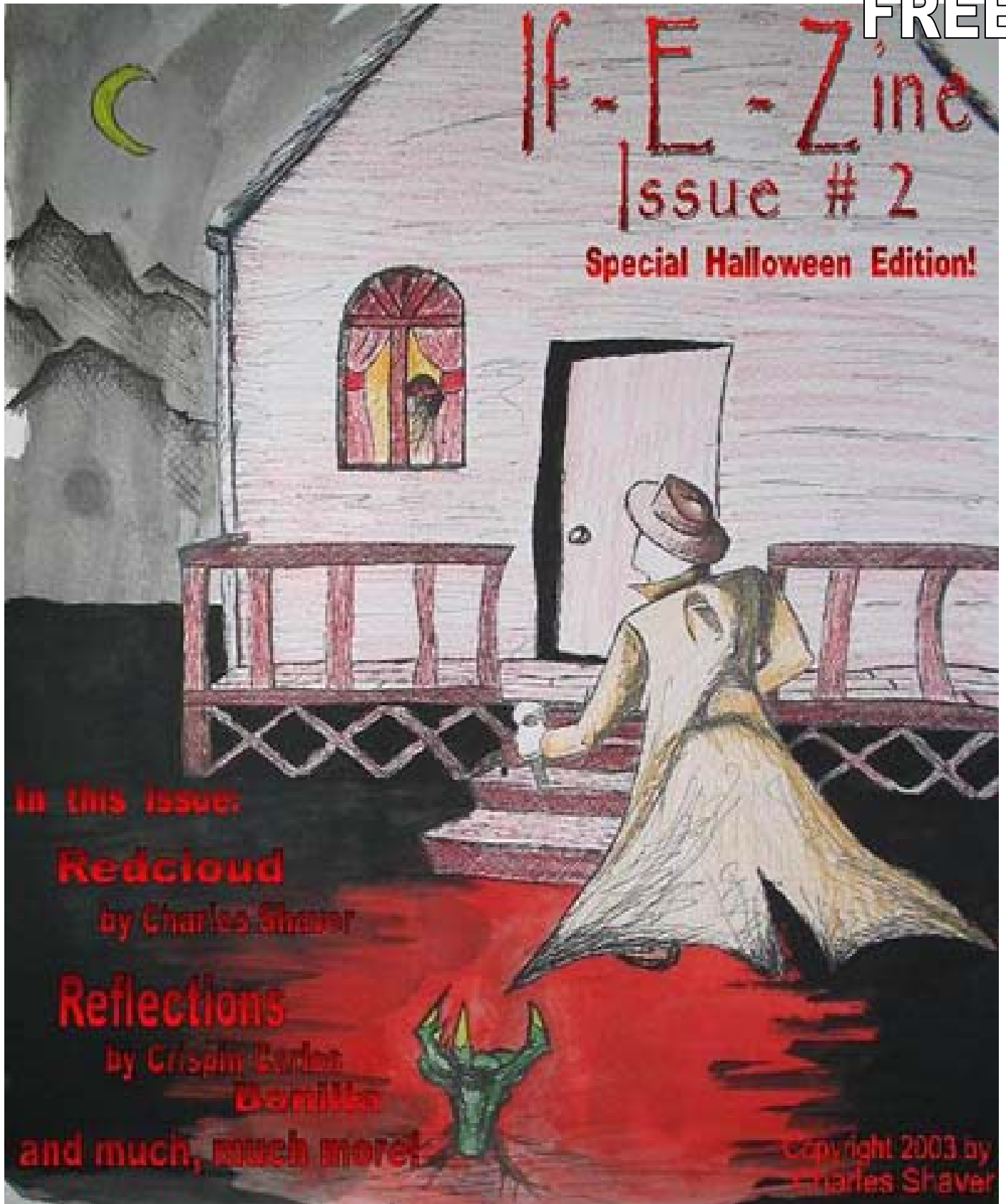


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Editorialby Charles Shaver

W elcome to If – E – Zine™'s second issue... a special Halloween Issue! Due to ill health and many, many visits to many, many doctors, this issue will feature less than I had originally planned. But as I just perused the near-complete version of Issue #2, I am surprised that it has quite a bit packed into it after all. In this issue we have a new short story from me entitled “Redcloud”, a slew of Halloween-themed jokes, eight ghost stories with claims to be true, a reading and viewing list of horror and Halloween movies and books, and an all-new short story written by Crispin Bonilla specifically for this issue of our 'zine!

I love Halloween. Always have. Even as a child I knew I loved this holiday because it was the one day of the year where it's acceptable in our country to dress up and play "make-believe" no matter your age. As a young child living in Michigan, I used to play records (remember those?) containing ghost stories. I used to love to play them when all my cousins were over (most of them were girls) and scare the hell out of them!

Every Halloween is packed with memories for me. My whole family kind of gets into the spirit of the holiday. When we were living in Long Beach, California we were across the street from a Taco Bell. My father taught me some great, fun tricks one year. He had come home from work, ate dinner and spent the rest of his time dressing up for the night. He took some white cover-alls and bandages and wrapped himself up like a mummy. He even took the handle of an old screwdriver that had broken off and stuck it in a hole in the cover-alls. It looked like someone had stabbed him in the chest with a knife! He then went about haunting the neighborhood. At one point, a small car with a smashed-in front fender pulled out of the Taco Bell parking lot across from our house. The tiny car was packed with college-aged girls who had obviously been drinking a bit (red complexions, constant laughter, etc.). My dad took the initiative and wandered out into the street like a zombie, pointing and yelling, "There they are! That's the car that hit me!"

I shit you not, the car stopped halfway out into the street! The driver's mouth dropped open as she stared in fear. Her girlfriends started screaming for her to go. Finally, she came to her senses and hit the gas and drove away rather quickly.

Ted Turner's cable stations began showing horror flicks many years ago on Halloween. In 1994, or maybe '96, I saw Ray Bradbury's animated film *The Halloween Tree* for the first time while watching one of those horror movie marathons. On another Halloween, a few years earlier, I stayed the night at a friend's house. We had wandered his neighborhood tortilla-ing people's yards (it's like toilet papering, but throwing tortillas onto front lawns and/or roofs). Then we went back to his house and we all played some horror-themed roleplaying games while horror movies played in the background on the TV. That was the first time I watched *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

My first year in private art school, I and a few friends spent Halloween in Hollywood with all the freaks. It was quite an experience indeed. At about 1:00 a.m. we headed for my first "art party." It was a party full of art school freaks and wannabes. It was a great time.

This year I plan on once again decorating our yard, busting out the fog machine and such, and haunting the whole neighborhood. We did it up pretty big last year. I hope to do more of the same this year.

Have a happy, safe and fun Halloween, folks!



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I must admonish you sir! The Black Cauldron wasn't part of a trilogy, it was part of a pentalogy called the Prydain Chronicles.

The books in the series were:

The Book of Three

The Black Cauldron

The Castle of Llyr

Taran Wanderer

The High King.

- **Bumpy J**

Oops! I do not know how I could have made such a horrible mistake! I actually knew this, but somehow it slipped my mind and thus I made the incorrect statement in the last issue. I stand corrected.

Thanks, Bumpy J.

- **Charles**



"Redcloud"

by Charles Shaver

Inspired by Serrano and Brule Sioux legends.

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Dana Redcloud screamed in pain. Blood flowed quickly and easily from her. Jason Redcloud held his wife close.

