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Hunted Mind

Nothing very interesting had ever happened in San Jose, until now. There is a house not too far away from where I grew up (and currently live) that was rumored to be haunted. The wild stories everyone at school and in the neighborhood told were always too elaborate and overly complicated or too simple and predictable. None of those stories were ever confirmed, but we did know that people who moved into the house were out within a month. Now, the owners of the house gave up on selling it. Instead, they are turning it into a museum/ restaurant/ shop for all the fools out there who like to test their fate—like my friends. In fact, my friends were the ones who told me about this event. They always drag me to their scary movies and such, but it's not their fault. They don't know about me.

When I was a child I had terrible nightmares that were so realistic, they made me fear going to sleep. I remember how there were multiple nights at a time that I did not sleep; this lack of sleep made me hallucinate and a tad paranoid. I attacked a neighborhood girl once, because I insanely thought she was after me. My parents realized the seriousness of the situation after that. They took me to a psychologist, and he casually stated these were night terrors and how many children suffer from them. But—to me, at least—the vivid and gruesome dreams were far from normal. I was then given medication and therapy for four years; I learned how to block out these terrible dreams, and soon they subsided along with the murmurs inside my head. I was able to lock them up in the back of my head where they could not disturb me. By eighteen, I felt normal,

and my parents and I had a mutual agreement to never speak of this to anyone; I was a little ashamed of it.

Anyway, yes, scary movies freak me out, but I can handle them. Going to a haunted house is very different. But I need to get a grip; I'll just go. I don't know why I'm worrying about it so much. I text my friends letting them know that I will be going. We will go this upcoming on Friday after class, so around fourish (five).

After my creative writing class ends, I head to my dorm. I straighten my long black hair, do my makeup, and I wear nice fitting clothing—just because I'm going to a haunted house doesn't mean I won't meet a cute guy. I text my friends that I'm on my way, get in my car, and drive.

This week is the house's grand opening, so the place is packed; I even have park a few blocks away from the house. I have to walk for three blocks, but I don't mind. The afternoon is actually quite beautiful: it is spring, so flowers are blooming, trees are a rich shade of green, and fresh air fills my lungs as my skin absorbs the warm rays of the sun.

Ah, and there's the house. I heard insane stories of it as a kid that contributed to my nightmares, and I always pictured the house in a more sinister and macabre sort of way. But in reality, the house looks somewhat normal—well besides the fact that it is enormous, a mansion really—its walls are a pale yellow with maroon roof tiles. It's three stories high and the third story has huge diamond shaped windows with flower details carved into the frames. This house is so enchanting, yet it emits a strange and chilling feeling by just looking at it.

I wait in line for a few minutes and then pay the fee to get in. They give me a black bracelet that will be a hassle to take off later. I walk into the house and goose bumps emerge all over my arms and legs. I see my friends waiting for me: Jess, Angel, Ana, and Santos. After we

greet each other, we decide to view the objects and paintings on display before eating. The place is packed, but everyone is currently in the restaurant part of the house, so the museum part of the house is left to ourselves.

We go see a portrait by Bill Stoneham in 1972 called *The Hands Resist Him*. There is a young boy in the middle of the painting in all blue, a girl that resembles a doll with black where her eyes should be standing right next to him, and behind them is a glass door where hands emerge from the darkness reaching for the boy. Then our attention is drawn by the *Dybbuk Box*: a wine cabinet that harmed everyone who owned it—or at least that’s what it says here in this caption. The others were admiring the *Annabelle Doll*—which is less scary than the one in the movies; this one is a rag doll with red yarn hair. Ana pulls me aside and tells me to go see something more interesting. I think she just did this because the others were going to make fun of her name and call her “ANA-belle”.

We go to the opposite side of the room where the flickering light overhead makes me a little nervous. We look at the *Chair of Death*. To ease my nervousness, I tell Ana: “I *dare* you to sit on it, I’ll even give you a lift”—the chair was hung from the roof so no one would be stupid enough to sit in it—she giggles, but I push her near it, and laugh at her reaction: the kind that says, “I’ll fuck you up if you do that again.”

“I’ll sit in it if you go through that door right over there were it says: Under Remodulation.” She lies.

“It’s not going to be open, dummy” I say. She ignores this comment, approaches the door with a bobby pin in her hand, and picks the lock for a few seconds before it flies open.

“How did you... I didn’t know you could do that.” She gives me a prideful smile and walks in first. She can see that I’m hesitant, then she says:

“Oh come on, what do you think will happen? The house will get mad?” She laughs a very fake and sarcastic laugh, but before I can reply to her question, the door shuts closed.

I feel like someone just dumped a bucket of ice down my back. I can't say anything else beside: “fuck, fuck, fuck...” and after a while it just sounds like “fuafuafuafuafua.” I head towards the others to let them know, but I stop myself, take a deep breath, and think a little, then laugh; she is just playing with me. Ugh, she can be so childish, but whatever, I'll play along.

