



Witch House

By

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The atmosphere in the large airy flat white room, readily filled with mumblings of stories, ramblings of dreams and just rapid and incoherent gibberish, lingered throughout.

The loud, and sometimes wild extravagant way they moved while speaking their bottled up emotions was almost violent in matter in some disturbing ways, and yet understandable with some of their past histories. Billy Barber was one of the patients at the Northern Michigan Asylum for the mentally insane. He has lived there at the asylum for the past 10 years now, and his so-called world he lives in has been and still filled with the horrors that brought him here in the first place at the tender age of 11...

"Billy, what is the picture about that you are drawing? The nurse said as she leaned over Billy's shoulder to see his artwork.

"House...old house...WITCHES HOUSE!" Billy said in a loud disturbing voice, while he continued to color in the siding on the old Victorian looking house.

"That's very nice Billy." The nurse replied as she moved to the next table, trying not to get Billy anymore excited in his matter or state of mind. Billy just kept on coloring his picture, but the pressure of how he was holding the crayon started to be more intense with each passing stroke. Harder and faster, he begin to move his hand, his facial expressions were getting more intense also as some inter pain of the past was surging from within him.

"Witch house...Tommy...witch house...Susan...witch house...Ben...FIRE!" Billy said repeatedly, with a cold-hearted and somewhat evil calmness to his voice. The nearby nurse that just a few minutes before was looking at his picture, turned quickly to try to calm him. She put her hands on his shoulders...

"It will be alright Billy...it will be alright." The nurse said in a soft calming voice, as she rubbed his shoulders and kept repeating, "It will be alright Billy." After a few minutes of this, Billy seems to slow down and come under some type of control. He slowly turned to look at the nurse; tears were starting to flow from his eyes and his look was a look of such sadness, that the nurse started to cry also. Then a voice from the other side of the room said...

"Is anyone up for some donuts and apple cider?" With hearing this...Billy went into such a fit of rage, that it took two strong male nurses to secure him and drag him back to his room.

"He is still alive...he is still alive..." Billy yelled out while they tried to give him a shot to calm him down. As they strapped him into his bed so he would not hurt himself or anyone else...Billy fell into a sleep from the medication that seem to work very quickly. He seemed to be under control on the outside, but his inter thoughts were still terrifying him from his horrifying past.

The next morning, a few of the top doctors that worked at the Northern Michigan Asylum, were having a discussion on Billy Barber's case history. They started back when it all happen 10 years earlier in 1955 on October 31, Halloween night. The head doctor of Billy's case started talking first about how it all started that night from what they have gathered from Billy over the years...

"Billy and Tommy get your costumes on and come and show me what you look like." Mrs. Barber said, as she was excited to see what her boys had come up with, for Halloween tonight.

“We will be right down mother.” Tommy replied, as he and his twin brother Billy hurried to finish putting on their scary monster costumes. Once they were done with their eerie makeup, they hurried down the steps to show their mother how scary they looked. As they quietly walked around the corner wall into the kitchen, they jumped out and yelled, “Boooo!”

“Oh my goodness! You scared the he-be-gee-bees out of me. You guys are so scary looking.” Mrs. Barber said as she was putting the rest of the candy into a big glass bowl for any trick or treaters that may knock at her door that night. The boys grabbed their Halloween bags and said they were ready to go out to trick or treat for their candy.

“We will just go around the neighborhood mother and maybe up the hill a ways if you do not mind? We will be careful.” Tommy said, as Billy nodded his head in agreement with his more forcefulness out spoken brother Tommy. Billy was the quieter of the twins, but did not mind at all, he loved his brother very much and always looked up to him.

“Do not be too long and please be careful you two. Also, do not go near the old house at the top of the hill. Old lady Skinner is somewhat spooky and so is her son Ben, ever since his accident when he was younger. The scars that cover his face and body are a shame, and the way all the children have treated him as he was growing up, well, it is just a shame.” Mrs. Barber mumbled. “Anyway, she does not like any strangers coming around her old house or even some of the town’s people for that matter, even though some children still go up there for Halloween. I think they go there just to cause trouble for her... Anyway, do not go up there, because I heard that some children have gone missing in some of the past Halloweens and who is to say that all the strange things that have happened over the years is or is not linked to her or her son Ben? Also all of the stray cats it seems live there with her and her son. I think they are the only true friends they have.” Mrs. Barber hated to tell them such a story, but she did not want them going anywhere near that old house. The town’s people have labeled her house as the “Witch House”. This name has stuck for many years and they are reminded this when Halloween is drawing near every year.