"It'll be alright," he whispered into her ear. She screamed again. Jason looked to the end of the bed where a doctor sat, intent on his task.

Jason looked back to his wife. Her eyes met his and frosted over with the chill of death. Jason held his wife closer still, unknowing of what to do. Jason felt something leave his wife's body. Her spirit lingered near her husband. And then, something departed from Jason. The doctor held Jason's newborn baby in his arms, clean the young one off.

* * * * *

In a small trailer, just inside the door, a small shrine had been built up around a photograph of Dana Redcloud. Each night, like tonight, Jason sat in front of the shrine and prayed.

"When the hell are you going to give that up?" Jason's mother scolded. She was a haggard woman whose face had been cut and scarred by the knife of time.

"I will honor the spirit of my dead wife." Jason replied.

"And what of your son? When will you honor him with your presence? Or are you going to wait until he's dead, too, to pay any attention to him?"

Jason breathed deeply, his eyes closed.

"I will honor the spirit of my dead wife," he repeated.

"It's been three years, Jason. Do you expect your sister to raise your child forever?"

Jason breathed deep once again, ignoring his mother. He began a ritual chant.

* * * * *

"Are you okay, Jason?" Stan Barris asked. He was a big, burly man. The perfect kind of man to be a police officer on a reservation.

"Huh? Oh, yeah. I guess I was just day-dreaming." Jason replied.

"We can't have our dispatcher day-dreaming," Officer Barris said. He took a seat next to Jason's small desk. "I know what it is. How long's it been?"

Jason hesitated, contemplating playing dumb, then decided to answer Barris straight. "Three years today."

"Jason, you cannot go on like this. Have you gone to see Chance Crow Dog?"

"I haven't seen him since she died."

"Go see him again. Maybe he can give you some medicine," Barris urged.

"Nah, I'll be okay. Besides I got work-"

"I'll call in Lewis. Get him to come and cover for you today. Come on, Jason. At least go home. You're no good to us here if all you're going to do is let your mind wander." Jason saw that Barris wasn't going to budge on the matter, but decided to stay at work despite the officer's stubborn and stern manner.

Officer Barris stood to leave. "Thoughts of the dead will drive a man crazy. Thoughts of the dead will conjure the dead." The officer left Jason alone at his desk.

* * * * *

Grandmother Redcloud gathered many of her neighbors. Together they hauled away all of Dana's things, including those of Jason's shrine, and took them to a nearby caern. There they collected brush around the pile of things and set it all aflame. Offerings were made and prayers chanted. The smoke of a deceased woman's belongings filled the air.

* * * * *

Jason Redcloud stepped into his house later that day. with one look he saw the emptiness, the sace of nothingness that was once his whole life.

"Where are my things?" he demanded immediately.

"Come, have dinner," urged Grandmother Redcloud. She lay two plates on the fragile little table.

"Where are my things?" he demanded again.

Grandmother Redcloud continued her task of setting the table as she spoke. "We put that poor wife of yours to rest, like you should have."

"What are you talking about?"

She stopped finally. She stared at Jason. "We laid her things to rest. We took them down and did the ritual. Now come and eat."

"I can't believe you did this! How dare you! You had no right!"

"We did it for you! You were making yourself ill. Thoughts of the dead conjure the dead." She said.

"Shut-up! Who cares! It's my wife!" Jason turned and left the little trailer home, slamming the thin door behind him.

* * * * *

Jason Redcloud knew where he had to go, but he took his time getting there. He wandered the outskirts of the reservation avoiding contact with others. he wandered and wondered what had happened within history for his people to have to live like this. He wandered and wondered what he had done to deserve the life he was given.

A couple of times Jason stopped to watch the other little Indian families in their nightly rituals. He watched children play in the mud near the well that provided them with most of their water. He watched elders sitting on crickety old porches as crickety as them, gossiping down the sun whose figure took on a shabby shape in the distanced horizon reflecting off the wavering shabbiness of the world around him. He watched men

return home from what work they could get that day to their little shacks and mobile trailers filled with families. He watched as men who couldn't or wouldn't find work open up another bottle of hope.

All of it made him miss his wife and son. All of it made him want to get away from here like his sister now living in New York with his own son. She was lucky enough to have found a white man to marry. They didn't live the high life, but then they weren't living here, either. Thinking of his sister he thought again of his son. And Jason felt alone.

* * * * *

Hours passed. The sun had set and the moon was now hanging high in the sky. Jason stepped into the circular caern. A pile of black and white ash lay at its center. Jason knelt before the ashes. A small tear came to him. Everything he had of his wife was now gone.

The air grew quiet. Everything came to a moment of stillness. Jason hated nights without a wind. He found it comforting to hear the nature about him rustling, speaking softly. Nights like these also brought an air that was warm, sticky and uncomfortable. So when the winds picked up again, Jason was quite relieved. The cool night air brushed his skin and gave him some relief from the days' happenings.

When the ashes rustled before him, Jason opened his eyes. The ashes blew around in a small circle. Some of them whipped close by his face almost playfully. Then the winds picked up, becoming fierce. Strands of Jason's hair thrashed about his face and nurturing the whirling whirlwind. The ashen whirlwind before Jason grew and grew until he became almost overwhelmed by it. He staggered to his feet as it attempted to engulf him. The windswept ash became a creature of air. And then, from within the devilish swirling beast stepped out the one person Jason never guessed he'd have a chance to see again. From within the whirlwind stepped out his wife, his love, Dana Redcloud.

"Dana?" Jason asked in a whisper.

"Jason, my dear," she answered with a sweet smile.

"Oh, how I've missed you!" he fell to his knees and embraced his wife's waist.

"I've missed you, too, my dear," she said.

"You've come back to me," he said.

"Because you need me," she answered.

Jason smiled. "Come. Let's go back home. Everyone will be so happy to see you again."

"No," Dana said firmly. "I cannot go with you."

"Why?"

Dana shook her head, her eyes focusing distantly looking for an answer. "I cannot... cannot stay."

Jason's smile disappeared. He stood before his wife. "I can't go on living like this. First you are taken from me. Then you come back, but only as if to tease me because now you tell me you will not stay. If I can't be with you in life, then I will join you in death." Excitement grew in Jason's voice as he grasped his wife's wrists, "Let me go with you back to the World of the Dead!"

Dana's face grew bright with a smile. "That we can do. Follow me." She left the caern, Jason following close behind. The landscape was dark around with the inky blackness of night. Soon, though, Jason realized his surroundings were being splashed with an odd glow of red light. The horizon looked like a distant forest fire at night, bright red and dancing. The voice of nature quieted. Trees quickly shriveled and charred black as soon as they came into Jason's view. He grew more and more frightened. But then his wife, Dana, turned and gave him a soft smile. "Come," she said as she led him. "It's not too much further."

She led him through thick brambles. Jason found it tough to get through field. Yet, he noticed, his wife glided smoothly through it all. Once to the other end of the field they came to some foothills at the base of a large mountain. A single, small path skirted along the cliffs of the mountain. Jason followed Dana as they slowly made their way up along the path. Loose gravel and stones fell off the path and down the mountain to their right every step of the way.

At one point Jason stopped. Up ahead, perched precariously above the path, was an enormous boulder rocking back and forth ever so slightly, ready to fall down upon any passerby. Dana noticed that Jason had stopped. She, too, stopped and looked over her shoulder. "What's wrong?" she called back.

