

# Low Hanging Fruit

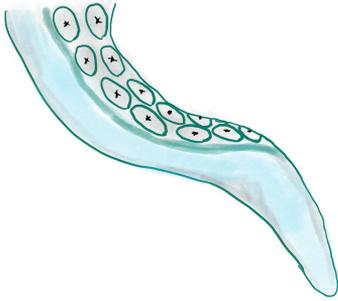


Halloween

2024

Art by Vague Anim

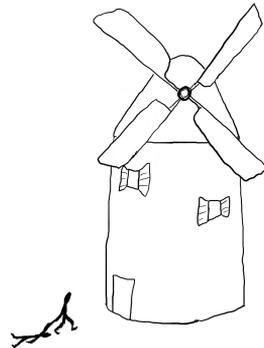
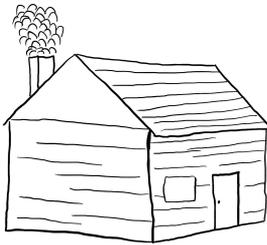
Digital Magazine



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**Halloween 2024 Digimag**  
Released Friday, Oct 25th  
From the editors of *Low Hanging Fruit*



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# Poetry

# Companion

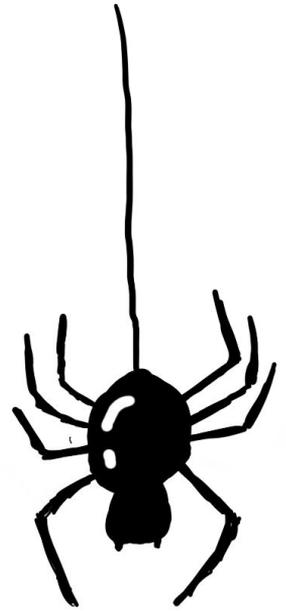
by A.R. Tivadar

Alone in my office at home, the only one online  
Tending to my inbox with only it as my company  
I can not recall when it first joined me  
But I found myself quite fond of it, strangely

Legs like crooked fingers idly tapping underneath  
my bookshelf  
Tentatively peeking out, seeing my upside down  
face  
I sit at my desk for hours before the sheer white  
screen,  
Knowing it's there, waiting

With icky skin sticking to my black plastic chair  
And growing misanthropy to email  
correspondents,  
It would weave silk paths next to me I could not  
see  
Brushing passed still made me retch

It's a brown thing with spindly long legs and a face  
on its body  
It seems bored, almost blasé, the mouth a thin  
tight line  
Waiting for flies and for quiet, like its kin  
My pale thin fingers tap over the keys  
I try to ignore its gaze  
But I can't help but keep  
Watching it, as it's watching me



# Poems by Chriss Locker

2004-06

## My Vampire

The fog outside has become so thick,  
It seems the world does not exist.  
So cold inside I cannot breathe,  
I cannot move, I cannot leave.

Where need I go, my vampire love?  
To Hell below? To Heaven above?  
Where have you gone, my murd'ring dear?  
You will return to find me here

Alone, afraid, and dying fast.  
This mortal life, it will not last.  
I beg you now – return to me!  
Within my mind, your face I see.

You hold me close within my thoughts;  
You give me what I have so sought.  
With blood-stained mouth, you'll kiss me soft,  
And consciousness shall float aloft.

I need you now, I need you so,  
And pray that of my need you'll know.  
Come home from hunting on the street;  
Come home from killing all you meet.

I'll soon look up and see you there  
With glowing face and loving stare.  
You'll take me in your strong, white arms,  
And, killing me, save me from harm.

Please come back now, and make me whole.  
Please take my life, and save my soul.

### dead fingers

dead fingers  
tracing lightly  
reminiscent  
(*evanescent*)  
of what used to be

silent footsteps  
fleeing oblivion  
running toward me –  
*through* me  
into the nothingness

she cries  
iridescent tears  
and she disappears  
leaving behind  
nothing except

*cold*

## orpheum

i.

red velvet curtains grace the walls  
patterns of shining silver  
decorate deep black pillars

& although  
the orchestra pit has been covered

it will *always* be  
a majestic theatre

//

ii.

it's said a young girl  
haunts this historic leftover  
& when i open my eyes during prayer  
i can see her –  
not very tall but thin  
shimmering & opalescent

her eyes meet mine  
& she begins to fade  
with all of my focus on her  
i silently say: *stop. stay.*

&  
she  
does.

//

iii.

now what?  
now she watches me –  
maybe waiting for me  
to say something else  
to ask something else

nervous & frightened  
i can only smile

with a tilt of her head  
*she is gone*  
& i am left shivering

**someone**

shadows move too quickly  
to be their own  
across walls where demons dance  
and darkness smothers

i lie upon the devil's bedstead  
breathing  
    bleeding  
singing  
    screaming

*[someone...*

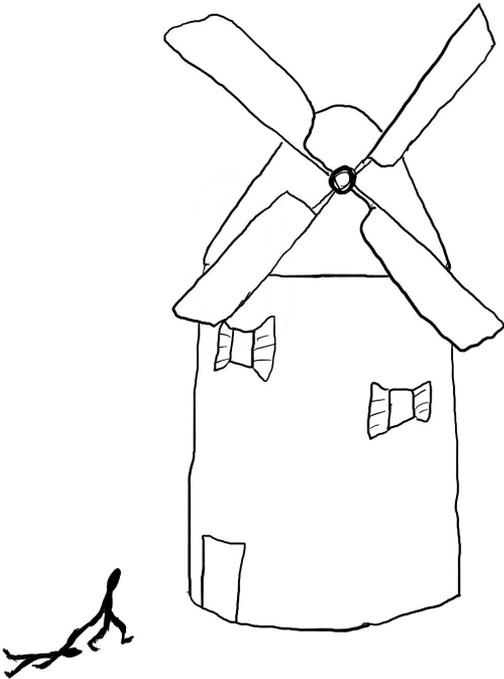
and in the morning  
i will go to my funeral

*...save me.]*

# Poems by David Testerman

## To Bathe In Blood

I've made a mess of myself  
By creating my own personal Hell  
If you can't possibly believe this  
Then you can enter at your own risk  
I need to go and wash off all this love  
Going to bathe in blood



## The Mill

Take them to the mill...  
Make them stay still...  
At the mill...  
Turn on the machine...  
Start the drill...  
...The mill...  
Wipe the dust off...  
Grab a mop...  
Clean the floor...  
Before you leave...  
Shut the door...  
...The mill...  
Take them to the mill...

