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The House

The House on Aster St. stood as it always had. It's decaying shutters, cracked windows and grey atmosphere gave it a uniquely sinister feel in a neighborhood otherwise comprised of picket fences. Rumors circulated, as they always do, about the nature of the House. Children discussed the horrific wonders inside, as the parents cautioned their children to never enter the House. That caution however, never fully registered for the boy standing outside the House, contemplating entry. Night-time had never felt so spine-chilling for the boy. The full moon in the sky, and the broken lamp on the porch of the House, were the only bright spots in an otherwise black night. He walked uncomfortably towards the House, heart-racing, losing confidence in each step, the House seemingly begging him to enter. He arrived at the porch, frozen in fear, plenty of kids had entered the House before, why couldn't he? After what felt like an hour for the boy, he decided to grab the doorknob, turned it ever so slowly and entered as the door shut behind him.

"Can you believe it's been two years since Patrick Miller disappeared?" Patrick Miller had been the subject around North Hills High School all day, after an assembly given by the school on student safety, in which Patrick was used as a primary example.

"I heard he went into the abandoned House on Aster St. and never came out."

"C'mon, Haunted House's do you guys really believe that sort of stuff?" asked Billy.

"Jack Carpenter said he saw Patrick standing outside the House the night he went missing." offered Doug.

"Well if Jack Carpenter says that, then it must be true." Billy replied insincerely.

"Well I'm going to check it out after school, who's with me?" proposed Doug. Caleb, Stephen, and Marc were all in.

"I'll pass" Billy declared confidently. "Besides I have an algebra test to study for anyway."

“Aw is Billy scared?” Caleb provoked.

“Terrified. I’m shaking in my boots.” Billy fought back.

“Your loss.” stated Doug. “So 4pm at the House?” everyone except Billy agreed to that time. “Alright see you adventurers then.” joked Doug as he offered Billy an insincere pouty face. Billy rolled his eyes and headed for Spanish class.

Billy walked into a typically hollow home after school had let out. He made himself his usual after-school Mac n’ Cheese but somehow forgot to mix in the cheese. He sat down to watch TV, but the words and pictures weren’t registering, all he could think about was the House. He hustled upstairs to his laptop and begin investigating. He dove right in, first reading theories and recountings of the mysterious disappearance of Patrick Miller, and then supposedly true tales about the House. Everything was so conflicting. He was being dragged into a world of mystery, intrigue and a chance to experience something new. Billy knew that mysterious disappearances, haunted houses, and spooky spirits were a thing of fiction, goosebumps books. But he wasn’t so sure anymore. What was the appeal? Why did everyone want to go into the House, and why did Billy find himself, being gravitated towards it? Halfway through a recounting of a particularly horrifying encounter at the House in the local tabloid, Billy jumped, startled by a jolting high-pitched noise. He froze for a second before realizing it was his phone going off. Incoming facetime from Doug. Billy took a deep breath and answered.

“What’s up?” he was shocked to discover that it was night-time already. Had he really been researching this for hours?

“That was insane... so much fun.” exclaimed Doug.

“Dude you have to come with us tomorrow.” offered Caleb.

“I’ll let you guys know tomorrow.” Billy said sheepishly. His friends were discussing with each other how great it was. “I’ll see you guys tomorrow.” Billy hung up the phone. Going back to his at home-research seemed trivial now compared to the real thing.

‘I’ll go with them tomorrow after school.’ Billy told himself. ‘What could possibly have been so cool about it, I want to know. I have to know.’ It’s just a silly House there’s nothing to see. If there’s nothing

to see than why did they say it was so cool. I should've just gone with them earlier. I don't want to do it. I have to do it. I have to see it for myself.

Billy grabbed his coat and headed out the door with a purpose. He was going to experience the House for himself.

Billy determinately approached the House about 20 minutes after 10. He had about 30 minutes to get home before his parents returned home, not that they would notice he was missing anyway. It was a cold night, but that was the last thing on Billy's mind. The House in its typically ugly physique, offered something that Billy hadn't known. It's distinguishable contrast from the rest of the neighborhood gave it an appeal unlike anything he had experienced before.

"Come in Billy" begged the House, or was it just the wind playing tricks on him?

"Just 30 steps and you're there." Billy told himself. His legs and brain seemed to be on a different wavelength. After what felt like an eternity, heart-racing, palms sweating, legs heavy, Billy defied the night and began inching towards the door. Billy grabbed on to the doorknob, he felt a push coming from behind him, moving him towards the House. The allure was stronger than anything he had ever felt. All it took was a twist and a push and he was inside. Easier said than done.

"C'mon just push in and you're there. All you friends have done it. Everyone has done it. You can do it too. But they did it together though, and during the day. Yeah, yeah, they did it as a group I'll just go with them tomorrow after school."

"Coward!" Billy bullied himself.

Billy relinquished his doorknob grip, slowly backed away turned around and headed for home.

"And the answer to problem 7 is... Billy, Billy, Earth to Billy, Billy!"

"What?" said Billy confused.

"Billy what is the answer to problem 7?" Mrs. Johnson asked.

"Oh, uh. I don't know." Billy responded still perplexed.

Billy was elsewhere today. His mind occupied by one thing: The House. He couldn't stop thinking about what the House could offer, what could be inside, but the back of his mind reminding him of what happened last night, taunting him that he would be too scared to enter.

Bell rings. End of class. Finally.

"So 4pm that's good with everyone?" Doug asked.

They all agreed.

"You too Billy?"

"Yes" he replied determinately.

"Alright then I'll see you all at 4pm at the House.

4:10 PM. Billy had been waiting for what had felt like an hour. Where were his friends? Billy traded in the cold, dark atmosphere of the previous night, for a more timid and sunny Wednesday afternoon. But still, the fear of the unknown crept up on him. No atmosphere was going to change that.

"I'm just going to go home." The small part of Billy's brain begged for reason.

"No. Go in." a voice said affirmatively.

"Who said that?" asked Billy fully engaged in the world of the House.

No response.

"I don't need them. I can do it all by myself." Billy declared into the ether.

Billy approached the door more confidently this time. He'd been here before and this time he wasn't going to be scared, despite the shy, tiny part of his brain telling him to get out. But still this newfound confidence did not stop his heart from racing faster than a cheetah. He grabbed the doorknob, this time he was in control of his actions, he was going to enter the House because he had to.

"Do it." Billy commanded himself.

He slowly turned the knob, already further than he got last time. Slowly pushed in and let go. The door open and he stepped in.

The air of victory around him. He did it. He wasn't afraid. A once fearful face transformed into that of victory. He had already begun feeling a sense of euphoria, was this what his friends had felt?

However, as soon as he felt that instant relief, the door shut closed behind him. He opened his eyes and gazed upon the House from the inside as a look of horror dawned upon his face. He was in it now. The House on Aster St. stood as it always had.