**“The Moans of the Cemetery”**

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The nearest grave lied within the walking distance from a fence. The garden was located up on the hill, and the backyard was coming all the way down right to the cemetery. The front of the house faced the upper side of the yard, where there grew flowers and two lush cherry trees. It was much nicer to potter around the garden up here, looking after pretty blossoms and picking ripe berries, other than walking around potatoes and hogweed next to the dead down the sidehill.

Every summer until September Danny used to stay at the house of aunt Halley, his mother’s cousin. It seemed like this deserted South state village preserved in its original form, as if it hasn’t aged a hundred years since being first set up.

The time that this boy spent at his aunt’s gave his single mother a possibility to earn and save some money for the two of them to live off after Danny’s holidays, as well as spend some of it to buy school supplies. As for Halley, she found her niece especially handy as extra labor for the whole summer, so she was happy to take this opportunity.

He always came there the second Friday of June, when the school was over. This time, however, he made it there a week early.

By the whole side of the backyard, from the cemetery and up to the house, there was a baseball field behind aunt’s fence. Although Danny had to help his aunt in the garden from morning to night, so he was rarely able to play with neighbor boys.

This time, as always, he was busy. Ragweed was growing close to the cemetery. It was an intrusive plant, growing a couple feet deep into the ground and spreading widely around it. It had to be unroot, which wasn’t an easy task. That day they were working late till dark. It was getting dismal, as neighboring the underworld was giving the boy anxiety. He tried not to face the graves. The cemetery was silent, but Danny’s curiosity prompted him to glance at the gravestones from time to time. Then all of a sudden, something white dashed in between the tombstones! Somebody’s silhouette caught his eye!

“Someone is there,” whispered the boy.

Aunt Halley looked into the dark indifferently.

“No one’s there.”

“Something white. It ran through the tombstones,” Danny was insisting.

“Don’t talk nonsense.”

“But I saw it!”

“Let’s go. We’re done for today.”

Cheerful voices and loud sounds of bat swings were coming from the baseball field.

“Kids are still playing. Can I go?”

“Just for half an hour.”

He immediately forgot about the image he saw and happily ran over to the guys. Jumping over the fence, Danny was right there in the spotlight. The game was heating up as the ball was flying all around the field and kids were running from base to base.

Soon the game was over and everyone began to leave. Having put his t-shirt on a shoulder, Danny was heading home. He hopped over the fence back into the garden and headed home. After almost reaching the end of the hill, the boy had stopped… He heard a weird noise. It seemed that was a moan… down there, an unclear and abrupt noise… Then he heard it again, resembling a violin string sound… Getting quiet for a couple of seconds and reappearing anew. He turned his eye to the cemetery. A moment after he was clearly hearing a woman’s cry, as a sudden gust of cold wind hit him. Behind the fence a white figure had flown by, not touching the ground and soon disappearing in between tombstones. Danny, frightened to the core, ran home flat out, swiftly went up the squeaky stairs into his room and hid under a blanket. He wanted to confront his fear to walk up the window that faced the cemetery and spy out that stranger, but he had not been able to bring himself to do that.

The whole night his room was full of rustling. It felt like someone was sitting in an old chair in the corner, and the crib that was crafted by Mr. Tumb, the deceased husband of aunt Halley while he was still alive, was rocking back and forth somewhere near, while children’s toys that were clipped onto it were making rattling sounds.

Danny was horrified…

Roosters were crowing. Soon the Sun peeked into the window and shined over that wicked corner with the chair and the crib. The boy got out of a blanket. He was alone in the room.

It was Sunday. No one was working, it was a rule of thumb. Aunt Halley loved to spend the day reading a book on the sofa. Her niece was able to control his own free time, although after the night of horror he was in no mood for fun.

“Halley…” he came into the aunt’s room all messy.

She burst into laughter looking at him.

“What’s wrong, Danny? Did you fall off the bed?”

“I…” mumbled Danny. “Last night someone was wandering around… down the hill behind the fence…” he pointed his finger at the window.

“Not this all over again. Who could that be?”

“A ghost,” said the boy with uncertainty.

“You must have a screw loose,” aunt smiled.

“But I heard moans.”

“Those were just hungry coyotes.”

“Someone was in the room.”

“Don’t get carried away,” gasped Halley. “You better take that money and go to the store.”

He took the money that were in a vase on a cabinet and walked out looking dull.