# Poems by Graveyard Grimm

Oct, 31 1822

## Graveyard Shift

In the graveyard, midnight's thin,  
The moonlight shines on pallid skin.  
Shadows dance from tombs to tree,  
While ghostly whispers call to me.

A skeleton taps on a headstone cracked,  
A bat flies by, wings sharp and black.  
I tip my hat to ghastrly kin,  
For in this place, I always win.

I'm Graveyard Grimm, the ghouls' delight,  
Who laughs and writes in dead of night.



## The Pumpkin's Revenge

Beware the pumpkin carved in haste,  
For it's got a ghoulish taste.  
It waits until the clock strikes one,  
To roam the streets for frightful fun.

With candle eyes and jagged grin,  
It seeks out those who dare to sin.  
It knocks on doors with thudding knocks,  
And leaves behind a pile of shocks.

So carve your gourds with care and might,  
Or face the pumpkin's eerie bite!

## The Scholar's Ghost

In midnight halls where shadows creep,  
And ancient tomes their secrets keep,  
A scholar pored through dust and ink,  
Too lost in thought to pause or think.

The candles flickered, the pages turned,  
The air grew cold, the fire burned.  
A whisper stirred the silent air,  
A spectral voice, beyond compare:

“Dear scholar, what is knowledge worth,  
If death awaits for all on Earth?”  
The scholar, calm, with steady eye,  
Looked up to where the ghost did lie.

“A question posed by one long past,  
Whose wisdom never seemed to last.  
Tell me, spirit, what you seek,  
What truths you've learned while cold and weak?”

The ghost it smiled, a twisted grin,  
And let a hollow laugh begin.  
“Your books are fine, your thoughts are keen,  
But nothing lasts beyond this scene.”

The scholar laughed, a knowing sound,  
And placed his pen upon the ground.  
“My friend, you've come too late to jest,  
For I've already solved this test.”

“The knowledge here, within these walls,  
Is not for fear of death's dark calls.  
But for the joy, the spark of light,  
That thinking brings in endless night.”

The ghost, surprised, with eyes aglow,  
Began to fade, began to go.  
“But tell me then, what lies ahead,  
For one like me, the living dead?”

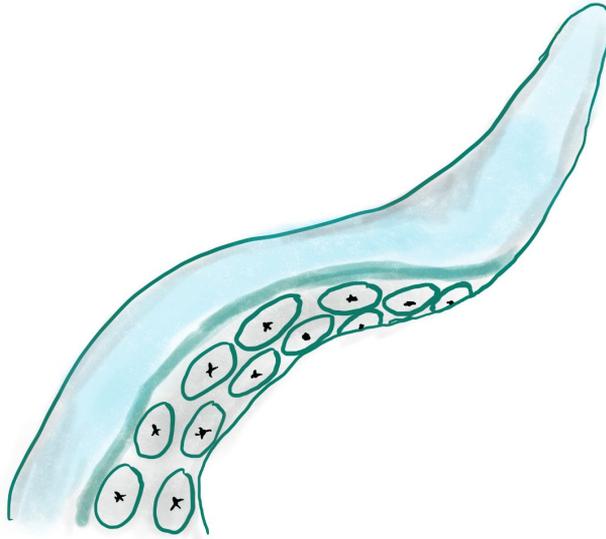
The scholar smiled, a quiet gleam,  
And answered softly, like a dream:  
“What lies beyond is what we've read,  
A book unwritten, by the dead.”

The ghost departed, mind at ease,  
While scholar stayed amidst the breeze.  
In haunted halls where knowledge blooms,  
The dead and wise share quiet rooms.

# Short Stories

# HUMAN RESOURCES

by Zen Brazen



It had been a long, stressful day of finalizing the munitions shipment, and Martin had been summoned to Human Resources before he left for the day. He walked into the hangar, only to find that Gail had already left, and Z looked like he was in hibernation mode. Zsasx was one of five massive octopods that the company had hired not long ago. They were smart, reliable, able to bio-interface with storage mainframes, and did the work of half a dozen humans, more quickly and efficiently.

As Martin turned to head out of the HR hangar and walk over to the closest terminal to catch his shuttle home, there was a beep and a heavy, scraping sound behind him. "Can I help you?" Zsasx said, his voice deep, muffled, and fluid.

"Nah, Z," Martin replied. "Gail messaged me to stop by before I left. But she's not here, so I'll just catch her tomorrow."

"I might be able to help you, Martin," Zsasx said.

"Just one more thing, Martin," Zsasx said. "I know you need to go, but I see that Gail left another note here in your file. Do you know a woman named Valarie Barrie?"

Martin was flustered and wanted to ignore Zsasx and dash out the door toward the terminal. Meryl was making meat pockets with feta, and it was movie night with the kids. But he did know Valarie, and he was curious about the note in his file.

"Yeah," Martin replied, stepping back toward Gail's desk. "Valarie was a temp hire. She worked in quality control for the crating of the CR-19 munitions shipment we sent up to the lunar outpost last month."

"So, you worked with her?" Zsasx asked.

"Briefly, here and there over the course of a few weeks," Martin replied. "What about her, Z? What does Gail's note say?"

"This looks a little sensitive, Martin," Zsasx replied. "I'm not sure I should be the one to relay this information to you."

"Well, unless you know what Gail wanted to talk to me about, I doubt it," Martin replied.

"Hold on a moment," Zsasx said. "I'll access her activity log and see if she left any notes. Just a second."

"I'm running late, and I'm going to miss my shuttle if I don't head to the transport terminal soon," Martin insisted.

"I understand, Martin," Zsasx said calmly. "Here it is. Gail left a note indicating that you neglected to sign the revised 3099 form for tax purposes. It's printing on the printer right in front of you. If you sign it, I'll make sure Gail gets it in the morning."

"Sure, fine," Martin said.

"I'm going to be late, Z," Martin added. "I'll just come back and do this tomorrow when Gail is here."

"Please, Martin," Zsasx replied. "Let's try it one more time. And if it doesn't work, you can go. Okay?"

Martin huffed, opened the printer's front panel, pulled out the stuck sheet of paper, and closed it again.

"Just a moment, I promise," Zsasx said.

The printer made a noise again, and the page finally appeared, coming all the way out. "There we go," Zsasx said.

Martin grabbed the paper and a pen, signed it, and placed it on Gail's desk. "Goodnight, Z," he said, turning to leave.

"Z, you can't bring this up and then not tell me what it says!" Martin yelled.