"That boulder. I know what that boulder is. It is the Stone of Judgment, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied. "So?"

"If I've lived a good life, I'll pass safely. If not... i-it will fall on me and crush me."

"Jason, my dear," Dana said soothingly, "Trust me. It will not fall."

Jason could not bear the idea of being crushed under the immense weight of the boulder, but when his wife gave him a gentle smile his resolve changed. If he was to die on this night, what did it matter how he was to die? He crept slowly forward. After some small steps, he passed safely under the boulder and rejoined his wife at their previous steady pace. Long was their journey to reach the other side of the mountain. When at last they made it, they found a deep valley that had been carved by a trickling river of blood. The river ran deep and wide.

"I don't think we can cross this river," Jason said.

"You cannot," Dana said. "No living being can and you are not yet dead. But I can carry you on my back."

"B-but, I am so much bigger than you," Jason replied.

"That does not matter. Things that make sense in the Realm of the Living do not hold truth here in the Realm of the Dead." She explained.

Dana had been correct about the Stone of Judgment, so Jason let himself trust what she was telling him now. Despite Jason being bigger and heavier, as he climbed upon his wife's back she held him firmly and carried him easily. She simply walked into the river of blood. The river at its deepest came up to her neck, but never did she stop or slow in pace or show any sign of fatigue. It was not long before they were both on the other side of the river with nothing more than a layer of blood caked upon their skin to show for it.

Before them lay a solitary path surrounded only by darkness, as if it were suspended in the black void of a starless space.

"We must walk down this path. Once we do, there shall be no returning for you. They'll know you're not one of them," Dana told Jason.

"What do you mean?" He asked.

"Just because you're in the World of the Dead does not mean you have to be dead. You're not dead. Not yet, anyway."

"Will this cause a problem?"

"Some will ignore you, others will want to eat you. Almost all will want to kill you," Dana explained.

"Eat me? Why?"

"To consume your lifeforce. Some of the dead seek power and the only power we know is the consumption of the dead for their lifeforce."

"Well, why will almost all want me dead?" Jason asked.

"Jason, my dear... In the World of the Living, how often did you see spirits?" Dana asked in return.

"None until you," he answered.

"And how did seeing me make you feel?"

"Happy, of course! And a bit sad because it served as a bitter reminder that you were still dead."

"And?" She urged Jason to explain more.

"And hopeful that maybe you'd returned to me," he replied.

"And?" She coaxed once again. Jason withheld from answering. "Jason, my dear, I already know. You're only keeping the truth from yourself."

"I-I was afraid," Jason knew he couldn't lie to his wife. "I'm ashamed to admit it."

"Do not be ashamed. It is natural. Spirits are everywhere in the World of the Living. They are in the rock, in the sand, in the tree. Our ancestors, too, are always present. They are in the air. Yet we do not always see them. They rarely reveal themselves. There is no reason for them to do so. They are just there, existing, and that is all that is needed of them.

"When they finally do reveal themselves it is always with good reason and they must take care to do so. Most people have so little contact with the spirits around them that when a spirit does step forward the living become quite frightened. This is a perfectly natural thing due to a lack of contact and understanding. Therefore the living often fear spirits.

"It is the same in the World of the Dead. Not many living creatures have wandered this far. The spirits in the World of the Dead have legends of visits from the living, but few can claim to have had experiences themselves. When the spirits see you they, too, will become frightened just as you became frightened of me. Some who have lived before might envy you. Whatever the reason, as I said, most will try to kill you. Not all, but most."

"If it is so dangerous for me to walk down this path that lays before us, then why did you bring me this far?" Jason asked.

"Because that is what you wanted me to do. Loved ones fulfill the wishes of those they love, no matter the potential cost." Dana explained. "If you wish to be dead, then join me and walk this path where they will take your life."

Jason hesitated. "What of our son?"

"Your sister has done well by him and will continue to do so," Dana paused. "Though she cannot truly do all that he will need. In some areas, it will be best if you

would take care of him. You can do it, my dear." Dana stared at her husband. For the first time, Jason did not see her as his wife, but as the spirit of her wife. A misty memory.

"You would make a good father," Dana said. The she added, "Trust me."

Jason looked over his shoulder across the thickly flowing river of blood. He looked down the narrow and deadly path with the precariously dangling boulder. He thought of the razor-sharp field of brambles he had to walk through. He knew he could trust his wife. He turned back to her. She smiled and pulled him close. His eyes closed as they kissed.

* * * * *

Jason's eyes snapped open. He was once again sitting in front of the ashes in the middle of the caern. A slight breeze shuffled the ashes. Jason was covered with caked blood, scrapes, cuts and bruises. Jason looked to the ashes, then to the sky. His wife was somewhere in the air. He smiled.

Jason got up off his knees and walked home.



"Reflections"

by Crispin Carlos Bonilla.

Our first work featuring someone other than myself! This is a wonderful story written by Crispin specifically for this issue of If – E – Zine™. Please enjoy. - Charles © copyright 2003 by Crispin Carlos Bonilla. All rights reserved. No part of this original short story may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written prior permission of the author(s).

Greg Narbosa, not sure of how late he was for work, looked to his wrist expecting to see his watch, but instead saw only the white impression of a forgotten and left behind watch. The school where he worked was strangely quiet for a Monday as he approached. The swings on the playground swayed back and forth as if ghost children were playing there.

"'Tis the wind and nothing more," Greg whispered to himself with the nerdy smirk of an English major. A gust of wind kicked up and made the swings jolt from their rhythm and clang together. He made his way across the grounds and to his classroom. The classroom door creaked and echoed down unusually empty halls as he opened it.

"Is today a holiday?" he thought aloud to himself. After setting his briefcase on his desk, Greg made his way to the auditorium thinking that maybe he had forgotten about an assembly. He looked into the other classrooms as he passed them, hoping to see any signs of life, but found only empty seats and rooms and his own footsteps that echoed throughout the deserted halls. Then, just as his hand touched the auditorium door, something suddenly caught his eye. There was movement at the end of the hall near the cafeteria to his left. He looked just in time to see one of the cafeteria doors slowly closing as a bathroom door across the hall from the cafeteria mirrored its action. Greg quickly picked up his pace and ran down the hall towards the closing doors..

"Hey!" He yelled. No response came. As he neared the end of the hall Greg began to feel really nervous. He had the unnerving feeling as if he were being watched. He looked over his shoulder before he reached the now closed cafeteria and bathroom doors. He stopped and listened. He could barely hear the sound of a dripping faucet. He hadn't notice it at first and started to wonder how long this new noise had been present. Sweat began to trickle down his face. He loosened his tie and undid the first button of his shirt. He took off his coat as he completed his journey to the end of the hall and threw it to the ground. Looking left and then right, he chose the cafeteria doors on the left. He was certain something would be going on inside. He noticed the sound of dripping water was now louder and was coming from the "little boy's room". He decided to step inside the bathroom first to make sure none of the little rugrats hadn't left a sink on and was flooding the bathroom. As he stepped through the door to the boy's room he found everything strangely dry. Not a single faucet was dripping. He then realized that the sound was coming from one of the stalls. He made his way slowly and cautiously to where the sound seemed to be coming from, his eyes on the floor scanning for any sign of water. He pushed the door open slowly.

Drip.

Drip.

The dripping matched the beating of his heart as he opened the door.