Mr. Stanley, the store’s keeper, was half asleep in a rocking chair at the store entrance with a baseball cap pulled down his face.

“Mr. Stanley?”

“What!” the old man flinched surprised. “Oh, it’s you Danny! Been here long?”

“A couple of days.”

“Where are you heading?” the old man asked cheerly.

“Home from the store.”

After a little hesitation the boy said, “Mr. Stanley, someone wanders around the cemetery at night.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Heard them moan yesterday.”

“It must’ve been hungry coyotes.”

“Aunt Halley doesn’t believe me either, but I saw a person…”

“A person?”

“… and when I came into my room something evil was happening there.”

“What do you mean something evil? It can’t be.” Old man was rattled but Danny nodded insistently.

Mr. Stanley said, looking at the boy, “Go home… just hang in there. Maybe… it… will go away a couple days later.”

Night was coming. Aunt Halley forbade sleeping with the lights on. Danny was standing by the window looking over the gravestones’ silhouettes, lit by the only lamppost from the baseball field. A little bit of its light was hitting the edge of the cemetery and was not letting the boy’s room get too dark. Danny was able to distinguish the outlines of furniture, which made him feel more peaceful. He lit up a candle with matches that he thoughtfully took from a pantry earlier to add more light.

No one believed what he said. He didn’t want to seem like a coward asking to sleep at the aunt’s room.

All of a sudden, just like last time, the wind became loud again. Apple tree behind the window began to bend, making scrape noises. Its leaves were rustling loudly. The candle quickly blew out. He heard a knock on the window! That was a little stone thrown at it! Danny flinched and pulled off the window. A couple of seconds later there was another stone! Having flinched again, the boy was stepping backwards. The chair in the corner began to rock, moving around wooden floor. He turned around, but it was empty. Another stone! Danny stumbled over something and fell down, being dragged across the floor of his room. The crib started shaking and so did the toys on it. He turned around once again, but there was no one in the corner. Yet another stone hit the window harder than before, leaving a crack on it! Danny rushed into the bed and covered himself with a blanket.

It got quiet for some time. Slowly, he started to get his head out of the blanket to look around and… froze in fear! Someone else was in the room. First he only felt it, but then his eyes caught a person’s silhouette in the dark. The boy was slowly turning his head in its direction. A woman in white was sitting in the chair. Her face was covered with long black hair, hanging down to her stomach, and her dress was dirty from clay. She slowly put her hand out to the cradle and began to rock it. Baby sniffles sounds were coming from there. It looked as if tiny hands were rising from the crib, trying to reach the toys.

“Laaarryyy…” the woman said in a voice that could make blood freeze. “Why did you kill us, Laaarryyy?”

She started rocking the crib even harder. The baby started to grizzle. Harder! The baby was crying aloud!

“Come join us, Larry!!!” the woman shouted and stepped further, showing her deadly face.

Danny passed out.

After waking up the next morning, having skipped his breakfast, Danny went straight to the village’s store in hopes of finding Mr. Stanley at his beloved spot. The boy, all pale, was rambling about what happened last night, after which the old man told him one local story.

“Halley’s deceased husband was named Larry and had another family before he had met your aunt. Young wife Mary and a one-year-old son Charlie. One time Larry Tumb was picking them up at Mary’s mother’s, where there were staying for some time. He drove them home in his car. Smashed vehicle was later found a couple miles away from their home. The mother and the child died immediately. Tumb was only out cold, but he survived. He regained consciousness in a hospital a couple of hours later.

It happened on June 4th, the next day after Mary’s birthday. That day Tumb was drunk driving. He went to court and they put him in jail. After getting out of it a few years later, he got back to his house and married Halley another year after.

Afterwards, strange things started happening there. People say Tumb used to huddle himself up in the corner of the upstairs room and yell, “She’s here! She’s come for me! And you! You! Stop crying, you hear me!” It lasted two months until Tumb had lost senses and died.

He was buried at the edge of the cemetery, away from his first wife and little Charlie. It is believed that since then Mary has not yet been able to find her husband that killed her and their child. So thereafter, every year on her birthday, June 3rd, and on the day of her death and Charlie’s, June 4th, she wanders around looking for her husband to take him with her to the afterlife.”

Mr. Stanley sighed, finishing his tale.

“So here’s the story. Next year it’ll happen again, but it has nothing to do with you personally, Danny. So, don’t fear it, son. Just next year make sure to come here after June 44th…”