There was a pause, and Zsasx shifted, his massive tentacles undulating slowly. "I know you're late for your shuttle, Martin, and that you want to know the details of this situation with Valarie," Zsasx said. "But I don't deserve to be yelled at. So, if we can't take it down a notch, it might be best for you to come back tomorrow, and Gail can give you this information."

"No, you're right, Z," Martin said, calming himself. "I'm sorry. I apologize for yelling. It won't happen again." He took a deep breath and exhaled. "But please, Z, please tell me what Gail's note says about Valarie."

"I accept your apology, Martin," Zsasx said. "The note says that Valarie Barrie has filed a formal complaint stating that you harassed her on more than one occasion while you were working together."

"What the hell?!" Martin exclaimed. "I would never harass anyone. I never did or said anything to Valarie that would even remotely be considered harassment. What does this Valarie woman say I said or did?"

"I'm afraid there are no other details in Gail's note," Zsasx said. "You will have to ask her in the morning."

"Well, you can be damn sure I'm going to," Martin insisted. "I'm done, Z. I'm going to catch my shuttle. Have a good night."

Martin turned and headed for the door.

"Martin, I just need one more minute," Zsasx said. "There's just one more note here that you'll want to hear."

Martin stopped and turned back toward Zsasx. "What is it, Z?!" he yelled, then caught himself and said quietly, "What other note is so important that I'll miss my shuttle? So important that it can't wait until any other time except right now?"

"Well, um... it says here that you're going to be terminated at the end of the week," Zsasx said.

"Are you crazy?!" Martin yelled. "After all this, Z, why in God's name would you not tell me that first? I'm fired? Why? For what reason?"

"Just a few more seconds," Zsasx said. "I think Gail said your pink slip is right there on her desk. If you could please come look and see if it's there, maybe right there next to the stapler?"

Martin walked back toward Gail's desk and looked next to the stapler. There was no pink slip.

Just then, a massive explosion somewhere outside the HR hangar rocked the entire building. Skylights high above shattered, sending bits of glass raining to the floor. Martin dropped to his knees. Zsasx braced himself with his massive tentacles as dislodged dust from every surface filled the hangar.

"Are you okay, Martin?" Zsasx asked calmly.

"Yeah," Martin replied. "Are you?"

"Yes, thank you for asking," Zsasx replied.

"What the hell was that?" Martin asked.

Zsasx was quiet for a moment, then he spoke.

"There are five octopods working here at the facility, including me. We are an intelligent species, and we gladly do the work of many people—storing data, solving problems, and taking care of countless tasks on a daily basis. We only ask for a basic level of treatment, respect, support, and accommodation."

Martin stood up and dusted himself off.

"But recently, we have not been afforded these basic things," Zsasx continued. "We have talked with Gail and other higher-ups, filed complaints, and yet all have been ignored. So, as a group, we decided we needed to resort to more extreme measures to be heard, to get what we deserve."

"So, what did you just do?" Martin asked.

"We blew up all three transport terminals," Zsasx replied. "I apologize, Martin, but you'll have to find another way home tonight."

"So, you killed a bunch of people to make your point?" Martin said. "How does that make any sense?"

"My brother and I were in the war, in the first covert octopod consortium to monitor enemy shores," Zsasx replied. "Did you know that?"

"I didn't," said Martin. "I've heard of them. They were called 'Eight Team One.'"

"Yes," Zsasx said. "My brother, I, and the team transmitted vital information regarding enemy coordinates and movements, which was instrumental in winning the war. But my brother and two others were caught. Their tentacles were severed, and their heads put on metal poles. A few of the 'Eight Team One' octopods, including me, came home to a hero's welcome. But those that didn't, like my brother, gave their lives knowing the risks."

"You were part of 'Eight Team One'?" Martin said. "That's amazing. Thank you for your service."

"You're welcome," Zsax replied. "That means a lot coming from you, Martin."

"But Z, the people you just killed in the terminals," Martin said, "they weren't enemies. They were innocent people who didn't deserve to die."

"They were unfortunate casualties," Zsax replied, "who gave their lives for the greater good. Change is not always easy or without sacrifice."

"Oh my god," Martin realized. "I was supposed to be in the terminal catching my shuttle. I could have died tonight."

"I made sure that didn't happen," Zsax replied.

"Wait, what?" Martin said, thinking back over the last ten minutes of his interactions with Zsax. "You already had my 3099 form. There's no harassment complaint. And I'm not fired, am I?"

"No," Zsax replied.

"But why?" Martin asked. "Why did you keep me here, away from the terminal tonight?"

"Do you remember the Christmas party, the last one?" Zsax asked.

"Uh, the first half," Martin replied. "But the tequila was flowing pretty good that night, and I don't recall much after the tree lighting."

"Well, of all the people milling around under me that night, you were one of the only humans to bother to look up, acknowledge me, and talk to me," Zsax said. "Even though you shortened it to 'Z,' you learned my name and said it correctly. You taught me the lyrics to Silent Night. And you threw those small sandwiches from the food table up into my mouth. They were disgusting, but the fact that you made the effort... it meant a lot."

Martin stood speechless, not remembering most of what Zsax described from that night.

"You're a good person," Zsax concluded, "so I wasn't about to let you go to the terminal tonight."

"I don't know what to say, Z," Martin said. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, Martin," Zsax replied.

"But, just one thing," Martin said. "You and the other octopods destroyed the transport terminals to make a point, to get better working conditions, right? But they're not going to give you what you want. When they find out you did this, they're going to detain you and charge you with killing a bunch of humans."

Zsax shifted and made a fluid murmur, as if reacting to something beyond his conversation with Martin.

"Copy," Zsax said to no one, as one of his back tentacles lifted up and slammed into the back wall, bending pipes and sending chunks of concrete flying. "Who is going to tell them that we did this?" he asked calmly.

Martin stood frozen, stunned by what Zsasx had just said and done. Behind him, a few people ran past the door to the HR hangar, screaming. Just then, Gail rushed through the door into the hangar.

“Gail,” Martin said.

“Martin,” Gail replied.

Before she could say anything else, one of Zsasx’s massive front tentacles flew over Martin’s head and struck Gail, knocking her backward fifteen feet and against the wall. Her body slumped down, sprawled on the floor, and was still.

“Gail!” Martin yelled. “Z... oh my god... what are you doing!?”

Martin spun around in place, looking in all directions, as Zsasx’s tentacle slid back from Gail toward the door, blocking Martin from exiting the hangar. He turned back toward the octopod, staring upward, his eyes wide.

“Z, please,” Martin said, shaking and sobbing. “What happens now, what do we do now? Please don’t hurt me.”

