

By: Alisa M.

Near the Woods of Wickery Lane

Don Baker conversed with a group of friends near the glassy lake. He, like many of the boys that lived on Vexing Street, was rough, wild, and loved a little challenge. Don had never declined a dare, and his friend, Garrett Williams, had dared him to do one very absurd thing. Baker, extremely devilish and smug, accepted it. How someone could be so foolish, no one will know.

Near Vexing Street, a dark forest stood at the end, and every parent had discussed with their child to never *ever* tread into it. Don, being the most dim-witted of the lot, entered it on a chilly autumn day. Blood-red leaves blanketed the floors, and Don eagerly trekked through the woods with a thrust of adrenaline. He sneered at Garrett who stood at the entrance, his arms folded and worried. Don laughed at his friend and threw a few rocks at some ravens. They screeched loudly and flapped away, cawing at his idiocy.

The road he followed wasn't even a road at all. It was simply just a few rocks leading into the dark trees, and Don scooped up almost every stone and scattered them into the darkness. When he reached the end of the forest, Don emerged out of the leaves and read a nearby sign.

Wickery Lane.

Don had never heard of this lane, and he noticed that it was nearly deserted; no houses, mailboxes, roads, nothing. He looked around. All that stood was a large house that creaked in the wind, its roof nearly broken off entirely and the windows shattered and dusty. He looked at it curiously and decided that he wanted to enter it. He'd probably even give Garrett a souvenir, just to emphasize on how much adventure he was missing out on. Don clambered up the stone steps and banged at the door. It shuddered weakly, and the door fell from its hinges and toppled to the ground away from Don, creating a cloud of dust. He stepped over the door and into the building.

In front of Don, there was a black staircase that was creaky and nearly broken. A kitchen was nearby, and an empty dining hall stood next to it. The wallpaper was nearly ripped off, and the floors were crawling with roaches and spiders. Don squashed a few before entering the kitchen.

There was a rusty stove and broken ice box on the floor. The walls, Don could see, were blackened above the stove top, and scorch marks were on the floor and kitchen table. Don opened up a cabinet and saw a jar of weird slimy things and a box filled with beetle eyes and cricket legs. "Cool," he murmured before moving into the dining room, clanking his way into the emptiness.

Rays of dim sunlight shone in the room, revealing thousands of dust particles roaming in the air. Don saw a strange figure on the floor and went over to touch it. The figure was a carved purple stone that looked like a stout old woman with two braids draped over her sagging shoulders. Her eyes were empty and dead, and Don didn't hesitate to stuff it into his pocket. That would be a perfect souvenir for Garrett. He would be jealous, and Don marveled at the look at his friend's face when he told him about his great adventure. One that Garrett Williams was too cowardly to come along.

Don slipped out of the dining room and debated whether he should go upstairs or not. Suddenly, he felt his feet move forward, and he figured that his body had decided for him. He ventured up the creaky stairs, feeling the great surge of curiosity and wonder coursing through him. He felt his foot step onto a cracked plank, and his leg sank through it. Don's heart was beating out of control, and he lowered even more through the hole. He struggled, clutching the banister and trying to lift himself out of the step, but his arms were too weak. He shouted for help, feeling every limb in his body go numb.

He felt a rough hand curl around his ankle, pulling so hard that Don was forced to wiggle his shoe off in order to break free of the threatening grip. Don felt nails as sharp as knives and skin rougher than rock sink through his flesh, and he let out a blood-curdling scream. Don managed to kick his trapped leg against the wall and pull himself out, feeling pain sink through his thigh. Broken wood planks had scraped at his skin, and a burning sensation covered his leg.

Don stood up and looked down at the hole, horrified. There, in the darkness, was two bright red eyes that pierced Don with such unexplainable pain. A crooked grin peered from the darkness, and a horrible sound emitted from it. A face emerged from the nothingness, wrinkly and ancient. Its skin was purple and green, and Don saw it leap out from the abyss. He clutched at his face and clanked down the steps to the door. But there was no door. The eerie wallpaper was peeling itself over the exit, trapping him. Don limped towards the window but felt a cold hand curl around his shoulder and sink again through his flesh. He kicked the creature and punched through the window, glass shards scattering everywhere. He climbed out of the broken window and headed for the forest, his leg feeling as if it had been ripped from his body. He went through the thick branches, desperate to find the trail home. But there was no trail, because Don had so stupidly scattered the rocks away. He decided to go forward, limping as quickly as he could. Then, all he felt was his face smashing into dirt and a withered hand reaching forward. Don sucked in his last breath and held it, ready for whatever was going to come next.