BANG! A loud crash came from outside. His heart jumped. Greg's curiosity changed and he abandoned the bathroom stall, letting the partially opened door swing back shut, and headed outside quickly to see what caused the noise. Wanting to catch whoever was around, Greg rushed outside only to trip and fall flat on his face with a sickening thud. Blood flew from his mouth as his lip busted open from hitting the ground. Stunned, he laid on the floor motionless. Remembering the reason he rushed out into the hall, he quickly shook off the effects of the fall and got to his feet. Again, he felt as though he were being watched. No one was to be seen. The pain in his mouth reminded him of his fall and he looked to see what had caused it. A dirty mop lay across the floor in front of the doorway. Greg looked closer at the mop and saw that it was covered in blood.

He thought at first that the blood was his, but the blood wasn't the same on the mop as the blood dripping from his mouth. It was not his. It was darker.

"But whose is it?" He wondered. Greg looked around quickly but, again, no one was in sight and the only sound was that of the dripping water coming from the bathroom. He ignored it and continued toward the cafeteria as before. Looking to the floor, he found bloody shoe prints. They hadn't been there before, or at least he thought they hadn't been, and they were leading into the cafeteria. Greg could have sworn that those bloody shoe prints just appeared when he looked, but rationalized that it was just his imagination and that they had to have been there before.

"I just didn't notice them," he said to himself over and over. He finally knew something wasn't quite right here. He followed the blood into the cafeteria. Again, feeling as if he were being watched, he looked up and down the hall. Seeing no one, he entered the cafeteria.

What Greg saw was something he could never have imagined, even in his worst nightmares. It was like a scene from straight out of some disgusting and obscene horror story. He didn't remember what he had had for breakfast that morning, but he felt his stomach was about to remind him. He covered his mouth, holding himself in check as he surveyed the horror before him.

The room was dimly lit with a red hue. Tables filled the room, each with a child strapped to them. Some seemed fine and possibly asleep while others, judging by the way their bodies had been mutilated, seemed dead. He felt compelled to walk down the center of the atrocity to where an old woman sat in an unusually placed rocking chair with her back to him. She rocked slowly. He reached out to her, touching her shoulder. He opened his mouth to speak, but refrained from doing so when he felt like vomiting again. The old lady must have heard him anyway, for she turned around slowly. Her face was that of annoyance, as if to say "How dare you interrupt me when I am working!"

She turned again away from Greg, starting up her rocking with her head down as though concentrating on something. Greg looked to see what she was working so hard on. He saw a child in her lap whom she was sewing together from the different parts of other children. The child's head was that of one of his students. The eyes opened and looked to Greg.

"Please, help me," the child gurgled. Greg just stood, horrified. His hand flew back to his mouth as he gasped.

"Please, Mr. Narbosa! End my suffering!" Blood bubbled from it's mouth.
"Please!"

Greg backed away in horror and disgust and felt something grab his leg. He looked down to see what it was and, again, saw a sight he couldn't believe. One of the mutilated children was grabbing him. It had been eviscerated and should not have been alive, but somehow it was.

"Please! End our suffering!" It cried.

The whole room suddenly sprang to life. Bodies of the children now squirmed as they all begged Greg to end their suffering. He couldn't take it anymore and began to scream in terror. The old lady began to cackle. Greg broke free of the child's grip and ran for the door, avoiding all the children that were now reaching for him. He got to the door but was stopped at the sight, to the left of the doors, of a janitor cleaning the floor with the same mop he had tripped over. The janitor looked up and just stared into Greg's eyes. Greg made his way to the door, preparing himself for a possible confrontation, but there was none.

Greg bust through the doors and made his way down the hall. The woman's laugh, along with the children's chant for help, echoed after him. Greg's stomach churned. He could no longer contain himself and he ran into the boy's bathroom once more. He instinctively ran to the stall he had abandoned earlier. Throwing open the door with a crash, he opened his mouth wide and released the contents of his stomach into the waiting toilet bowl. Blood splashed everywhere. He checked his lips and he realized that the wasn't his. The dripping sound overpowered him as he realized that blood was dripping from above him into the toilet. He looked up to the ceiling. It was soaked with blood and before he could react the ceiling came crashing down on him. Thousands of little black leaches came down along with the naked body of his wife, Elizabeth. Greg became even more hysterical as the leaches attached themselves to him. He began to scream as he tried to brush them off, but they stayed attached. He left the stall in a panic, wrenching the door of the bathroom open. Just outside in the hall was the old woman with five of the sewn children standing like marionettes behind her.

"These are my perfect children... unlike you," she said. Greg stood in shock, unable to move or react as she reached up and grabbed the fattest leach, tearing it from his flesh. She placed it in her mouth and began to chew the rubbery critter. Blood squirted from it like a juicy orange.

"Mmm, eat up children," she said. The children then began to move clumsily toward Greg as if being controlled by an invisible puppeteer. They grabbed and ripped the leaches from Greg's body and all he could do was scream and plead the children for help. Then he found himself pleading, "Mommy, please don't!"

* * * * *

Greg awoke with a jolt.

"Mommy!" He screamed. It took him a moment to recover and realize where he was. He felt his sweat-soaked sheet. "Just another dream," he whispered to himself. With a sigh he put his hands to his face. For a moment he was relieved. He looked to his left where his wife Elizabeth slept. His heart sank, her side of the bed was empty. The old woman's face flashed before his eyes as well as the visage of his dead wife. He sobbed

for awhile, but soon the imagery of the dream thankfully began to fade from his mind. His alarm of his clock radio rang then slipped into broadcasting the news, bringing Greg's heart rate back up with a startle. He reached to turn it off, but paused at the news report of another murder. A woman and her only child, it was the third this month.

* * * * *

The school looked livelier today than it did in his dream last night. Children were actually swinging in the swings... and in one piece. Greg looked to his wrist and found his watch. It was 7:35 and 43 seconds. He was a bit late, but bad dreams will often make you late. He remembered when his nightmares began, just after he and Elizabeth had separated last month. It wasn't the first time he had had bad dreams, but it was the first time in many years. They had always left him exhausted and today was no different. He made his way across the parking lot to the classrooms. Teaching elementary kids wasn't an easy job, especially when you're tired. Today was going to be a long day.

"At least it's not teenagers," he thought aloud to himself with a sly grin.

* * * * *

The bell had rung signaling the end of the day. The last of his students had left. Greg sighed and covered his face with his hands. Thoughts of his rough night came back and he almost began to sob. He was thankful that, as tough as his day had been, work had at least kept his mind off of everything. Not wanting to show any weakness in front of his students, Greg had held his emotions in check. But now with no one around, he was able to release his pain. The child he had heard about on his clock radio that morning that was killed last night was one of his own students. Her name had been Stephanie. A pretty little girl. The principal had told him out in the hall before Greg began class. He didn't know how to talk to his students about it, so he had opted not to bring it up with the class at all. The two previous children who had been murdered were from the area, but other schools. This one he knew. In fact, he had dreamt about her last night. The severed head that begged for his help in his dream last night had been the one who had died. Greg was far too spent to realize the strange coincidence at first. Now that he did, he rested his head on his desk.

Sleep began to creep up on him and soon he was dreaming, the same dream as last night and the other nights. Again he was in front of the empty school. He looked for his watch but like every other time before he had forgotten it. He looked up and at the school and heard a loud crash.

Greg jolted awake. Startled, he looked about the room. A figure stood in a darkened corner.

"Who's there?" Greg asked looking hard to try to recognize who it was.

