

The House on Creep Street

A Fright Friends Adventure

By

The Blood Brothers



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PROLOGUE

There is a legend in the small, tree-lined town of Blackwood.

Have you heard it?

Like most small towns, Blackwood hides its secrets away like a virus, hoping its contagions will not hitch the wind over the surrounding green hills to the neighboring communities beyond. Only the older citizens of Blackwood know of the big spooky house perched on its isolated street and of the night-drenched murder that took place there decades ago. For years, this Blackwood house has stood unoccupied. Nothing dared live within its creaking and rotting walls. It was said that even rats and low, scurrying insects would avoid the ancient structure.

And like most small towns, old and creepy houses also have stories—of blood-curdling screams, and headless specters, and clanking chains. And the longer these houses exist, the more detailed their stories become—as if they were something organic. Alive. The line between neighborhood folklore and reality becomes increasingly blurred until it vanishes entirely. The legends of houses like these grow as

their weed-infested gardens grow. And lying at the bottom of their black earth will always be the root.

When it comes to things that go bump in the night on Creep Street, the small-minded adults of the town may claim nonsense and blame their children's overactive imaginations on their consumption of monster movies and ghastly comic books, but it doesn't make the legend any less real. And the legend of Blackwood's haunted house remains firmly entrenched in the small town's history. Told and retold by the curious and the fascinated and the terrified, the story of Halloween murder, and of innocence reborn into monstrosity, remains an urban myth that refuses to die.

Much like the lone inhabitant of the house on Creep Street.

FOUR DAYS TILL HALLOWEEN

CHAPTER 1

An early autumn night had just begun to fall as Joey Tonelli stared into the black eyeholes of the bleached and bony skull. It sat before him and grinned an evil grin, its white teeth stained with blood. A slimy snake crawled inside one eyehole and out the other as a monstrous spider rested on the very top of the empty head. Just when Joey thought he could hear the soft hiss of the snake and the prickly hair of the spider's legs, he was snapped back to reality by the voice just behind him.

"I'm done with trick-or-treating, dude. It's for little kids."

Joey continued to stare at the skull, which he imagined grinning wider and wider until its dry bone shattered. Then he sighed.

The skull was just one of many masks and costumes in the main display window of Irwin's Hardware. Inside the window sat clattering skeletons, deranged witches, and scary vampires with gory fangs. They all stared back at Joey from their many rows, surrounded by fake cobwebs, black candles, and orange crepe paper.

The greatest night of the year was almost here.

October 31st.

Halloween.

But like some cruel joke from the universe, Joey's two best friends, Kevin and Barry, didn't seem to have interest in trick-or-treating any longer. All three boys were only twelve years old, and while Kevin and Barry were slowly maturing day by day, Joey seemingly refused to. He was still obsessed with monster toys, and horror comic books, and the eternal pursuit of the perfect Halloween costume.

"How can you guys say Halloween is just for little kids?" Joey demanded, finally turning to face his friends.

Kevin rolled his eyes. "Joey, c'mon," he began. "Another year of dressing like a ghost, or a robot? We're getting too old for that stuff."

Joey couldn't help but glare at his friend Kevin, who had changed a lot in the last year. Recently, Kevin had discovered he was something of a hot item around the halls of Mary Shelley Middle School. The girls would bat their eyes and giggle nervously as he walked by, and he loved every minute of it. He felt like he was finally becoming a "real man," so he didn't have time to dress up like a monster and go begging for candy.

Joey turned with pleading eyes to Barry, who had always been the more easygoing member of the group.

“Come on, back me up,” he begged his friend. “You still wanna go trick-or-treating, right?”

Barry, who had been best friends with both Joey and Kevin since their first day of elementary school, glanced at his shoes. He was ashamed of upsetting his friend for the sake of going along with Kevin in order to feel older—and cooler. Barry, who was heavier than most boys his age (a fact that never ceased to cause him internal embarrassment), had all the time in the world to go begging for candy. And the last thing he wanted to do was hurt Joey’s feelings. But if he had to choose sides, he would have to choose Kevin. As rotten and lame as it made him feel, he had to admit that Kevin was officially the “cool one” of the group—and that was all Barry ever wanted to be.