As the boys left the house for their night of spooky antics that comes with this time of year, not only trick or treating for the candy from the different fun loving people in their neighborhood, but trying to scare the other children that past through the night with their bags of goodies. The boys were doing very well as they went to all the nearby houses and only soaped the windows of people that did not give any candy. Then they turned up the hill for their last run of the night. As they made their way up the hill, the large moon shined in all its glory for that night of ghosts, monsters, and all the creepy things that past in the darkness. Towards the top of the hill, they came to the gates of old lady Skinner’s house.

“Well, I guess it is time to turn around and go home to see all of our candy that we got tonight.” Billy said in an excited voice.

“Not just yet!” Tommy said as he was looking at the old house through the open gates.

“Mother said we cannot go to that house or we will get in trouble. You remember don’t you Tommy?”

“I remember, but aren’t you a little curious what the house looks like on the inside or what goes on up there?” Tommy replied as he stepped closer to the large iron gates. Suddenly a few cats started to brush up against their legs, as Billy started to say...

“But mother said...” Billy was cut off from finishing what he was trying to say.

“I know...I know! But sometimes you just have to do things to find out what really goes on in this world, don't you Billy or are you chicken?” Tommy said as he grabbed Billy's hand. “We need to find out if mother is really telling us the truth or just a story to scare us from this old witch's house...right Billy?” Before Billy could answer his brother, Tommy was dragging Billy through the iron gates and up the driveway to the old house. Billy was fighting his brother at first, but when his eyes finally fell upon the large eerie old house up close, he was almost in a daze...

Slowly the boys walked closer to the steps that led up to the large wooden door with a lion's head knocker in the middle of the door. As the boys stood in front of the door, they turned and looked at each other as if it were their last time. Then suddenly, Billy started to turn to run away...Tommy grabbed his arm and pulled him back. Then Tommy quickly moved his hand up to the lion's head knocker and clapped it against the door three times. They stood there for a few minutes...but nothing seems to happen except more cats were brushing up against their legs and even licking their costumes. Then Tommy did it again... After a minute or so, the door started to open and old lady Skinner stood there in the shadowy light from inside the house, with a few cats close to her legs. As she moved closer towards the boys, her face came into the light of the moon. The boys jumped back a few steps when her facial features scared them and she said in a spine tingling voice...

“What do you want?” The boys just stood there with their mouths wide open, staring in aw at the sight of her winkled leathery looking face. “What do you boys want I said?” She repeated in a more angry voice. The boys had a hard time trying to find the words, when all of a sudden they said in unison...

“Trick or treat!” The eyes of old lady Skinner seem to widen a little and then she said...

“Come on in. I will get you something for your treat.” She said in a softer voice. “Would you like some apple cider and maybe some donuts? It looks like you have had a long night.” Then she turned to walk down the long hall that led her to the kitchen.

“See Billy, she isn't all that bad.” Tommy said in a more relaxed voice. Billy just nodded his head and turned back to look down the long hallway. The boys stood there for a few minutes, then old lady Skinner walked out of the kitchen carrying a tray of donuts and glasses of cider. She moved somewhat slowly with a slight limp on her left leg. The boys looked on as she approached them with an eerie smile on her worn wrinkled face. Her right eye was an off-white color, with a light glazed appearance as if she was blind in that eye. The boy's legs were moving slightly back and forth, with their fingers doing the same thing, as they stood in silence waiting for the donuts and cider.

“Here are your treats young boys. In addition, could you do this old weak lady a small favor?” She said in a soft weakening tone.

“Sure, we would be glad too.” Tommy said quickly. “Isn't that right Billy?” Billy just nodded his head again, agreeing with his brother.

“I want to also give you some nice apples for your other part of your treat. You can put them in your bags that you have, so you can take them home with you.” Old lady Skinner said and continued saying, “If you could go down in my basement to get them, that is where I keep them nice and cool so they last longer, I would be ever so happy... please?”