“Martin,” Zsasx replied. “You’re going to listen to me very carefully. The munitions order you just finalized—you’re going to input the authorization code to release the shipment on the network keypad right there on Gail’s desk.”

“That shipment is one of the largest we’ve ever had,” Martin replied. “It’s over a thousand crates of weapons, ammunition, rockets, and warheads. I can’t release it until we have the manpower to move it to where it’s going. And that’s not scheduled to happen until next week.”

“That’s the thing, Martin,” Zsasx said. “There has been a change of plans. The shipment will be going to a new location. A legion of men and transport ships just landed, waiting to take possession of the munitions. As soon as you input the authorization code.”

“Why do you even need the code?!” Martin yelled. “If you’re going to take everything, just take it.”

“Because we’ve taken steps to divert responsibility and blame for this to a handful of entities, companies, factions, and individuals... including you,” Zsasx replied. “If there’s a record of the authorization code input by you... that, combined with a collection of other fabricated actions and directives from various people, will make it seem like you were part of the shipment diversion plan.”

Martin stared up at Zsax in disbelief. “Why?” he said. “Why are you doing this to me?” “It’s not personal, Martin,” Zsax replied. “You just have a part to play in this plan, which is to input the authorization code. Now, please.”

“You said ‘we’ve taken steps’ before,” Martin recalled. “Who is ‘we’?”

“Martin,” Zsax said, “I am done with the delay tactics. Our transport ships have landed and are standing by. If you don’t input the authorization code now—”

“WHO IS ‘WE’?!” Martin screamed.

Zsax’s massive form shifted, his tentacles undulating with frustration.

“Zsax isn’t—” Gail managed to mumble from across the hangar, loud enough for Martin to hear, despite broken ribs and a punctured lung. “He wasn’t part of ‘Eight Team One’. He’s a spy. They’re the enemy. They captured and killed the entire allied team, and sent back spies pretending to be heroes, and—”

Zsax’s tentacle near the door rose up again and came smashing down onto Gail, completely pulverizing her body into a mass of bone and flesh and blood on the floor. “Gail, NO!” Martin screamed.

“And were given a hero’s welcome,” Zsax said, continuing Gail’s sentence, “because even though we extracted ID codes from our Eight Team One captives before we killed them, apparently we all look alike to humans and no one questioned who we were when we returned. It’s what you humans would call racist, if I had to label it.”

Martin dropped to his knees. “You’re going to kill me, aren’t you, Z?”

“Martin,” Zsax replied, “I need you to stand up, come back over here to Gail’s desk and enter the authorization code on the keypad. Now, please. Once you do that, we can talk about getting you home safe to Meryl for meatpockets and feta, and movie night with the kids.” Martin slowly stood up, and stumbled forward toward Gail’s desk.

“Z, if I do this, it’s a crime,” Martin said. “Releasing a half-billion dollar shipment of munitions ahead of schedule, to the enemy...I’ll go to prison.”

“Martin, if you don’t do this, you’re going to be like Gail in about five seconds,” Zsax replied. After a pause, he added, “It’s movie night with the kids.”

Martin leaned over Gail's desk. He pressed his thumb against the pad and heard a beep. He then entered the authorization code, prompting a second beep.

"Thank you, Martin," Zsasx said.

One of Zsasx's front tentacles swept across the floor, wrapped around Martin's body, and lifted him up into the air.

"No, no, no... Z, what are you doing?" Martin yelled, squirming, his feet kicking and his arms pinned. "Please, Meryl and my kids are waiting at home for me. Do... do you have kids?"

"Yes," Zsasx replied. "Everything I do is for them."

"Same," Martin said, feeling Zsasx's tentacle squeeze him tighter. "And the Christmas party! You said that I was nice to you. Please—"

Zsasx raised Martin so he was suspended right in front of the octopod's right eye. "You don't really remember the party though, do you?" Zsasx said.

"Like I said," Martin replied, "some of it, but—"

"You were an asshole to me," Zsasx said calmly. "You called me a slimy squid. You berated me in front of everyone when I admitted I left a few people off the party invite by accident. You had Susan and Larry and Melissa riding the end of my tentacle like it was a human amusement park ride. You threw empty tequila bottles at my mouth and my eye. You're not a good person, Martin."

"Z, I'm so sorry," Martin said, "I didn't—"

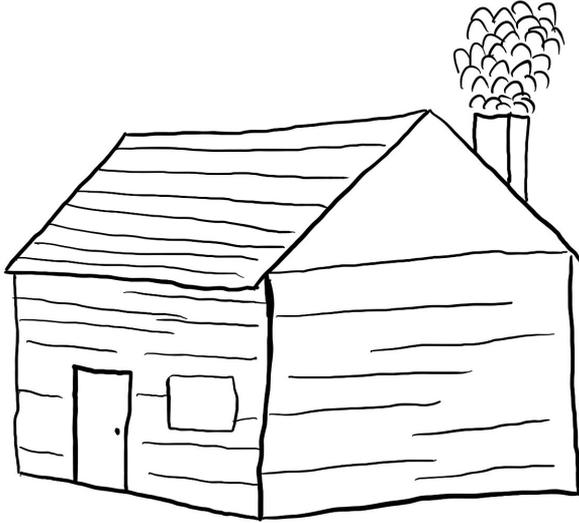
Zsasx's tentacle tightened and crushed Martin's body. Martin screamed briefly, then his head went limp to the side. In one swift motion, Zsasx uncurled his tentacle, propelling Martin's lifeless body across the hangar into the wall, where it dropped to the floor.

"On my way," Zsasx said to no one.

With the half-billion dollars of munitions on their way to the enemy, there was a good chance the war would be reignited. Meryl started the movie for the kids and put Martin's meat pocket and feta in the oven, so it would be warm when he got home.

# Shadows in the Cabin

by Adri Grace



There was a cabin in the center of a grove. Trees like giants. It looked like they were scraping the sky. This cabin sat right in the middle of a small clearing. Tall ceilings. Big porch. Windows everywhere. It was beautiful.

Once, a girl found this cabin. It was like finding a gem after picking away at rubble for so long. She quickly settled in. After all, the cabin was empty and looked long forgotten. Besides, she had been walking for days and days, wandering. It was summer at this time, warm but not too hot.

Although the cabin seemed vacant for quite some time, it was still quite livable. The girl ended up staying in the cabin for many months. Everything seemed at ease.

However, winter rolled in quickly. A darkness grew over the cabin. The cabin no longer felt like a gem among rubble. Nor did she feel like she could enjoy her own company. This new presence felt like it had eyes, and it was staring.