Always the peacekeeper, however, his eyes went wide in excitement.

“There’ll be some *great* spooky movies airing on Halloween night!” he said with forced enthusiasm. “We can all go to my house, and we’ll make popcorn and cheesy nachos and watch them all! It’ll be great!”

Kevin laughed and patted Barry’s belly. “Do you really have room in there for *more* nachos?”

Barry’s face warmed over and he fought the frown tugging at his cheeks.

Joey, feeling even more alone in this conversation, crossed his arms. "So you're out, too? Since when are you too old for free food, Barry?"

Kevin laughed out loud at Joey's joke, but thought better of high-fiving him, considering Joey was really sore at him at that moment.

Barry did not think either friend's joke was particularly funny, as he didn't like it when they made fun of his weight. In fact, he would say he downright hated it. But he was not the type of kid who was good at sticking up for himself. It was much easier to laugh along with the jokes, and so he laughed along with them now, hoping to lighten the mood.

The darkening evening caused Joey to check his watch and he saw that it was almost six o'clock. The night winds were suddenly fierce, but it was that perfect time of year when it wasn't too warm or too cold. Leaves fell from tree branches and showered the ground. Houses were plastered with Halloween decorations. Every window contained a vampire or mummy face, whose dark eyes loomed on those who passed by. Dummies sat on porches, their straw-filled bodies dressed in flannel shirts. Illuminated eyes of jack-o-lanterns sat on porch railings and glowed in the night.

Joey stared at his Halloween surroundings and realized with bitterness that people of all ages—and much

older than Barry and Kevin—respected Halloween enough to at least decorate their houses and carve some lousy pumpkins. And Joey was sure that after these people had finished their decorating and carving, they all had gone down to Blackwood General and purchased bag after bag of candy for all the trick-or-treaters that would soon be invading their front porches.

So why was it that Joey found himself stuck with the only two kids in all of Blackwood who no longer felt Halloween was worth celebrating? He could feel anger building slowly within him again, and though he tried to ignore it, the frustration began to spill.

“It’s stupid to say we’re too old to trick-or-treat. Who cares if we’re twelve?” Joey demanded, shoving his hands into the pockets of his black denim jacket. He could sense that his outburst was bordering on tantrum, but this wasn’t any old day of the year they were talking about, here. It was Halloween! “I even know kids in *high school* who still go trick-or-treating!” he lied.

“Like who?” Kevin challenged.

Joey thought for a moment, desperately searching his mind for the many names of kids that attended high school. Scott DeForrest? Peter Reeves, maybe? Surely he could think of *someone*!

“I know!” Joey proudly exclaimed. “Douglas! You know, Mario’s friend!”

“Your brother doesn’t have any friends!” Kevin laughed.

“Wasn’t Douglas that kid who set the boys’ bathroom trashcan on fire one day when he was sneaking a smoke?” asked Barry, skeptically. Kevin laughed again, and the two boys high-fived. Joey, however, was not amused. He turned away from his friends and looked back into the storefront window, admiring the masks on the middle shelf.

“Halloween is kid stuff. Why is it such a big deal to you?” Kevin asked Joey, who continued to stare at Mr. Irwin’s collection of masks. Joey was about to answer when he saw Kevin’s reflection in the windowpane—and caught him rolling his eyes to Barry.

“Because it is!” Joey firmly answered, spinning to face his friends again. “Because if we don’t trick-or-treat, or stay up all night making prank phone calls, or fill Carl Arven’s mailbox with shaving cream, then we have to actually grow up! We have to grow up and get jobs and pay bills and everything else that comes with getting older!”

Neither friend spoke.

Joey eyed Barry harshly. “Are you looking forward to that?” he asked, and Barry shook his head. “How about you, Kevin?” Joey asked. “Are you looking forward to overtime and taxes and mowing the lawn every day?”