"Sorry, sir. It's just me. Frank." The figure said.

"Frank? The janitor?" Greg questioned and yawned, "What was that noise?"

"The trash can slipped from my hand. Sorry." Frank explained.

He apologized once more, finished up and walked to the door. He turned back around to say goodbye to Greg and his face was now illuminated. Greg recognized his face right away. Greg's heart began to race. Frank was the same janitor from his dream.

* * * * *

Greg's car was still in the shop. He passed up his rental having forgotten this. Realizing his error he corrected himself and quickly got in. He pulled out into the street to watch the school from a safe distance. Before leaving, he had made a terrible mess in the cafeteria of all places. He had hoped this distraction would be long enough for him to get to his car and out of sight. He was sure Frank's was the same janitor from his dream. First Stephanie, and now the janitor had appeared in his dream. He was sure this all meant something. Greg knew he wasn't psychic, but this was all too weird. What if Frank was the murderer?

Finally, his suspect came out. Frank went to the parking lot and looked around. Looking frustrated and tired, he hit the roof of his car. Greg had made a big mess, but had it been big enough to miff Frank to the point of hitting his own car? Greg smiled in some sense of satisfaction. Frank got into his car and sat there for a moment before he finally departed. Greg was by no means a detective, but he had seen enough movies to know to keep a good distance while tailing someone and did just that. His tracking led him past the Motel 6 he had been staying at since he and Elizabeth had separated and then into a very familiar neighborhood. It had been a while since Greg had been in this neighborhood. It had been his own until Elizabeth had asked him to leave.

Greg slowed as Frank's car slowed and parked in an even more familiar place: across from his old house! Greg pulled off on a side street and parked quietly at the corner where he could see Frank's car Elizabeth's house. Frank sat in his car for quite a while. Greg was going crazy.

"He's after my family!" Greg muttered, gritting his teeth. "I can't let him take the life of my wife and kid like he's done to the others!" Greg decided quickly to go into action. Starting the car, Greg punched the gas, spun the car back onto the street upon which his house sat and raced straight for the back of the other car. A huge crunch of metal on metal exploded, disturbing the quiet neighborhood. Momentarily stunned, Greg stared at the smoke and disaster in front of him. Blood dripping from his forehead brought him back to reality and Greg bolted from his car towards Frank's. Frank's car started up. The janitor squealed off down the street. Greg turned and ran back to his car. The engine churned and whirred but never started. Frustrated, he hit the steering wheel.

By this time, Greg's wife and their neighbors were spilling out of their homes into their yards.

"Greg? What the Hell are you doing? What the fuck is going?" Elizabeth yelled as she approached the mangled rental. Before he could answer, she continued into a tirade.

"You know you are not supposed to be here!" she screamed.

"Someone was here meaning to kill you!" Greg yelled back as he exited his car.

"What?" she stood in disbelief.

"The janitor at the school, I think he's the one who's been killing all the local children and their mothers," Greg tried to explain.

"Greg-"

"And he came here to kill you," Greg said desparately.

"Greg! Listen! I told you to stay away! I don't want to hear any of your lies!" Elizabeth was fuming.

"Why are you doing this to me? You know I didn't hit you! Why did you tell your lawyer all that crap?" His own fury consumed him.

"Tell that to my black eye and busted lip!" She spat back. The whole neighborhood watched, not knowing what to do.

"You know damn well I didn't!" Greg screamed.

"Oh yeah? It your fucking evil twin, right?" She spat again. "Fuck off! I should have filed charges, but I needed you working to help with Christopher! Count your damn blessings and leave!" They continued to argue till the police arrived.

* * * * *

It had been over a week since the confrontation with Elizabeth. Every day Greg called the police only to hear that they were still trying to locate Frank. Greg got the feeling that they were just blowing him off every time he called, but they did put a patrol car to watch Elizabeth's house, which appeased him. He knew because he had driven by a couple times himself and seen them cruising the neighborhood. His dreams had been rather pleasant since the incident, but it didn't make him sleep any better. He had a lot on his mind. He was worried about his wife and their son Christopher. Also, he was very troubled about what was going on between him and Elizabeth. She kept on insisting that he abused her but he had no recollection of any abuse. She had bruises to the contrary, though. He didn't think he could ever hurt her. He still loved her more than anything, even through all the complicated matters they were dealing with now, but there were still the bruises. Was she plotting against him? Did she set him up? Did she have a lover and together were they plotting against him? These thoughts battered his already worn mind. Sleep soon took over.

* * * * *

The killer stood in front of the house and stared at it with an intensity as though he were trying to see through it's walls. He stepped away from the police vehicle, pulled on his mask and made his way to the house. The door to the house was unlocked. He stepped inside. It was late, but he heard movement upstairs. He made his way up the steps. He wandered towards the master bedroom. From somewhere beyond the bedroom a shower sang with a steady hum of water. Steam rolled out of a door connecting the master bedroom to the bathroom. The killer could Elizabeth's figure silhouetted through the glass shower door.

KEE-RASH!

The killer's fist slammed through the shower door, grabbed her and pulled her out of the shower. Elizabeth screamed. Her leg got caught on one of the shards of glass stuck in the door. She yelped in agony as she struggled with the intruder. Her skin was slippery with soap and he struggled to hold onto her. She clawed and scratched at him and eventually tore off his mask. She stared in silence for a moment, then began to scream even louder and with more desperation. The killer procured a knife from his belt and brought it down into Elizabeth's stomach, twisting it, pulling it out and repeated the stab again and again.

Slashing skin and bloodletting gave the killer such a high that no drug ever could. The tortured screams of his victim brought him to new heights of ecstasy. Cries of terror gave him a satisfaction in knowing that what he was doing was right. To him, each victim had had their own shade of red. And the darker the red, the richer the blood, the more intoxicated he would become. Each cut he made was precise like an artist's brush stroke to a canvas. He never stabbed randomly, he always aimed for vital organs. He was an artist of death making his grand statements upon the human canvas.

He watched the pool of Elizabeth's blood grow deeper, waiting for the last twitch of the body to make sure all life was gone. When his work was finally done, he took great satisfaction in knowing that all would admire his work. Sure, some would give their criticism, some would give their praise, but all would stare in amazement of the beauty of his art.

The killer's euphoria was soon interrupted.

"Mommy?" Christopher stood in the doorway of the bathroom. He was a young boy, only nine years of age. The killer turned around quickly, taken by surprise. As his bodies swung around in, the knife also swung around. Blood flew from it, splattering the across the boy's face. Christopher froze in terror. The killer left his canvas and made his way toward the boy. Instinct overtook the boy and he ran from the room. The killer gave chase, caught the boy and hit him so hard he flew across the master bedroom and into the hallway. The boy's head smashed into a large, full-length mirror. His body plopped to the floor, unconscious. As the killer approached the boy, he saw his reflection in the shattered mirror. He didn't like what he saw.

Greg stood, mouth gaping, staring at his reflection holding a bloody knife in his hand. He dropped the knife, yet the image in the mirror stayed unchanged.

"What's the matter, Greg? Don't like what you see?" The image spoke to him in a mocking tone. Greg just stared in shock. It had been him the whole time! He was the evil killer!

"Wh-who are you?" Greg asked the image in the mirror.

"Why... I'm you," the image answered softly.

"That's not possible," Greg mumbled. He thought this had to be another dream, another nightmare, but he knew it wasn't.