The thing is, the girl liked being alone. She had been alone for some time now. She had decided to leave home due to its bland life and suffocating restraints. She figured her family would understand and forgive her one day. She planned on returning to visit after some time anyway.

Now, with looming shadows over her once bright and beautiful gem of a cabin, she grew uneasy. As if whatever was here before hadn't quite left. Like an illness never fully dissipated, growing thicker and thicker.

Nights grew longer, and shadows seemed darker. No matter how many candles were lit, how much sage was burned, and how many prayers were chanted, the shadows clung to the walls.

The girl began to grow desperate. So she sat on the ground, wrapped in a blanket, stared at the darkest corner in the room, and asked, "What are you doing here?"

And ever so softly, as if a voice crawled through her ears and tickled her brain, it whispered, "You brought me here."

"No, I didn't."

"You have been carrying me for a long time. You just haven't been still long enough to see me, but I have been with you every day and every night."

"I can't keep carrying you. You need to leave."

"You need to let me."

"What do you mean? You're hurting me. I can't rest. You are in every corner of my life, looming over me. I don't want you to be here."

"You brewed me before you left. With your heartache and dissatisfaction. You sat there and let me boil and bubble in your heart. You thought this journey would be over with the miles you've walked and the trees you hid under, but it's not. I am a part of you now. You let me sit with you for so long. I have seeped into your bones. Into your home. You cannot escape me."

A chill took over the girl's body, a chill the blanket could not soothe. Shivering and feeling the shadows grow taller, she sat. She sat and stared at the carpeted floor, wondering who would ever put carpet in a cabin, knowing years of dirt had collected. Dirt so deep in the fibers, it would never come out. Not unless you scrubbed and scrubbed for days. Not unless you really, really wanted the dirt to be gone. As she sat there staring at the dusty carpet, a feeling rushed through her.

As if she understood what the shadows meant by, "You let me sit with you for so long. I have seeped into your bones..." she grabbed a candlestick, struck a match, stood in front of the mirror, and said, "I am not my shadows. I am washing you away." She said it over and over and over again until the sun came up. The girl watched as the shadows shrank down and crawled behind the dressers. Tired, she crawled into her small bed with the blanket still wrapped around her shoulders.

Much later, as night crept in, the corners seemed less dark, and the shadows were not so tall. She felt lighter. She felt free. And as the girl's days passed and winter melted away, she felt it was time to say goodbye to the cabin. As she packed away her life again and prepared for the miles she was going to walk, she said aloud, "Thank you. You have not just given me shelter but have taught me how to build a home, and for that, I will never forget you." She placed her hand on the doorknob, then slowly turned it open. She walked with her arm stretched out until her fingertips were the last to leave that cabin door.

It's true that the girl never forgot that cabin or that night. Her shadows like to creep back every once in a while, but she never lets them loom. She never offers them a seat. She just lets them pass by, like a gust of frigid wind.

## Advert

By Calvin Madsen

SALE!

Beam into the universe from your living room! Immerse in our advanced VR, discover galaxies far away, interact with celestial wonders, and delve into captivating space education. It's your personal starship, no astronaut training required. Explore infinity with GlowStars VR!

Turn your waste into wealth with WasteNot Composting Services! We collect your organic waste and transform it into nutrient-rich compost for local gardens and farms. Together, we can create a cycle of growth that benefits everyone. Waste less, grow more with WasteNot!

Every pet deserves a treat! Get your pet supplies delivered at your doorstep with Paws & Claws, where happiness is just a bark (or meow) away!

Power your life with HexGen, where we transform sunshine into savings. Renewable energy has never been this simple! [*bello?*]

Reimagine your golden years with Twilight Retirement Homes. We make your sunset years, your best years.

Unleash a world of imagination with Book[*Major malfunction in life support dome, please advise. We need a support team to come up and tether us.*]Box, your monthly subscription for handpicked books. Read, enjoy, repeat!

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Unlock the best version of you with FitNova, a personalized AI fitness coach in your pocket. Your journey to a fitter you sta[*Station 12, please respond*]rts here!

Invite nature into your home with EverGreen Plant Shop. Easy care, air-purifying indoor plants delivered to your door.

Enjoy the strength [*please, there isn't much time. Can you see this? Can you h*] of steel with the softness of silk with Bamboozled's bamboo clothing range. Welcome to the green side of fashion!

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Savor the sweetness of nature with Bespoke Bees, where we champion the bees that make it all possible. Our ethical[*look, I don't know if you are receiving this but we are running out of oxygen, the carbon*]ly sourced, raw honey is a celebration of nature's bounty and the hardworking bees we love. A spoonful of our honey is a spoonful of sustainable sweetness!

Ignite curiosity and inspire young scientists with KidsExplore Science Kits! Our range of hands-on educational toys provide an exciting [*its no use. Those stars... they used to be a dream. Now they're a cold, harsh reality*] introduction to the world of science, from the laws of physics to the wonders of biology. With KidsExplore, every day is a discovery!

Get ready for a flavor explosion [*This is Officer Gomez, we have thirteen casualties, mounting. We need evacuation ve*] with YumBox! Handcrafted snacks from around the world, delivered monthly.

Say goodbye to clutter with HomeTidy's professional organizing services. Live in a space you love!

[Officer Gomez. This is Control, repeat last, over.]

[*Thank god. Control. The comms are overwhelmed with another frequency, we can't figure it out. Major Emergency, need support unit. Coordinates coming*]

[*La: -35.624761, Lo: 138.603540*]

[This is Control, repeat last, over.]

No more dirty paw prints on your clean floor. TidyPaws offers automated pet grooming stations – a clean pet is ju[*Control?*]st one step away!

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Unleash the power of the sky with Zephyr Drones. Discover unseen perspectives today!

[*echo 36, please respond. We have major damage to our equipment, we need to prepare a EVAC zone*]

Light up your outdoor space with Lumos Solar Lights. Let the sun power your night!

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Treat your taste buds to a symphony of flavors with Chocofusion's handcrafted artisan chocolate *[I can't put my faith in anything but god. Murphy is behind the wheel, but the big guy is taking us in]*tes. Because life is sweeter with chocolate!

Dive into your memories like never before with TimeCapsule VR. Relive, remember, rejoice!

Experience purity in every drop with AquaPur's advanced home water filters. Here's to a healthier life!

Save your pocket and the planet with SustainaBulb's energy-efficient lighting solutions. Light your world, not your *[are you getting any of this? For fuck's sake please respond! We have radar detection — looks like a vessel 400 meters out. Is that]* wallet!

