

The Willies

Ethan Crownberry

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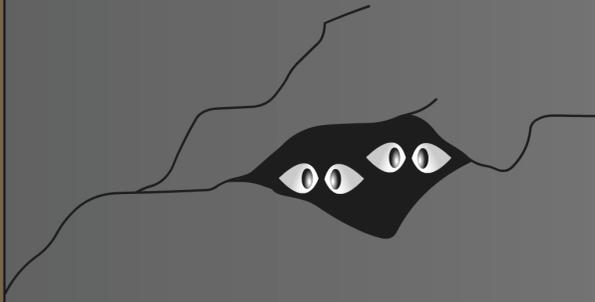
To Sofia. May you never know fear.

The Willies

Ethan Crownberry

On Halloween night, if you hear someone scream
like they've just woken up from a nightmarish dream,
it might be a goblin, or a ghoul, or a ghost,
or a big hairy monster that's scared them the most . . .





But take it from me, out of all we can list,
there are scarier things in the world that exist.

There are things we can't see but can certainly hear,
and the sounds that they make fill our hearts up with fear.

There are things we can feel but we just cannot touch,
and the thought of such things makes our hearts beat too much.

There are things we hear lurking behind closet doors,
in our attics, our basements, our walls, and our floors.

There are things that go *bump* in the darkness of night,
and sometimes they even go *bump* in the light.

Yes, of all of the monsters, the big and the small,
the Willies, I'd say, are the worst of them all.

And one night it all happened, some time around eight.

I was on my way home and was running quite late.

I was out on the street, I was not yet a teen,

just a lad barely twelve out on ol' Halloween.

I had just left a friend's, where his dad told a story,

a Halloween tale quite macabre and quite gory.

Now, this story he told had no meaning or plot;

it was just a grim tale meant to scare us a lot.

But what scared me the most, and what stuck in my head,

was the last thing of all, out of all he had said.





He said:

“On your way home there are things you might hear,
but there’s no need to worry—there’s nothing to fear.

For it’s only the Willies out traipsing about,
and on Halloween night they just love to come out.
They’ll be out there for sure; there’s one way you can check:

all the hair will stand up on the back of your neck.

Now, there’s no need to panic—no cause for alarm;
they just mean to scare you; they mean you no harm.

But the Willies won’t rest ‘til their job is quite done;

they will not rest at all ‘til you cry, scream, or run.

No, the Willies won’t stop ‘til they give you a fright,

if it takes them all day, or it takes them all night.”

And so there I was, on Ol' Hollow Oak Lane,
a wrong turn or two down from Elm Street and Main,
a road that at nighttime was so dimly lit
even cats holding flashlights could not see one bit.
Yes, Ol' Hollow Oak Lane was a lane hardly traveled,
an endless dirt road with some parts slightly graveled,
a long winding path through a deep darkened wood,
where no one ever goes, and no one ever should.
And the full moon above had an odd, eerie glow,
with a cloud or two passing below it quite low.
And the air was as still as a statue of stone,
with a dampness that chilled me right down to the bone.





It was growing quite dark. I could feel my heart race.
I could barely see my hand right in front of my face.
I should have turned back—should have turned right around.
I was all by myself—not a soul to be found.
And then came a noise, like the snap of a stick.
I turned around fast. Boy, I turned around quick.
“Who’s out there?” I asked, but no one answered back,
just another twig snapped with a much louder crack.
Yes, something was out there—a man or a beast—
but which one did not matter, at all, in the least.
No, whatever it was, I did not need to know.
And one thing was quite clear, it was time I should go.

It was time to move on. There was no need to stay.
So I turned right around and went straight on my way.
I tiptoed off slowly, then quickened my pace,
then I found myself caught in an odd sort of chase.
For the noises, as hoped, did not linger behind.
And these noises were not simply things in my mind.
No, these noises were real, and kept right on my tail
with each step that I took down that long, darkened trail.

Was it goblins, or ghouls, or some new fangled curse?
Or were all of these noises from something much worse?
Then a chill that I felt—just a small, tiny speck—
grew and grew up my spine, then grew right up my neck.

Then the hair on my neck rose
with each inch I walked
(a feeling one gets when
they're now being stalked).



And I knew at that moment my friend's dad was right.
Yes, the Willies would come for me all through the night.
They would not rest one bit 'til their job was quite done.
They would not rest at all 'til I cry, scream, or run.