

“Grandma’s House”

The air was crisp, cold and clean as my sister and I walked down the stairs from our grandmother’s old log house. She lived alone up in the hills where you had to drive to see your neighbor and there were more cows than people. Our house was nearly two hours to the south assuming you missed rush-hour traffic after hitting the highways. The sun was hanging low and lazy and the sky burned in a cornucopia of colors, blazing reds and oranges and pinks as the last light of day began to wink out over the mountains on the horizon. The country was beautiful up here but it didn’t really suit me. I would take a packed mall over a hike in the woods any day.

As my sister and I began down the stairs our grandmother came to the door. She was in her eighties and her grey-white hair was held in a tight bun. Her face was lined and she stood slightly stooped but was still a lively woman. “Be careful driving home! Just because it’s not the city doesn’t mean it isn’t dangerous.” I smiled and turned; waving goodbye and she did the same. The distorted pink scar on her palm reflected the light as she waved her hand in farewell. I glanced at the white line that went the length of her brow. She claimed it was the last reminder of a bad accident. I hoped she would be ok.

I do worry about her, if she were to fall right after I left and not be able to get up no one would know until I came back next weekend. With that last fleeting thought my sister and I climbed into my car and we began to drive down the rocky and dusty driveway putting the sun and my grandmother’s house to our backs. The car rocked and swayed until we reached a road that was slightly better than her driveway. I cursed myself for staying too late and knew that it would be a miracle if we both had all of our teeth with the promise of a jarring ride ahead.

My sister was playing with the radio trying to find her favorite station. She was only eleven yet managed to get me to agree that if she listened to my music on the way up, it was her choice going back down... I had hoped she would forget. I sighed as the dulcet tones of Brittany Spears began to fill the car. Rolling down my window and not taking my eyes off the road for a second we continued our trek down the back roads of nowhere. Fireflies lit the pine forests around us shining brightly, twinkling in the darkness like the stars in the skies above our heads. Driving onward was a mundane experience. The scenery could only keep your attention for so long. If not for the struggle to keep my car from driving into some four-foot hole I think I would have fallen asleep right there.

The soft chill wind blew gently into the car at our slow pace, and the sounds of crickets could be faintly heard over the music. The sheer aloneness of knowing that you were the only humans for about twenty miles made it seem an ideal place to take a nap. However, I had work in the morning so I couldn’t afford to spend a night in the woods. I turned to check the time and noticed something odd. My clock did not say 9:30, which was my guess of how late it was, but was flashing 12:00 over and over. Finding this strange I tried to fix it when the radio cut out and only faint static could be heard. I looked around checking for potholes once more and noticed that the fireflies that had become companions on this journey were gone now too. The wind seemed still and not a single cricket could be heard.

My sister was nodding off with her head lolling against the window, giving off a thwack every time I failed to dodge a pothole. I was totally alone and I felt a soft clenching in my stomach and my heart began to double in speed. It was at that moment my headlights shut off and soon after the whole car shuddered to a stop without so much as a hiss or groan. Everything seemed so dark as I climbed out of the car with every intent to find out what was wrong and get the hell out of there. I opened the door and it felt as if hundreds of invisible eyes were staring at me from the total blackness that was the woods. As if millions of things were watching just out of sight and their eyes were pressing down on me with all their weight.

I stood up and gasped. Slowly I felt bile burning in my throat as lights began to shine and dance off my hood. In the sky something was moving. My sister was awake now. Her eyes were pressed to the glass of the windshield, as she looked skyward. My feet would not move, my eyes could not look away, sweat rolled down my face and body as I watched this spectacle draw closer and closer. My sister screamed and looked at it horrified as if just making out what it was and I too could now see it clearly. I had never seen anything like it. It was cylindrical, but the ends came to points. It reminded me slightly of a cigar. The metal was bright silver and I couldn't tell if it was solid or not. The way the light glittered off its surface made it almost seem liquid. It descended slowly, hesitantly towards us, and even if it didn't look like Hollywood's depiction I knew what it was. I tried to slowly inch back inside the car as if it were some animal and sudden movements might scare it.

Suddenly, I could not move. Rooted there I helplessly watched it slowly draw closer. It was then I heard the door open and close. My sister slowly began to walk away from the car towards the craft. My shouts were muted. The silence that hung in the air was louder than anything I had heard before. Then everything froze for an instant. My sister stopped and the movement of the craft had ceased. An eternity passed in seconds and then I was on the ground. I shook visibly as I slowly got to my feet. Tears rolled down my face as I cried, "Jamie!" It was then that I heard someone softly say "what?" I turned and behind me was Jamie. Her eyes were wide and staring, reflecting the sun. "What's wrong?" She asked as blood dripped from the corner of her eye. "Why are you crying?" She asked while crimson sparkled from a fresh incision on her forehead. "You don't look so good" she said smiling, and holding her hand out for me to take where a shiny pink square shined on her palm.