“Sure!” Tommy replied as he took a big drink of cider to wash down the rest of his donut. Billy was just standing there nibbling on his donut, but had not taken a drink of his cider yet...still kind of frightened of old lady Skinner. The boys turned to follow the old lady back down the hallway, when they came to a doorway just before the kitchen. The old lady opened the door slowly as it creaked with her slow movement, revealing the darkness of the basement below. A musty smell filled the air with also a smell of cat feces that lingered throughout the basement.

“The apples are over to the left in bushel baskets on the cool floor of the basement. If you would gather a few for yourself and a few more to bring up stairs, that would help me out a lot, boys.” The boys slowly stepped down the wooden steps, hand in hand they ventured downwards. The coolness of the basement, plus the mixed odors, brushed across their faces as they slowly descended farther. The air was getting thicker and the rustling sounds in the darkness became too much for the boys. Suddenly Tommy turned and said...

“We have changed our minds and my brother and I want to come back up stairs. We do not need the apples.” Tommy said in a frightened voice; Billy just started nodding his head in total agreement with Tommy. They started back up the steps, when old lady Skinner yelled...

“You are not going anywhere! My son Ben and I have you now...you little bastards!” Old lady Skinner yelled this as she slammed the basement door in their faces and clicked the basement light off, laughing in a most disturbing way. The boys could hear the door lock as the reality of being trapped entered their frightened minds. They both screamed from the horror of it all and pounded at the door wildly. Soon their arms got tired from the pounding and they both slid down to the wooden steps beneath them to catch their breaths. The basement was almost engulfed in darkness, except for some faint moonlight filtering through a small window up high on the basement wall. They just sat there with all these frightening thoughts running through their busy minds, fearing that this was the end for them this Halloween night...

Tommy started to feel sick to his stomach and started throwing up a mixture of cider and donuts, plus some of his supper he had earlier. His head was starting to sway from the dizziness that came upon him suddenly and fell down the steps to the bottom. Billy hurried after him, trying to help him if he could.

“It will be okay Tommy, I will get you out of here, do not worry...” Billy said with a sense of some kind of control or just his loyalty and love for his brother taking over. Billy quickly looked around for some way to escape the horrifying basement where they were trapped. Then suddenly, Billy could hear faint cries of help coming from the other side of the dark basement. He moved slowly across the floor so he would not bump into anything in his way in the darkness of the basement. Moving his hands back and forth in front of himself trying not to hit anything if possible, he reached a door where the cries of help, seem to be filtering through. Slowly Billy turned the doorknob and opened it to an eerie flickering dim light from a small candle, dancing across the lower walls of this room where the faint cries of help were coming from. Billy slowly and cautiously entered the room. It was hard to make out what he was seeing; it looked like some kind of trophy room with a variety of mounts hanging on the walls. From the shadowy darkness of the upper walls, the figures were just faint enough that he could not make out what they were. A voice from across the room said...

“Please be careful, Ben will get you!” A soft voice of a girl echoed from the far side of the room. Billy slowly moved over towards her.

“What are you doing here in this cage?” Billy said in a confused tone of voice.

“My brother and I were trick or treating, and he talked me into coming up here to this old witch house...I did not want too, but he talked me into it.” The girl said as she started crying again.

“Where’s your brother at!” Billy loudly said.

“Ben got him...he dragged him from this cage and took him off through a door over by the book shelve into another room. All I heard after that were loud screams of pain and some kind of chopping sounds, and after a short time, there was nothing but silence. I fear he is dead.” The girl started crying even louder now from her pain of losing her brother.

“Do not worry... I will try to do something; I need to save my brother also from this witch house.” Billy said as his own tears started to fall. He reached over to turn on a light so he could find anything that might help him get the girl out of the large metal cage...

As soon as he turned on the lights of the room, the girl screamed in horror of what she seen hanging on the walls. Billy quickly turned and gagged when he saw it too. For on the walls were not deer heads or horns that are usually in trophy rooms, but heads of children. They were scared up in a horrifying fashion and mounted on the walls like trophies from some very sick and deranged person. Then suddenly the door that Billy came through from the entrance to the basement, opened up and old lady Skinner came through the door swinging a large butcher’s knife and yelling...

“You cannot get away from me now you little bastard!” Dozens of cats followed her into the room as they started to surround Billy, licking their whiskers in a hungry fashion. Billy started kicking at the cats and ran towards the other door of the room. Just before he got there, the door opened up to a much-disfigured person.

The girl in the cage yelled out, “That’s Ben...he killed my brother!”