“My dad doesn’t mow the lawn every day!” Kevin argued back, but he could see his argument was useless.

Joey was stubborn in general—it was just part of his personality. He certainly didn't demand that things *always* be his way, but there were certain things he felt strongly about—even if his friends didn't. And he would admit that sometimes the stuff he valued was a little cornball and silly, but not this. Not Halloween. His friends could refuse to trick-or-treat all they wanted, but Joey would die before admitting it wasn't important—that it was merely...*kid stuff*.

Kevin could see the disappointment in Joey's face, so he finally softened and put an arm around his friend's shoulder. "Come on, dude, we'll be late for the movie," he said and led Joey away from the storefront window.

As the boys walked down to Main Street Theater to catch their horror double bill of *Clown Town* and *Count Rockwood: The Old-Fashioned Vampire*, autumn leaves blew carelessly all around them, ushering in another Halloween—one that Joey Tonelli would apparently be celebrating alone.

CHAPTER TWO

At any other time of year, Main Street Theater was deserted. People did not have much use for an old, single-screen movie house when they could travel to the nearby bustling city of Bradbury and attend the Googolplex, which had ear-shattering surround sound and eyeball-watering 3D. Despite this, Main Street Theater had managed to stay in business, and it was especially popular during the month of October, when it ran classic (and not-so-classic) horror films on weekends.

Joey, Kevin, and Barry took their seats in the busy theater for the double bill, which was scheduled to begin at six o'clock. Barry had two large tubs of popcorn cradled in his arms, and Kevin carried his friend's mega-jumbo soda for him.

Joey was in a dark mood. The very thought of skipping trick-or-treating that year was gnawing at his brain like a jackal picking at a piece of road kill.

I guess I'll be trick-or-treating alone, he thought glumly, before scolding himself. *Who goes trick-or-treating alone? A loser, that's who.*

“Any babes in here?” Kevin grinned, taking off his lucky blue ball cap. He smoothed down his parted black hair, as if this very act would cause any girl in the theater to fling herself at him.

As Barry began chomping down on fistfuls of his extra-buttery popcorn, Joey slumped in his seat and sighed, balling his hand into a fist and resting his head against it.

The first movie began playing, and the audience of mostly teens and pre-teens went wild—hooting and hollering and throwing their candy snacks in the air.

Joey’s mind drifted.

I’ve gotta think of a way to get the dudes interested in Halloween again...but how...?

As he watched a group of teenagers in letter jackets and cheerleader outfits enter the old, abandoned house on the big silver screen, Joey was hit with sudden inspiration. Images of that lone, creepy house in the corner of Blackwood suddenly sprang up in his mind. He pictured its ancient design and dead, groaning wood, and his imagination concocted tattered curtains swaying in windows with evil eyes glowing just behind them; and perhaps there were screams—maybe a young woman’s as she confronted the unseen terrors that dwelled within the eerie house’s walls.

Every small town has at least one house the children whisper about; the type of house that has always been abandoned; where the once pristine white paint has faded to

a grimy gray; where the windows are boarded, and the lawn never grows; where children hold their breath and close their eyes as they pass by.

A house that sounds like it contains an army of whispering spirits when the wind whistles through the nearby trees.

In the town of Blackwood, that house could be found on Creep Street. It had stood there as long as he could remember.

That's it! Joey thought excitedly. *I'll get Kevin and Barry back into the Halloween spirit by bringing them to the house on Creep Street!* He celebrated inside his mind, already confident his plan would work. He eagerly looked over to his two friends, who watched the movie with looks of amusement on their faces. Joey hoped both flicks would fly right by. There was much to do that night.

This has gotta work! Joey thought to himself, feeling rejuvenated. *I'll show them spooky stuff can still be fun, even if I have to push them through the front door of that old place myself!*

* * *

After the double feature ended, the three friends left the theater. Kevin and Barry laughed and quoted terrible lines from both movies.