"But it is, Greg. You have suppressed me for far too long. Kept me hidden for far too long. You need me, Greg. The world needs me. There's so much pain in the world, so much suffering. And all of it unnecessary. All of it brought onto people through their own actions. It needs to end. But you wouldn't let me free, so I had to take action." An image of Greg beating his wife flashed in his mind. "That's right. You just needed a little push."

"Why?" Greg sobbed.

"To end the suffering of those poor children. Don't you remember the pain we went through Greg? Don't you remember when our mother killed our father and abused us tirelessly?" The image said. Images of Greg's childhood flashed across his mind.

"I'm over that! We went to therapy! All that therapy!" Greg spat.

"You got over it. But I didn't!" The image yelled. "And I couldn't let anyone else go through what we did. Those poor children with unfit single mothers like ours!"

Images flashed through Greg's mind. He saw himself entering all those houses and killing the mothers and their children. Each victim flashed in his mind, each face, including his wife's.

"Why my family?" he asked, barley able to speak.

"She made herself a single mother when she pushed us out," explained the image. "Besides, she was an obstacle in our mission. Just like the janitor. I knew he was on to us, so I had to get rid of him. I had you sabotage the car so you would have to change vehicles. No one would recognize us in that rental. And then we were able to get rid of him. Then I made you dream about him so that you would get rid of him, but you blew that didn't you? Instead of killing him, you just chased him off for a while. Still, you managed to get rid of him long enough so we could get rid of Elizabeth."

"My God, what have I done? What have you done!" Greg screamed, realizing that his wife and all those people were dead at his hands. Greg fell to the ground crying.

"You disappoint me, Gregory," the image said, shaking his head in disgust. Then the image smiled again. "Still maybe there is hope." The brought his knife down. Blood flew all over the mirror.

* * * * *

"Your hunch was right about him," the police officer said.

"With his history of abuse his mother put him through and his contact with the children made him seem like the one, but I can't believe I blew it." Frank said.

"The guy was clever. He must have known you were a detective," the officer replied.

"I should have been more cautious. And now two good men are dead and his wife. Their separation must have set him off."

"Well, at least the boy is safe," the officer said, trying to bring some comfort to Frank.

"How is he?" Frank asked with concerned.

"When we found him he was in shock, of course, and had the knife in his hand. We think he somehow got the knife away from his dad and killed him in self-defense," John explained.

"Man, can you imagine what this will do to him?" Frank stated.

"Time will tell, but for now he is safe." The officer said. They walked over to the ambulance where the boy was sitting in the back. The door was closed. Frank opened the doors to the ambulance slowly. Both men jumped back in horror as the body of a paramedic fell out. His throat had been slashed and his lips had been cut off leaving him with a twisted smile. Christopher, scalpel in hand, got out of the ambulance nonchalantly. He looked to the paramedic.

"He told me both his parents were dead, too, and that his grandma raised him all by herself. He must have suffered a lot," Christopher smiled at the two officers. They stood in shock and disbelief.

"But look," Christopher pointed with the scalpel, "he is happy now. No more suffering! My daddy will be so proud of me!" Christopher looked over his shoulder and there he saw the ghostly visage of his dad, standing over him with a big smile, watching his boy make him proud.



Halloween Howls

Here are some sure-fire Halloween jokes, laughs and guffaws!

Q: Why can't witches have babies?

A: Because vampires have Hollow-weenies!

* * * * *

Wardrobe Designer: I hear The Mummy is quite a party-animal.

Set Decorator: How do you know that?

Wardrobe Designer: I hear he makes it a habit to be at every wrap party he can go to!

* * * * *

Man: Dear sir, your job must be quite boring and lonely.

Gravedigger: By all means, no! The cemetery is quite the popular place!

Man: Surely you jest!

Gravedigger: By no means! I tell you the truth! In fact, people are just dying to meet me!

* * * * *

Q: What do you call an abominable snowman that is always late?

A: A snow-flake!

* * * * *

Q: Where do all the monsters go to eat?

A: White Castle, of course!

* * * * *

The rotting corpse of a zombie walks into a bar. He takes a seat at the bar. The bartender, with some trepidation, approaches him and asks what he would like to drink. Upon hearing the order, the bartender leaves to prepare the drink. When he returns, he hands the zombie his drink, then immediately hunches over behind the bar and vomits all over the floor.

"Dear sir," says the zombie, "if my presence bothers you I can leave."

"No, no," replied the bartender, "You're fine as you are. It's just me. I apologize."

The bartender cleans the floor and leaves the zombie to enjoy his drink. Seeing that the zombie soon needs another drink, the bartender returns with a new glass. Again, the bartender heaves over behind the bar and vomits all over the floor.

"Dear sir," the zombie says, "I can leave if you wish. Really, I don't mind."

"No, no. You're fine. Please stay," replies the bartender as he cleans the floor.

The bartender returns later with the zombie's third drink and again the bartender vomits behind the counter.

"Listen," the zombie says, "I'm just going to leave." He digs into his pocket for some money to pay for his drinks and prepares to leave.

"No! Please, stay! I told you, it's not you at all," claims the bartender.

"Well, if it's not me, what is it then?" the zombie asks.

"Well, as I said, it's not you that's making me sick. It's the drunk guy sitting next to you dipping his pretzels in your arm and eating them that's making me sick."

* * * * *

Q: What's the first thing that the Wolfman does to prepare for a date?

A: He combs his face.

* * * * *

Q: When Bigfoot was in high school, what was his favorite school dance to attend?

A: The Foot Ball

* * * * *

Q: Why was the Polish vampire arrested at the blood bank?

A: He tried to deposit a stolen Czech.

* * * * *

If you're ever invited to dinner with Count Dracula it is considered proper etiquette to never, ever order the stake.

* * * * *

Q: What does Dr. Frankenstein do when he gets a little lonely?

A: He digs up a few old friends.

* * * * *

Creature from the Black Lagoon: Hey Wolfie, have you gone to any of the new raves they're holding up in the mountains?

Wolfman: Nah, not yet. What kind of music do they play?

Creature: All kinds, but mostly they play Trance-ylvania!

* * * * *

Q: What's one sure sign that the party you've been invited to is at a vampire's house?

A: The salsa in the buffet is clotting.

* * * * *

Q: What do you get when you cross a vampire with bronchitis and an elephant?

A: A bad coffin fit.

* * * * *

Quasimodo: Hey, Count! Why do you have all these copies of Vogue lying around the castle?

Count Dracula: The salesman duped me. He told me it had good circulation.

* * * * *

Q: Why did the Wolfman, as a child, keep getting kicked out of foster homes?

A: He kept biting the hand that fed him.

* * * * *

Q: Why won't vampires attack attorneys?

A: Professional courtesy.

* * * * *

Old Witch: Hey, Wolfie! How come the Count didn't come over to watch movies with all us monsters?

Wolfman: Oh, Count Dracula? Because he heard we were watching westerns tonight and he just can't stand to sit through High Noon.

* * * * *

Q: What is the Creature from the Black Lagoon's favorite movie?

A: Beaches

* * * * *

Mummy: Why did Count Dracula get mad and storm off the stage during karaoke last night?

Frankenstein: They wanted him to sing You Are My Sunshine.

* * * * *

Q: If Tony Bennett were a vampire, what would be his favorite song?

A: I Left My Heart in San Francisco

* * * * *

Q: What do vampires call tampons?