“You are going to die too! I will chop you up into small pieces to feed my cats and then disfigure your face like mine. Your head will then go on my trophy wall.” Ben screamed out in rage. “Then I will burn what is ever left, up in the furnace.”

“Go to hell you son of a bitch!” Billy screamed out at Ben. “You can also go to hell you old bitch and your witch house too!” Out of rage, Billy charged at Ben and some how knock him off his feet. Ben fell backwards, hitting his head hard on a large wooden block table, covered with blood from the girl’s brother, which Ben had killed earlier. Ben fell limp to the floor. Billy ran into the room where Ben was lying on the floor, all the cats ran in there also, licking the blood from the table and floor that also covered some of the surrounding area from throwing the remains of the girl’s brother into the large opened door of the furnace. The cats found some pieces of the boy in tubs over on another table and furiously ripped at the pieces, even fighting over it as they consumed the flesh of the boy...

At the same time as this was going on, the old lady grabs Billy by his hair and tries dragging him over to the furnace door as the flames casts dancing images across the nearby walls of the room, just waiting for its next entry...

Then a scream of rage comes from the next room over and a voice echoes out, “I will save you Billy!” Tommy runs straight at the old lady and with all of his strength; he hits her in the chest, knocking her backwards. She lets go of Billy’s hair, from the force of

Tommy, but latches on to him and they both fall into the large door of the furnace... Billy runs to try to catch his brother Tommy, but is too late and falls to his knees just out of reach. His thoughts explode into an overwhelming rage and sorrow mixed. His brain cannot take the overload and something snaps in his mind. As he kneels in a crying fit, he throws out his arms and screams at the top of his lungs. Small pieces of clothing and flesh popped out from the fiery furnace and landed on some old rags that were by the block table, starting the room on fire. A small piece hits Billy in the arm and he jumps to his feet. Screams from the other room enter his head and his thoughts of saving the girl flush through his mind. Billy frantically searches the room for the keys to unlock the cage, which he finds over by the door to the furnace room. With every bit of strength he has left, he avoids the flames of the burning room and makes it over to the cage. He unlocks the cage door, pulls the girl from there, dragging her into the entrance of the basement, and stumbles his way up the stairway. The fire by this time is engulfing most of the basement and the smoke is everywhere, making it hard to see. Some thing bumps into Billy almost knocking him and the girl back down the steps. In his state of mind, he just assumes it is just all the cats fighting their way out of the burning basement...

Later, Billy comes to his senses or what senses he has left, outside of the old house with firemen and policemen everywhere. He looks around to see the young girl from the cage all covered up with a blanket. She is walking towards him; he just stares at her with a dazed look on his face. She kneels down to kiss him on the forehead and says... "Thank you Billy for saving my life...my name is Susan." She walks back to where her mother is and Billy's mother runs to his side, kissing and hugging him, while she cries for the lost of her other son, Tommy. Everyone turns to watch the flames climb higher in the night sky as the firefighters work hard to put out the house fire. Billy just stares into the flames of the burning witch house, as tears trickle down his face from the loss of his brother Tommy.

Billy never really recovered from the whole ordeal of losing his brother, or all the other horrors that he went through that night. His mother in the next few months has to have him committed to the Northern Michigan Asylum for proper treatment and he has been here ever since that time. I and some other doctors have tried everything we can think of, but it is forever etched in his mind and life must go on. His mother still visits him when she can and so does Susan, the girl he saved, but Billy's mind is forever locked into the past and I am afraid it will always be that way. I can understand the drawings of the old house and his fasciation's with the old lady and her so-called witch house. In addition, her demented son Ben, but the only thing that I cannot figure out when I talk to Billy, he keeps saying that, "He got away". Who got away? It was to my understanding that everyone burned up in the fire, except Billy and the girl, Susan. I have read in the surrounding newspapers over the years that have past, about the deaths of young children, and how they were partially skinned, chopped up somewhat and beheaded. I assumed these horrific acts were from some kind of cult rituals or something like that, and it had nothing to do with the Witch House history of torturing children. Could Billy be talking about...no, it could not be Ben Skinner...or could it?

The End

Note from author... If you are traveling around up there or even if you live in the northern part of Lower Michigan and you read about missing children or your children come up missing...who's to say it isn't Ben Skinner...but that is another story...from the eerie backwoods of Michigan...isn't it?

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Ben Skinner Lives!