

Spooky Podcast Scene 1

1 (DEEP MALE VOICE)

The leaves change, the nights grow cold. The darkness remains longer. We humans love the mystery of autumn, the chill in the air, the *twinge* of fear. Perhaps we're just superstitious, but you have to admit, the stories get stranger and stranger... (spooky laugh)

Musical Interlude

2 CLARITY

You're listening to Episode 1 of Fright Fest, an all-October long podcast series dedicated to celebrating the best season of the year. We're here to tell you strange and scary stories passed through generations, stories local and far, stories true and fake. I'm your host, Clarity Amrein, here to remind you: it's only a story....

(theme music/transition)

Underneath a bedsheet with a flashlight are two seven-year-old girls, Megan and me. Now that fall has started, we sleep over at each other's houses almost every weekend. Under that sheet, we read "Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark." This book was the first of three in a series of children's books written by Alvin Schwartz and illustrated by Stephen Gammell, first published in 1981. I grew up listening to these strange, unsettling stories. Their existence in my memory has long fueled my creativity, my curiosity for the unusual, and of course, my nightmares.

Scene 2

3 CLARITY

A story originating in Albany, New York, "The Guests" is a chilling story that has been told for many generations. From: "Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark."

A young man and his wife were on a trip to visit his mother. Usually they arrived in time for supper. But they had gotten a late start, and now it was getting dark. So they decided to look for a place to stay overnight and go on in the morning.

Just off the road, they saw a small house in the woods. "Maybe they rent rooms," the wife said. So they stopped to ask.

(MORE)

CLARITY (cont'd)

An elderly man and woman came to the door. They didn't rent rooms, they said. But they would be glad to have them stay overnight as their guests. They had plenty of room, and they would enjoy the company.

The old woman made coffee and brought out some cake, and the four of them talked for a while. Then the young couple were taken to their room. They again explained that they wanted to pay for this, but the old man said he would not accept any money.

The young couple got up early the next morning before their hosts awakened. On a table near the front door, they left an envelope with some money in it for the room. Then they went on to the next town.

They stopped in a restaurant and had breakfast. When they told the owner where they had stayed, he was shocked.

"That can't be," he said. "That house burned to the ground, and the man and the woman who lived there died in the fire."

The young couple couldn't believe it. So they went back to the house. Only now there was no house. All they found was the burned-out shell.

They stood staring at the ruins trying to understand what had happened. Then the woman screamed. In the rubble was a badly burned table, like the one they had seen by the front door. On the table was the envelope they had left that morning.

Break/Advertisement

I'm Clarity Amrein and you're listening to Fright Fest. Remember, it's only a story.

4 ANNOUNCER

Still looking for the right costume? We've got 'em funny, scary, sexy, spooky, and silly - ready to wear for all your Halloween tricks and treats! We've got makeup, accessories, decorations, props and more! So get down to Spirit Halloween and put the spirit back in your party!

Scene 3

5 CLARITY

You're back on Fright Fest with your host, Clarity Amrein.

Everyone knows that Cincinnati is full of ghost stories. The city itself is a ghost of the thriving industrial era that once was. If you know Cincinnati, then you must know the story of the Dent Schoolhouse.

Proudly perched on a slight hill of Harrison Ave. near Cincinnati, the Dent Schoolhouse was a locally renowned kindergarten through twelfth grade school that prided itself on its experienced teachers and efficient custodial staff, particularly the head of custodial services, Charlie.

But in 1942, several young students known for their disruptive behavior mysteriously vanished, last seen at Dent Public School. The police began an investigation, and concluded that they must have run away.

A few years later in 1945, four more students went missing, last seen at the school, and rumors began to circulate that it had something to do with that place.

By 1952, three more students go missing; the police and the community are shaken. A student of the school complains about a strange, pungent smell coming from the basement. Charlie, the head janitor, said that the smell was because of the pipes clogging up and soon made the smell subside. But new rumors surfaced that maybe Charlie had something to do with the kids' disappearances.