“Your neck is perfect for my fangs!” Kevin laughed in a faux vampire accent.

“Oh my gosh, these custard pies are filled with BRAINS!” Barry gleefully shouted.

“Hey guys, wanna go somewhere fun?” Joey interrupted, sipping the last of his soda before chucking it at a nearby trashcan. The soda can hit the rim and fell onto the street, clanking away down the block, carried by the autumn wind.

“Go to Chicken Lickens?” Barry asked, his face lighting up at the mention of his favorite fast-food joint.

“Jeeze, Barry, do you have that place on speed dial?” Joey muttered, causing his previously excited friend to frown.

“I know where we can go!” Kevin said through a grin. “We can go spy on Barry’s foxy sister!”

Barry punched him on the arm.

“We’re going,” Joey said, pausing for dramatic emphasis, “to Creep Street!”

A nervous look settled on both Kevin and Barry’s faces.

“That is...unless you guys are too scared?” Joey teased, stuffing his hands into the pockets of his jeans. He knew that was all he had to say to seal the deal. Kevin’s face quickly hardened at the challenge, and Barry sighed,

knowing he had no choice but to follow along—or be called a chicken for the rest of his life.

Creep Street was at the very edge of town and intersected the road on which both Joey and Barry lived—King Street. As the boys walked past both of their houses, Barry stared longingly at his own, wanting nothing more than to go inside, lock the door behind him, and not even *think* of going anywhere near the house on Creep Street.

“You s-sure we shouldn’t just go home?” he asked, nervously, his eyes still on his house.

“Where’s your sense of adventure, Barry?” Joey exclaimed, walking in front of his two friends. He kicked a can down the street. The sound echoed off the cool fall air.

As the boys approached, they could see the house waiting in the distance. Even from afar, it had the power to chill their bones. It was the sole remaining structure on the otherwise barren street—the other houses had been torn down years ago to make way for a real estate deal that never happened. Three stories tall and built in a Victorian style, it stood at the end of the block and loomed above the landscape—pitch-black, and composed of uneven angles and jutting arches. A single dead sycamore tree stood by the house, its twisted bare branches reaching out like the arms of a deformed spider.

As the three boys stood on the dead lawn looking up at the cold, blank face of the house, it was easy for them to

understand why every kid in Blackwood believed it was haunted. The place was beyond creepy, and though it was likely Joey's imagination, he could've sworn he heard the house's old wood creaking and cracking, as if it were breathing...

He was beginning to have second thoughts. Even to him—a boy obsessed with all things creepy—the house was unnaturally eerie. Being in its very presence gave him gooseflesh.

"Now what?" Kevin asked, his arms crossed. Joey could tell that Kevin was trying hard to act like he didn't have the willies, but he wasn't doing a very good job.

"We go in," Joey answered. Though he was looking up at the house, he knew his friends' mouths had gone wide in shock. He smiled in response, confident in his plan.

A chilly wind blew, and the dead sycamore tree shook violently, sending chips of bark hurtling to the ground. Almost on instinct, Joey checked his watch. He saw it was almost ten o'clock. If he was out much later, his parents were going to hit the roof, and his father would probably threaten to throw away all of his rare, out-of-print VHS horror tapes—which was the go-to intimidation of choice for the old man.

But this was too important. Halloween was at stake.

Joey was just about to ask his friends who would be the first to go inside.

Then he saw a pale, hollow-eyed face in the upstairs window...and it was looking right at them.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Edgar and Allan Blood were both October-born and subsequently abandoned in the woods. After being raised by wolves, the brothers set out on a worldwide journey to find their fortune, until they were separated by a brutal snow-

thunder-hurricane, which left them believing each other to be dead. They were reunited under the most amazing and unbelievable circumstances—but that's another story. Together again, the brothers honed their literary skills through jobs writing obituaries and ransom notes. To tell them apart, remember: Edgar has an eye patch and Allan has a wooden leg—but sometimes it's the other way around. When the Blood Brothers are not writing stories, they work as door-to-door coffin salesmen.

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