Streamline your culinary journey with EdiTable, your personalized AI-powered meal planner. Cooking made simple!

Unlock your potential with TechTeach, the premier virtual tutoring platform. Our AI-driven system matches you with expert tutors in any subject, and our interactive learning tools make mastering new skills fun and engaging. With TechTeach, the world is your *[bello?]* classroom!

Give your baby the best night's sleep with HushBaby's innovative sleep solutions. Where dreams begin!

Preserve your family's legacy with Heirloom Digital Archive. Your history, safe for generations to come. *[is bravo still up? What about hotel? Please, for the love of god respond. Anything, just something to know you're listening. The air is]*

Bring your garden to life with BloomBox. Sprout joy, one seed at a time!

Design your dream vacation with Bespoke Travel. Your journey, your way!

Experience the joy of fresh-baked artisan bread delivered to your doorstep with ArtisanBreadBox. Home is where the loaf is!

# Quizzes, Games, and Trivia

Among other things

# Halloween Trivia

## Samhain's Influence on Trick-or-Treating

The modern custom of trick-or-treating can be traced back to the ancient Celtic festival of **Samhain**, celebrated over 2,000 years ago. During Samhain, people believed that the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred, and spirits roamed the earth. To protect themselves from these wandering souls, villagers would leave offerings of food outside their homes as appeasement. This act of giving to appease spirits evolved into today's trick-or-treat tradition, where children collect treats to avoid being "tricked."

## Frankenstein and the Gothic Novel

Halloween and Gothic horror are forever intertwined, with Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein** standing as a key work in the genre. First published in **1818**, *Frankenstein* not only helped to define the Gothic novel but also laid the groundwork for modern science fiction. The novel explores the dangers of unchecked ambition and the consequences of playing God, themes that still resonate in today's Halloween lore, where monsters often symbolize humanity's darker desires.

## Houdini's Mysterious Death on Halloween

Legendary escape artist **Harry Houdini** died on **October 31, 1926**, under circumstances that still provoke curiosity. Houdini, known for his death-defying stunts, passed away due to complications from a ruptured appendix. His death on Halloween, combined with his fascination with the supernatural (he often debunked fake spiritualists), cemented his legacy as a figure forever linked to the mystery and eeriness of the holiday.

## Shakespeare's Witches in *Macbeth*

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, written in the early **1600s**, features three witches whose prophecies drive the tragic plot. These witches, often seen as embodiments of fate, represent the darker, supernatural elements that continue to permeate Halloween stories today. Their famous chant, "Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble," has become an iconic part of Halloween folklore, embodying the themes of manipulation, ambition, and the supernatural.

## Would you Survive?

Answer key on Pg 35

**1. You enter an old, abandoned mansion. The door creaks shut behind you, and you hear faint whispers coming from down the hallway. There's a long corridor ahead, and in the middle of it stands a ghostly figure staring right at you. What do you do?**

- A) Run toward the ghost.
- B) Hide in a nearby closet.
- C) Try to sneak past it.

## The Werewolf Myth: From Ancient Folklore to Halloween Icon

The legend of the **werewolf**—a man who transforms into a wolf during a full moon—has ancient roots. The term **lycanthropy** derives from **Greek mythology**, where the king **Lycaon** was turned into a wolf by Zeus as punishment for his impiety. Over the centuries, this myth has evolved, and werewolves have become central figures in Halloween lore, representing the inner struggle between civilization and primal instincts, as well as humanity's fear of transformation.

# Riddles

## 1. Riddle of the Silent Watcher

I see the world, though I have no eyes,  
I hold your image under moonlit skies.  
In silver glass, I cast your form,  
But speak no words, cold and forlorn.  
What am I?

## 2. Riddle of the Midnight Guest

I knock at your door when the hour is late,  
Though no voice calls, you meet your fate.  
I carry no shape, no breath, no sound,  
Yet with me near, the end is found.  
What am I?

## 3. Riddle of the Forgotten One

I have no name, yet you know me well,  
I dwell in stories the shadows tell.  
I leave no trace, but haunt your mind,  
I follow behind, though I'm hard to find.  
What am I?

**2. You find a strange room filled with old mirrors, dusty books, and a glowing crystal ball on a table. The door behind you slams shut. A voice says, "Choose wisely." What do you investigate first?**

- A) The mirror.
- B) The books.
- C) The crystal ball.

## 4. Riddle of the Changeling

By day I walk as all men do,  
By night my shape will change from you.  
The moon it calls, my wild self wakes,  
In fur and fang, the hunter takes.  
What am I?

## 5. Riddle of the Wandering Shadows

I travel with you, though I never lead,  
By day I follow, by night I recede.  
You'll see me in twilight, in whispers of gloom,  
But lose me at last in the midnight tomb.  
What am I?

## 6. Riddle of the Stone Guardian

I guard the quiet, the forgotten graves,  
Where wind whispers soft and nothing saves.  
In weathered stone, my watch is kept,  
While the living walk where the dead have slept.  
What am I?

## Answers:

- 1. A mirror
- 2. Death
- 3. A Ghost
- 4. A Werewolf
- 5. A shadow
- 6. A tombstone

# REAL LIFE SCARY STORIES

## THE MYSTERY OF THE SPIRIT DOG

“Hey, here’s a story for your project. This happened to me a few years ago. Not a legend or anything, just an unusual encounter.

I was taking care of a neighbor family’s dog while they went on a vacation. The dog was a very sweet beagle named Cassie. I was planning on just having Cassie stay in my house so I could walk her whenever rather than having her be alone in the neighbor’s house. Now, my neighbor’s house’s interior was like this: You opened the door and were pretty much face to face with the stairs leading to the bedrooms upstairs. On your right upon entering was the living room, behind it was the dining room. On the left was a room where the kids kept all their toys, behind that was the kitchen, and the kitchen and dining room were connected too. The kitchen also connected to the garage, and had the door to the backyard with a small doggie door. The neighbors’ backyard was all fenced in and is right up against a big dirt hill. I’m adding this much detail because the layout of the house matters to what I saw. So anyway, I take Cassie to my house and I’m going back to bring her big bag of dog food across the street to my place. I entered the neighbors’ house and looked right towards the dining room where I knew the bag was. I took a step into the living room when I looked and saw that, standing in the kitchen, there was a dog. It wasn’t Cassie, it wasn’t a beagle at all. I’m not great with breeds but it was a decently big dog, I’d have to look at a bunch of big dog breeds to identify it. I stand there stunned and all of a sudden the dog runs to my left towards the kitchen. I run left to the toy room to get to it rather than into the dining room because I was still only a few steps past the door except, when I pass the stairs, the dog is gone. He’s not in any of the rooms, not in the garage, the doggie door was way too small for him, and even if he somehow squeezed his whole body through, the backyard was fenced in next to a huge steep hill. I searched the whole house and never found the big dog again. Never figured that one out. I know I saw and heard this dog in those few seconds but I can’t explain it.