In October of 1955, seven students vanished without a trace from the Dent Schoolhouse. Again, more students complained about the awful smell coming from the basement. Parents and community members gathered and stormed up to the school and they demanded to see the basement.

As told by the historians at the Dent schoolhouse themselves, "the basement was covered with the decaying remains of the missing students. Bodies had been sealed in barrels, wedged behind the brick walls of the basement, and left in sanitary tubs to decay forever."

By the time the bodies were discovered, Charlie had fled. The police searched for him for two years, but he was never found. The school is said to be haunted by

(MORE)

CLARITY (cont'd)

the many children who were "taken care of" by the head of custodial services.

Who knows if it's actually haunted, but...

(whisper) at least the rest is true.

Scene 4

6 CLARITY

I must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Maybe from the state route, I still can't remember. I was already late and frustrated. Maybe that's why I missed the turn.

Oxford is a long, wide, rural township with a university in the middle of it. The surrounding townships have only a house or two every few miles. It's a beautiful, hilly drive on a sunny autumn day, but tonight, it is my nightmare. Endless winding roads plummet into the dark far beyond where my headlights can reach. There are deer and animals constantly wandering in the road. There are no houses, no structures for long stretches. There's only fields in all directions, and the trains from the steel mill humming somewhere far in the distance.

I am almost out of gas. I drive a crappy car. My heat stopped working. The snow has picked up. I am too far to turn around. I am late for the party. The nights out here are the blackest I have ever seen. I'm lost, and the last thing I remember is the state route. There's a lump in my throat. I tread cautiously around every turn, gripping the steering wheel tightly. I've smoked all my cigarettes, and I am so close to panicking. Perhaps it was my jittery hands that did it.

On my way down a long hill, my tire catches a rock, a patch of ice, a something. I feel the front end of my car fling to the right in its direction. The next thing I know, I am in a ditch. Not a steep one fortunately, just a small draining ditch at the end of a field, but enough so that my car is pointed down and I can't easily get out. I consider crying for a moment, but I just open the door and breathe in the icy air for a moment. My car is off even though the keys are still in the on position. I pull them back to off and try to turn the engine over again. I turn and turn them, but nothing happens. Not a buzz or whir from inside the car. Nothing.

This time, I do cry. I cry off all the glitter from my face. I try the keys again and again. I step outside

(MORE)

CLARITY (cont'd)

the car. The endless darkness of the fields around me feels like outer space. I can't see anything but the trees in the clouded moonlight, and a few fat, bright stars. The snow is light and flaky. Out here, all but two radio stations get fuzzy, and there is no cell phone signal until the university. I feel so scared that my heart might burst.

I get back in the car. I can sleep here until daylight, try to find a house in the morning? Sleeping out here seems impossible. I keep trying the keys until I hear a little grinding. I turn and I turn and I turn the keys in crying desperation for more than two hours until my sad car's sputtering engine returns from the dead. My heart feels even tighter. I start to back myself out of the ditch; I go outside to the front of the car and push. My shoes and tights get soaked in the snow. I reverse and push a few times until my banged-up Ford Taurus finally sits level with the ground again. I am able to drive it back on the road for a few slow and cautious miles.

The lady at the gas station thinks I'm drunk when I walk in. My makeup smeared, my voice erratic and shrill. I ask her what time it is. She says 3:30am. I ask her what town I'm in and she says Eaton, two whole towns away from Oxford. I explain to her that I've been stuck for four hours, and she lets me use the phone to call someone about my car, its weak engine dead again as soon as I turned it off in the parking lot.

The last thing I can remember is falling asleep in the tow truck. My car was dropped off at a repair place in Oxford, and then I was dropped off at my house.

Sometimes I have dreams that I am still all alone in that wide, open field.

Outro

7 CLARITY

Thanks for tuning in to Fright Fest. Next week, we'll read more chilling and thrilling stories from near and far. I'm your host, Clarity Amrein, and you can reach me on the Fright Fest Facebook page. Happy Halloween and just remember, it's only a story.