A: Finger food

* * * * *

Lawyer: How do you know that ghost was lying on the stand?

Wolfman: Are you kidding? You could see right through him!

* * * * *

Q: What happened when the two vampires raced after the same victim?

A: It ended in a neck-tie!

* * * * *

Old Witch: How come Count Dracula's hair always looks so bad?

Mummy: Because he can't see himself in the mirror to comb it!

* * * * *

Mummy: Count Dracula's been feeling kind of down lately.

Blob: Really? Why?

Mummy: I guess he's finally starting to feel his age.

Blob: Oh, so he's feeling a little long in the tooth, eh?

* * * * *

Blob: I just found out that the world's greatest lizards - the Loch Ness Monster and Godzilla - are related!

Mortician: Really? How are they related?

Blob: From what I hear, they're hissing cousins!

* * * * *

Wolfman: That's it! I think Dr. Frankenstein has finally lost his last shred of sanity staying in that old castle of his all the time.

Mortician: How do you know?

Wolfman: The Blob just told me he's got bats in his belfry.

* * * * *

When Count Dracula was a very young vampire, he found Andrea the Amazon moonbathing at night on the beach fully nude. Not only was she fully nude, she was completely spread eagle! Being the young vampire that he was, certain feelings stirred deep inside the Count. The horny teen vampire quickly transformed himself into a bat and flew in as fast as he could, right in between the Amazon's muscular legs. He did his dirty deed as fast as he could and then flew off, out of site.

It is said that Andrea the Amazon was then heard to say, "What was that?"
To which replied the Invisible Man, "I don't know, but my ass hurts!"

* * * * *

Q: What are the world's monsters' favorite band?

A: Body Count

* * * * *

Wolfman: I guess Count Dracula is trying a new trick where he can make the blood of his

victims talk.

Old Witch: Really? I always did love veintriloquists.

* * * * *

Q: How can we get proof that the forces of evil are at work in Hollywood?

A: Jay Leno has a job, doesn't he?

* * * * *

Q: How did Frankenstein's monster react to all these jokes?

A: They kept him in stitches!

Thanks for reading all these tasteless jokes! Have a happy - and safe! - Halloween!



Some Real Ghost Stories

Here is a collection of allegedly true ghost stories and sights of hauntings from all over the United States. Some of the more daring of you may wish to visit for these haunts for the Halloween holiday... if you dare!

Resurrection Mary

Have you ever heard the urban legend about a young man driving along a lonely stretch of highway at night, usually while it's raining, and he sees a young woman by the side of the road that he takes pity on, picks up and drives her home only to have her disappear? Guess what... it's based on facts. Along an eight block stretch of road just outside of Chicago this story has been playing out for at least half a century. Local historians believe that the young girl is the ghost of a woman who died in a tragic car accident while heading home from a nearby dance hall. She died quickly and was buried in the Resurrection Cemetery located along the same stretch of road that people to this day claim they see her. Sightings and experiences with the young woman have been reported over and over again to the police and newspapers of Chicago. She often appears on rainy nights. The most common end to every person's tale who make contact with the girl is when they approach the cemetery. The girl begins to urge her nighttime rescuer(s) to pull over at the cemetery. When they do, she jumps out of the car and heads for the front gates only to disappear in thin air.

Hotel del Coronado

This hotel located in San Diego, California was once famous for their lavishly rich clientele. But over the years it has become more renowned as a place of a mysterious haunting. The story goes that a young woman checked into the hotel one night. She was alone, had little luggage and seemed to be very sad according to the hotel staff records and local police reports. The young woman went straight to bed and wasn't seen the rest of the night. The next morning the young girl stepped out onto the beach just outside the hotel before sunrise. She had dressed herself in a long, flowing black dress. She walked the shoreline as the sun came up. She watched the ocean's waves roll in at her feet... and then she put a bullet in her head. She was found later that morning. Her identity was never truly confirmed and the name she had signed the hotel registry with was believed to be false because she had no I.D. to confirm it. Who was she? Why did she kill herself? Where did she come from? To this day, no one knows. But she is still occasionally seen wandering the halls of the hotel or along the shoreline of the beach.

Mission San Antonio de Padua

This mission, located in northern California, was built in 1771. It still stands and operates to this day. Of the many hauntings reported at the mission over the years the most common are those of ghostly monks sometimes seen going to midnight mass. They do nothing more than wander the halls en route to conduct their ritual prayers and never respond or interact with anyone. They usually disappear at some point within the

hallways. Another apparition is that of a headless horsewoman. It is said that she was an Indian maiden who had married a prospector living in the area. Her husband would often go off to remote mining camps and leave her at home alone for extended lengths of time. As the legend goes, the prospector came home early from one of these camps to find his wife in bed with another man. Enraged, the prospector took an axe and killed not only the cheating couple but, in his fit of rage, his wife's prize horse, too. Local Indian customs said that if a body was not buried properly or in tact, the dead would be cursed to roam this world forever and would not be allowed to enter the realm of the dead. Knowing this, the prospector chopped off his wife's head and buried it in an unknown location. To this day, her body is seen riding her prize horse around the area of the mission looking for her head.

The Artist House of Old Town Key West

Key West is an area infused with the cultural lore of many different peoples. The Artist House was built in the 19th century and was owned by the Otto family until the 1970s. It is now a bed & breakfast. Many of the guests over the years have reported to the owners incidents of haunting activity. Some have seen the ghosts of children, while others claim only to get a "feeling" of hostility, as if someone or something doesn't want them there. One of the most popular stories is that of a large wooden doll that supposedly moves on its own. It was the toy of a child who had grown up there. It is said that whenever the child got into mischief, he would blame his activities on the doll and claim that he hadn't done anything wrong. The history of the area is steeped in the religion of voodoo and many believers fear the doll a great deal.

Sheldrake, Michigan

Named after the type of duck that frequents the area, the old logging village of Sheldrake, Michigan doesn't really exist anymore. The area is now privately owned by a family. The logging village sprouted up in the late 1800s and started dying out by the turn of the century as the area was cleared of trees. The final nail in the coffin for the small community was a couple of fires that swept through the area believed to have been set on purpose for insurance money (which was a common practice at the time, especially for such communities). These fires virtually destroyed every building. The family that currently owns the area has refurbished the old ruined buildings and occasionally rents them out for the summer to vacationers retreating to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Many of the hauntings reported in the area are believed to be of the former logging residents who died either while working there or during the raging fires. There is also an old captain often seen standing on the nearby dock, waving boats into shore. When the small crafts approach, the captain vanishes before the crew's eyes.

The Spy House of Port Monmouth, New Jersey

I just had to mention this house. It's actually one very large house made from three smaller ones, including one believed to be the oldest house yet standing in New Jersey dating from the 1600s. Many ghosts have been reported over the last several

decades. It is incredibly haunted by its vast and various previous owners. It has been an inn, served as a safe haven for both British and American soldiers during the revolutionary war, been the home for many colonists, a brothel on more than one occasion and was even once a den for pirates! It is now a museum of history.

The Flying Dutchman

Take my love for the sea and my passion for a good ghost story and you're bound to come across a lot of tales of hauntings at sea. The Flying Dutchman is the single most famous ghost ship in history. The tale is so well known and is so often retold that it is hard to discern fact from fiction. But here are the basics: The Flying Dutchman was once a merchant ship. While sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, which is notorious for its bad weather, the captain of the ship decided to sail on into an approaching storm. At some point during the storm the ship broke up and sank, killing everyone (or so it is believed since no survivors were ever found). Ever since then, sailors rounding the Cape of Good Hope during a storm will return to their home ports with tales of how they were lead through the storm to safety by a mysterious ship that disappeared once they were safe. Or, less commonly, they tell of how a mystic ship tried to lure them close to the rocky cliffs and shallow waters of the shoreline as though to make them sink during the storm.