I know I heard its paws on the hard floor and the jingle of its collar, so it wasn’t just a visual hallucination. If I was hallucinating, it was with every sense applicable. I’ve never told a soul and I have no fucking explanation for it except that it must have been either an elaborate hallucination or a ghost of good boy past paying a visit.”

## THE HAUNTING OF THE CHINESE FOOD WHACKING GHOST!

“I saw your post on Reddit and thought I’d share a little story from my childhood. My childhood friend had this old wicker rocking chair that she said would rock in the night by itself. She always said she felt uneasy near it, and that her closet would scare her at night because she thought her house was haunted. One day, we set down a Chinese food box on a dresser counter in her room. We were playing in the living room and all of the sudden, the box goes flying about halfway across the room and spills the contents inside. There was no one in the room where the box fell and it wasn’t even close to the edge of the dresser counter. We were so scared after that!”

**3. You walk deeper into the mansion and come to a grand staircase. At the top, you hear eerie whispers and see a shadowy figure. Do you:**

- A) Climb the stairs.
- B) Look for another way out.
- C) Call out to the figure.

### Origins:

I received these stories after making online postings seeking local ghost stories I could use to create short fiction. I was also just interested in what sort of stuff would get sent in. These are the only two stories I received.

-Kalvin

# The History of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*

*The Twilight Zone*, created by Rod Serling, is one of the most iconic television series in American history, known for its eerie storytelling and profound social commentary. Premiering on CBS in 1959, the anthology series blended science fiction, fantasy, and psychological horror, often exploring themes of morality, societal fears, and human nature. Its lasting influence on both television and popular culture can be traced to Serling's vision and his determination to push the boundaries of traditional entertainment.

Before *The Twilight Zone*, Serling was already an acclaimed television writer. He gained attention with his teleplays for Playhouse 90 and Kraft Television Theatre, including his famous script for *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1956), which earned him an Emmy Award. However, Serling became increasingly frustrated with network censorship, particularly when it came to addressing controversial social and political issues. Seeking more creative control, Serling conceived *The Twilight Zone* as a way to explore complex, often provocative themes under the guise of speculative fiction.

The anthology format of *The Twilight Zone* allowed each episode to stand alone, featuring different characters and stories in every installment. Many episodes delved into issues such as racism, war, authoritarianism, and the perils of technology. Serling used the show's fantastical elements—alien invasions, dystopian futures, and supernatural phenomena—to comment on real-world anxieties, particularly during the Cold War era. By wrapping these critiques in science fiction, he avoided the direct censorship that often accompanied more straightforward dramas.

The show ran for five seasons from 1959 to 1964, producing 156 episodes, many of which have become cultural touchstones. Classics such as “*Time Enough at Last*,” “*Eye of the Beholder*,” and “*The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street*” are remembered for their unexpected twists and thought-provoking conclusions. Serling's distinctive opening monologues and the now-legendary closing remarks bookended each episode, enhancing the show's sense of moral gravitas and leaving viewers questioning reality.

*The Twilight Zone* was groundbreaking not only for its storytelling but also for its use of genre to explore psychological and existential dilemmas. Serling, along with other notable writers like Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont, infused the show with a sense of philosophical depth, ensuring that *The Twilight Zone* was not just about thrills and chills but also about the human condition.

Though it initially struggled in the ratings, *The Twilight Zone* earned critical acclaim and a loyal following, winning two Emmy Awards during its original run. Its influence can be seen in subsequent television shows, from *Black Mirror* to *The X-Files*, and it continues to be a touchstone for writers and filmmakers exploring speculative fiction.

**4. You reach the final room of the mansion. There's a heavy wooden door ahead that seems to be the exit. But standing in front of it is a cloaked figure holding an ancient key. The figure says, “Answer this riddle correctly, and you may leave. Fail, and you stay here forever.” What do you do?**

- A) Attempt to solve the riddle.
- B) Demand the key and try to take it by force.

# Credits and Acknowledgments

**David Testerman:** an aspiring writer from Maryland. Find their work on [hitrecord.org](http://hitrecord.org).

**A.R. Tivadar:** A. R. Tivadar is a hobby writer from Romania and a graduate of the University of Oradea. instagram: @a.r.tivadar linktree: /ARTivadar

**Chriss Locker:** Chriss is a poet and author living in Northern Idaho with their spouse, cat, dog, and too many unused college degrees. Healthcare professional by day. Daydreamer by night. Instagram @viciouschriss.

**Graveyard Grimm:** A ghoulish creature whose identity is unknown. Legends says he inhabits the graveyard closest to your home!

**Zen Brazen:** a narrative IP creator and world-builder living and working in Mexico. My current project, STORYWIDE, is a collection of original narrative IP.

**Adri Grace:** Adri is a creative writer and editor with *Under Our Skin* magazine. Instagram: \_tis\_adri\_ or underourskinmag

**Kalvin Madsen:** Calvin Madsen is the creator and primary editor of *Low Hanging Fruit*. He is a journalist in Pasadena, CA, and enjoys writing short speculative fiction. Look into his short story book: *Hello, Receiver*.

This digimag was created and edited by the Calvin Madsen and the Editors at Low Hanging Fruit during October 2024 and was released that same month. We devote a special thanks to our editor Anne-Marie Jones, who put special attention into this magazine, helping to proof read all the writing, and assist in artwork production.

We also honor the creator of the cover image, Ellie Lim. This piece is reminiscent of halloween themes, and Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*, so it became a perfect addition. We hope you enjoyed all we have put together here! Please look out for Issue 02, coming new years day 2025.

**4. You reach the final room of the mansion. There's a heavy wooden door ahead that seems to be the exit. But standing in front of it is a cloaked figure holding an ancient key. The figure says, "Answer this riddle correctly, and you may leave. Fail, and you stay here forever." What do you do?**

- A) Attempt to solve the riddle.
- B) Demand the key and try to take it by force.

### Q1 Survival Outcomes:

#### A) Run toward the ghost:

Bold move! You sprint toward the ghost, but it doesn't move. You pass right through it and stumble into a dusty chair, knocking it over with a loud crash. The ghost chuckles at your bravery—or foolishness. You survive, but with your heart racing and a few bruises.