I walk over to the door, and I open it. I walk inside and notice that the room is pretty big; it could be a small department store. It has a few isles and shelves with random things on and around them: old looking shoes, clothes, broken toys—especially dolls that give me the willies—furniture, and just one mirror near the door. This is the room where they dumped all of the belongings of previous owners, I assume. There are so many different styles of clothing and furniture which makes me wonder exactly *how* many families lived in this house. I walk deeper into the room and call out my friend's name:

“Stop being a bitch, Ana. I'm going to leave if you don't come out soon. You know I'll do it like that time at Disneyland.” To be fair, she did leave with a guy at the end of the day who is her current boyfriend, so technically, I'm not a terrible friend.

There is just silence; I can't even hear the people outside the room anymore. The silence is so intense and so loud that it makes me panic, so I decide to turn back to head out. I know I'm not very good with directions, but I could of sworn the door was right behind me.

“Okay, this isn't funny anymore!” I check my phone, and just like in scary movies, I have no signal.

I don't think this is a joke anymore and I don't want to cry, but I might. Why did Ana have to say that? Now we both might die. Well, the pretty ones die first, so she has nothing to

worry about just yet. As I walk deeper into the room, the bigger it gets. My eyes fill with tears, my heart pounds violently in my chest, and my stomach is filled with bricks of ice that slowly melt into my bloodstream making me shiver nonstop. I start to think of my mother; she would know how to calm me down, and then I hear it. I hear a whistle, and there she is.

My mom emerges from one of the isles whistling the song she used to when I was younger. But then, there she is again and again. Different versions of my mother start to emerge out of nowhere. The whistling stops and then they are all calling my name: “Mel... honey... it’s okay... baby...” It becomes jumbled in my head. My body is numb with confusion and a penetrating fear that seems to invade every cell in my body. They all look like her, but I know this is not real. They are not approaching me; they stay in the same spot and call to me with their arms stretched out. I force my legs to move. I stumble at first and then sprint away, and I know I should not look back, but my dumbass does anyway. They are melting into the ground as their voices start to deteriorate which makes the sinister tone in their words more evident. Their disfiguring faces will haunt me forever if I happen to survive this. When their voices start to sound faint, I come to a halt to catch my breath and try to organize my scrambled thoughts. But my heart is thumping so loudly in my ears that it makes it hard to concentrate.

As desperately look for an exit, I turn a corner, and I see Ana. The smirk on her pale face makes me shudder, and then it molds into my face. I am staring at myself. I’m not sure whether to scream, fight, run, or pee myself. They all seem like pretty useless things to do at this point. She grabs my neck and starts to squeeze, then states:

“Something’s different about you, I felt it as soon as you walked in... but don’t worry, those voices inside your pretty little head will be quiet once you’re dead.” I didn’t understand the meaning of these words, but they fell out of her mouth in such a smooth and melodious way

which is what made my being ache and tremble with a fear that I didn't know my body could produce.

Her eyes—my eyes—are lifeless and dark as coal. I kick her in the stomach as hard as my terrified body allows me to. I barely gather the strength to run, but as soon as I turn around to run, she's there. She grabs my arm and throws me across the room. Damn, I'm strong. My head smashes into a wall next to a mirror. My head actually cracks a little corner on the mirror. I'm disorientated, my head is pounding, my arm broken, and the fear is only increasing within me to such an extent that it cripples me. The blood drips into my right eye, but I can still see with my left one that she is approaching me.

I want to fight it, and I try to crawl away, but she grabs me by the hair and forces my face up to look at her. The lifeless eyes of hers start to cry a black liquid that she lets drip onto my face. It feels hot and cold at the same time. It starts in my face, then to my neck down to my stomach, and it spreads to the rest of my body. It feels like I am being burned from the inside out. I scream at the top of my lungs but no noise comes out.

I hear how her disgusting and vile laugh is pouring out of her mouth without effort. Nevertheless, its perturbing effect is the same. I want to fight it, but it only burns more. I allow it to sink in without protest, get my body into a fetal position, and rest my head on my knees in a defeated sort of way. Then, her laugh turns high and light, almost sweet. I look up: the room is back to its normal size and Ana is standing in the doorway.

“HAHA, Are you okay? I was just kidding, God. You don't have to be so dramatic acting all crazy... Look, this door closes on its own, so I *had* to hide and scare you.”

I stand up from the corner where I was rocking back and forth. I glance towards the mirror that I thought I had hit with my head, but my head and arm are perfectly fine; I look and

feel great. We walk out the room and we go join the others. We go eat the food that is oddly named: eyeball soup and so on. Then on our way out, I buy a dismembered head keychain, while the others get a miniature Annabelle doll and make fun on Ana's name.

At the end of the night before I walk back to my car, I go around the house and stare at the third floor... any second now. Ah, there she is. I appear in one of the windows with a delightfully terrified expression on my face. I can tell she is screaming at the top of her lungs. I give her a little wave goodbye and skip to my car.

I start to whistle like *she* did. As I'm settling into my car, I look into the frontal mirror; my eyes look darker than usual, and I have a smirk on my face. I know that the dreams will invade my mind tonight along with the voices, in fact, I will invite them, and unlock the vault that I once sealed when I was sane while I let my mind wander off into the darkest of places.