The Lobo Girl of Devil's River

Not really a ghost story, but a story you really can't place under any other category. The Lobo Girl is one of the most favorite and famous stories of the American Southwest. The story goes like this: There was a young couple, John and Mollie Dent, who had headed along the Devil's River in Del Rio, Texas to hunt and trap for the season. Like most new couples, they were soon expecting a child. John Dent worked hard that season. On one stormy night, he came home late after hunting all day to find his wife in labor. She was going to have the baby before the night was through. He settled his wife into bed and decided to take his chances against the wicked storm to get help for his wife. A doctor lived many miles away. The trip was long in normal weather, but with such a heavy downpour it would be nearly impossible. John arrived at the doctor's house wounded and died soon after he gave the doctor word that his wife needed help. By that time, the storm had grown even more fierce. The doctor knew of no way he could get to young Mollie safely. He waited all night, until the storm passed, then headed out for the Dent's settlement to help the young mother and tell her of her husband's demise. When the doctor arrived at the Dent home, he found the door open and a trail of blood covering the floor leading from the bedroom to outside. The doctor found young Mollie Dent dead. He declared her death as having been caused by difficulties during childbirth. The child was nowhere to be found. When the local law enforcement was called in, they reasoned that the door to the house had blown open in the night. Fresh wolf tracks in the mud outside the door suggested to them that a pack of wolves, seeking shelter from the storm, had entered the home and subsequently dragged the newborn off for their meal. It was a great tragedy indeed. About a decade or two later, when brush was being cleared for a railroad to pass through the area and then after the trains started running through, reports

began filtering in from rail workers and train passengers who claimed to have sighted a very young girl, perhaps ten to fifteen years of age, running naked and wild with a pack of wolves. Later stories told of someone having caught the rabid and wild girl only to have her escape and run free once again.

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Reading & Viewing List

Here is a list of things to read or watch to help get you in the mood for the approaching Halloween. I've dispensed with the traditional things, like the Universal Studios classics (Dracula, Frankenstein, The Mummy, Creature from the Black Lagoon, The Wolfman, etc.) because I figure you'd be able to think of those yourself. Here are 13 lucky picks.

The Halloween Tree

This animated movie, written and narrated by the great Ray Bradbury, is perfect for kids and kids at heart. It tells the story of a group of young friends who chase after an odd old man-creature on Halloween night to retrieve the soul of their best friend. Through their adventures, they discover the traditions and beliefs from all over the world that helped to influence the holiday we today call Halloween. Educational, lots of action, and lovable characters make it a favorite for everyone of every age. Great for kids.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Although I grew up loving the Disney animated short it wasn't until recently that I actually read the original story written by Washington Irving. I must say, Disney did justice to the story. There is, of course, the most recent Tim Burton movie called Sleepy Hollow. I suggest all three: the story, the Disney short and the Tim Burton version. But, if I had to choose just one for you, I'd say watch the Disney (it's out on DVD and is called The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad). The Disney short is great for kids.

The Amityville Horror

Supposedly a true story. I've recently finished the book and have seen the movie countless times. It's about a family who buy a house in a rural community and quickly discover the house has a life of its own... and it's not very welcoming to the family. Full of creepiness. Keep kids away from this one.

The Exorcist

The grand-daddy of them all as far as alleged true horror stories go. William Peter Blatty, the author of the book, admitted that when he wrote the story he was looking for something that would scare people back into churches in what he saw as the morally degenerating society of the 1970s. It seemed to work for a lot of people. I'll say pick up the flick over the book, simply because the movie does just as good a job scaring the hell out of its audience but only takes two and one-half hours to do so.

Night of the Living Dead

A lot of people argue that horror films are mindless trash. They might be right in many respects. But George Romero's brilliant Night of the Living Dead proves that all wrong. From the beginning of the movie, where we see a single car on a dirt road heading towards a cemetery, to the very end the movie never loses in progressively building the tension and horror. On top of that, there is an incredible parallel shown between the world in which the movie takes place and our own reality. Romero thus legitimized the

horror genre as an area where valuable literature can come from. Do yourself a favor, see the original before seeing the remake. Not for kids.

Creepshow 1 & 2

While the EC (Entertainment Comics) horror comics of the 1940s and 1950s helped inspire Romero in the process of making Night of the Living Dead, the two Creepshow movies were made as an homage to the same comic books. Each movie is a fun and frightful anthology of horror stories written by Stephen King and directed by George Romero (of Night of the Living Dead fame).

Evil Dead, Evil Dead 2, & Army of Darkness (aka Bruce Campbell vs. The Army of Darkness)

I gotta admit, the first movie was one of the only movies to really ever creep me out. Based largely on H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulu mythos, these movies have become huge underground B-movie classics. Where the first one was creepy and more of a traditional kids-in-the-woods-hunted-by-unknown-forces flick, the next two were ridiculously funny. Army of Darkness is easily comparable to the Monty Python movies. Big, cheesy laughs. Lots of blood and weirdness. Probably not good for kids.

The Best of H. P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre

A master in horror. I've slowly been working my way through this collection of his stories. All are great. Lovecraft enjoyed creating mystery, not just for the characters in the story but for the readers themselves. Many have odd or surprise endings. All are very short. As is the norm for many turn of the last century writers, his style is wordy and heavy. Somewhat like a modern Shakespeare. This will make it difficult for most kids, who should stay away anyways since cannibalism and death are common themes.

Vault of Horror

I just saw this movie a month ago. It's inspired by the old EC comics that go by the same name. Five people get trapped inside a vault and know that they will not be able to escape for quite some time. To pass the hours they tell each other frightening stories of events that have happened in their lives. Interesting ending. Good stories. Adult subjects are abundant.

Burn, Witch, Burn!

This movie is considered a classic in horror. Steeped in traditional European views of witchcraft, this movie packs a lot of suspense and drama. Not much gore. Great cinematography.

The Island of Dr. Moreau

As I write this, I am finishing the book. Written by H. G. Wells and first published in 1896, this story has become timeless and well loved all over the world. I saw the most recent movie and while it's not a bad movie, it doesn't quite seem to live up to the original novella. The book is only 104 pages long and shouldn't take long to read for most people, so I'll say pick it up instead of the movie.

The Gate

Do you want to know how influential H. P. Lovecraft is on the horror genre? Look at this list. Not only do I mention a collection of his works, but the Evil Dead movies are inspired by Lovecraft's Cthulu mythos, as is this movie. Two kids discover a small hole in one of their backyards. The parents are away on a trip. Their family dog winds up dead and buried in said hole. The dog's blood and body, along with a teenage party with some magic thrown in as an after-hours fright game, causes the hole to open up as a gate for the Old Ones (aka evil demons). The biggest, baddest of all the Old Ones, of course, is Cthulu. Watch the kids scramble to seal the gate and banish Cthulu once again. It's fun! Parental discretion advised.

It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown!

Every year I look forward to seeing this on TV. And every year I am sad to see this short work of animation end. Definitely a must see for all kids... of all ages!