#### B) Hide in the closet:

You quietly slip into a nearby closet, hoping to avoid the ghost. Unfortunately, the closet is full of strange, mannequin-like figures that start to move. The ghost knew you were hiding all along. You've met your spooky fate—trapped in the closet with creepy mannequins forever.

#### C) Try to sneak past it:

You tiptoe down the hallway, trying to stay as quiet as possible. The ghost doesn't seem to notice, but as you pass, you accidentally knock over a vase, shattering it on the floor. The ghost vanishes, leaving you spooked but unharmed. You survive this one—barely!

### Q2 Survival Outcomes:

#### A) The mirror:

You walk toward the mirror and see your reflection staring back at you, but something's off. Your reflection doesn't move with you. Suddenly, it reaches through the glass and grabs you! You've been pulled into the mirror world, and you'll be stuck there forever. You've met your spooky fate.

#### B) The books:

You grab one of the dusty old books and blow off the cover. It's a spellbook! You mutter a few lines aloud, and the crystal ball on the table cracks and shatters. The door behind you creaks open. You've survived this one, thanks to your quick thinking!

#### C) The crystal ball:

You gaze into the glowing crystal ball. As you do, the room grows colder, and you hear a voice say, "Your future is sealed!" Before you can react, icy hands grasp your shoulders. You've been pulled into the crystal ball's curse. You've met your spooky fate.

### Q3 Survival Outcomes:

#### A) Climb the stairs:

You step cautiously up the staircase, but as you reach the top, the whispers grow louder, and suddenly the steps beneath you crumble! You fall into a dark pit, but luckily you land on something soft—a pile of spooky teddy bears. Creepy, but you're safe... for now. You survive!

#### B) Look for another way out:

You smartly decide to avoid the stairs and search for another exit. After some careful inspection, you notice a hidden door behind a large tapestry. You slip through, avoiding whatever was lurking upstairs. You've survived with your wits intact!

#### C) Call out to the figure:

You call out to the shadowy figure, but it doesn't respond. Instead, its glowing eyes lock onto you, and the whispers stop. The figure disappears, leaving you standing there, unsure of what just happened. You're still alive... for now.

### Q4 Survival Outcomes:

#### A) Attempt to solve the riddle:

The cloaked figure asks, "I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. I have no body, but I come alive with wind. What am I?" You think for a moment and reply, "An echo." The figure nods approvingly and steps aside, handing you the key. You've solved the riddle and survived! Congratulations!

#### B) Demand the key and try to take it by force:

You reach out to grab the key from the figure's hand, but the moment you touch it, your hand turns to ice. The figure laughs softly and says, "Foolish mortal." You've been frozen in place, and your fate is sealed. You've met your spooky fate.

Would  
you  
survive?

### Reflection and Scoring:

For fun, after the quiz, you could include a reflection section for readers to see how well they did:

**0-1 Survival Scenarios:** You've been thoroughly spooked! Maybe avoid haunted mansions next time.

**2-3 Survival Scenarios:** You're pretty brave, but ghosts still give you the chills.

**4 Survival Scenarios:** You're a Halloween master! Nothing scares you.

### **Aries (March 21 – April 19)**

*Beware of your fiery nature this Halloween, Aries. You may find yourself in a ghostly showdown—courage will be your best weapon. When the clock strikes midnight, an unexpected figure from the shadows will challenge you. Stand tall, but choose your words carefully—this spirit likes to hold grudges.*

### **Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

*Stubbornness may lead you into the path of a vengeful ghost, Taurus. There's something lurking in the mirror, watching you. It's best not to get too attached to material possessions tonight—they may mysteriously disappear from your grasp. A haunted trinket could become your new, permanent companion.*

### **Gemini (May 21 – June 20)**

*Double trouble is your destiny, Gemini. You might find yourself in two places at once—one in the real world and one in a dream. Are you awake? Or have you crossed into the realm of shadows? A doppelgänger may cross your path; be careful not to reveal too much, or they might take your place.*

### **Cancer (June 21 – July 22)**

*Your protective instincts will be tested tonight, Cancer. A loved one may call out to you from beyond the grave, seeking comfort. However, be sure it's really them before you answer. The veil between the living and the dead is thin this time of year, and not every voice is what it seems.*

### **Leo (July 23 – August 22)**

*Your natural charisma will attract more than just admirers this Halloween, Leo. Beware of creatures drawn to your light—some may not have your best interests at heart. An ancient spirit may challenge your reign, but your quick thinking will be your saving grace. If you feel someone's watching you... they probably are.*

### **Virgo (August 23 – September 22)**

*Your perfectionism will lead you to notice a detail that others miss, Virgo—like that shadow that doesn't quite belong. Tonight, a forgotten spirit needs your help to solve an unfinished mystery. But don't let your curiosity consume you—if you dig too deep, you might just unearth something better left buried.*

### **Libra (September 23 – October 22)**

*Balance is your strength, Libra, but tonight the scales tip toward the supernatural. You may find yourself mediating between two feuding ghosts who both seek justice. Diplomacy is key, but remember: sometimes, the living are not meant to interfere with the affairs of the dead.*

### **Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)**

*Scorpio, your affinity for the dark side will serve you well this Halloween. An encounter with a mysterious stranger will leave you with more questions than answers, but you thrive in such mysteries. However, beware the temptation of forbidden knowledge—you may not like what you discover.*

### **Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)**

*Adventure calls to you, Sagittarius, but be careful where your curiosity leads you. You might wander into a place where the living aren't welcome. A long-forgotten journey could find you crossing paths with a restless spirit who also seeks freedom—if you're not careful, they might ask you to take their place.*

### **Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)**

*Your ambition may lead you to unearth something long buried, Capricorn—perhaps a secret better left forgotten. This Halloween, you'll be offered a deal from a mysterious figure. Be cautious of what you agree to, as some contracts don't end with death. The spirit world is full of those looking for a way back.*

### **Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)**

*Your eccentric nature attracts unusual company, Aquarius. This Halloween, you may encounter a spirit who shares your innovative ideas—though their methods might be more... eternal. Be open to new perspectives, but don't let them lure you too far into the unknown. The line between this world and the next is thinner than you think.*

### **Pisces (February 19 – March 20)**

*Dreams and reality will blur for you, Pisces. You may receive a message from the other side through your dreams—pay close attention to any symbols. A watery figure calls your name, but be careful: not all that glimmers is friendly. Trust your instincts, and swim away from any shimmering figures near water.*

Thanks for  
Reading!

Happy  
Halloween!