
cheering filled the room

Posted by lookme875 - 2009/12/07 09:25

Hey, i@Bones,i j± my brother, Parker, asked me, "what are you going to be for Halloween?" The elementary school party started at 7:00 PM. The winner of the prize for the most original costume got two free tickets for the Sunday matinee. Parker was dressed and ready to go. I watched him parade in front of the mirror in his pirate costume. He's so handsome, I thought. All the girls in the fifth and sixth grades were madly in love with him. I'd spent the afternoon defending myself from his rubber dagger.

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" I'm not going!" I replied.

" Why not?"

" No costume."

"That's dumb," he said. "You hardly need a costume. You're already a perfect scarecrow!" I was used to these observations. Furthermore, he spoke the truth. At twelve, I was already six feet tall and weighed eighty-nine pounds. Tack on red hair and freckles and it added up to one thing: I was a scarecrow.

School days were charged with searing taunts. "Down in front." "How's the weather up there?" "Are those skis or shoes?" It was hard to smile back, and even harder to make friends.
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I tried plastering my hair down flat on the top of my head and prying the heels off my shoes. I took scalding hot baths, hoping I'd shrink. In bed at night, I put my feet against the footboard, hands against the headboard and pushed, hoping to press myself back together. Nothing worked. So I saved nickels and dimes in a cider jug to pay the future surgeon who would find fame in Ripley's Believe It or Not by cutting six inches of bone from the legs of the tallest girl in the world and making her the same height as everybody else.

"When I grow up," I told Parker, as he brandished his cutlass in front of the mirror, "I'm going to live on an island where there's no one to stare." My brother raised his eye patch and looked at me hard.

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"Sounds awful," he said, and left for the party.

Alone, I listened to the cheerless night and pictured the costumes my classmates had bought. I had tried on a few, too, but nothing fit. I could picture my classmates in their costumes, having a wonderful time. As I wandered about the house, I remembered happier days-before Mommy and Daddy were separated. When Daddy lived with us, he always made me feel loved and wanted. Seeing him now for short visits wasn't the same. The more I brooded, the more my self-pity grew.

Then I spotted a broomstick standing in the kitchen corner. Maybe I could make a costume, I thought. Outside, a sheet and pillowcase billowed on the clothesline. I could be a witch or a ghost. Then my gaze fell on the back of the cellar door. My father's old plaid work shirt, faded overalls, jacket and cap were hanging right where he had left them.
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"I could be a hobo," I murmured as I buried my face in the dusty clothes. But Parker's taunt kept coming back at me. "You're a scarecrow." As much as I hated to admit it, he was right. Well then, a scarecrow was what I'd be. The closer I got to the school, the louder the cheers and clapping became, and the more my fears grew. What if they laughed at me? Worse still, what if they didn't do anything? Hiding behind the tool shed next to the gym, I pulled everything out of the pillowcase and started to dress. Because I was so tall, I could peek through the high window and see everybody taking turns on the stage in quest of the coveted prize. Ghosts, princesses, monsters, cowboys, soldiers and brides-they were all there, clad in store-bought costumes, fragile dreams for one night. My teeth were chattering. Would they clap for me? Would they whistle and cheer? My stomach ached from anticipation.

I'll run home! I decided. No one would know I had been there. But Parker came on stage and glanced at the window. It was too late. He had seen me. If I left now, he'd call me chicken. I watched him bow to the audience and listened to the squeals from the girls as he leaped on chairs and tables and parried with his sword. Next, a small gorilla climbed on top of a ladder and ate a banana. Lincoln gave a brief address. Cleopatra danced with a rubber snake in her hands, and a soldier marched and twirled his gun. Only Tarzan remained.
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Maneuvering carefully through the entrance, I went in, held my breath and prayed, Please, God, don't let me make a fool of myself. The applause was so loud for the King of the jungle when he gave his call and swung on a curtain rope that no one seemed to notice me walk slowly to the center of the stage. A pillowcase covered my head. With arms outstretched

and hands clutching the broomstick inserted through the sleeves of an old plaid shirt, I wore a felt hat and faded overalls stuffed with straw. The room was suddenly still.

Nobody clapped. Nobody cheered. The only sound I heard was the hammering of my own heart. I'm going to die, I thought, right here in front of everybody. The world was tilting, and my ears were ringing when the hood slid down my nose, just enough so I could peer through the eyeholes. And that's when I saw my classmates for the first time, as they really were. Petite blonde fairies with golden wands-and steel braces on their teeth. A baseball hero with a bat and mitt-and bottle-thick eyeglasses. A boxer with fighting gloves-sitting in a wheelchair. Someone asked, "Hey, who is that?" "Parker's sister!" They looked at one another, surprise brightening their faces. Clapping and cheering filled the room.

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Re:cheering filled the room

Posted by eagle1r - 2010/01/13 03:33

The Letter

The following day was dull and foggy. The Hall was surrounded by heavy, low clouds, which opened now and then to show the grim, cold moor and its wet, grey rocks. The weather made us miserable. It was difficult to be cheerful when we felt danger all around us. I thought of Sir Charles' death, and the awful sound of the hound, which I had now heard twice. Holmes did not believe that there was a supernatural hound. But facts are facts, and I had heard a hound. Was there a huge hound living on the moor? If so, where could it hide? Where did it get its food? Why was it never seen by day? It was almost as difficult to accept a natural explanation as a supernatural explanation.

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That morning Sir Henry and Barrymore argued about Selden, the escaped prisoner. Barrymore said that it was wrong to try to catch Selden.

'But the man is dangerous,' said Sir Henry. 'He'll do any thing. Nobody is safe until he is in prison again. We must tell the police.'

'I promise he won't break into any house,' said Barrymore, 'and he won't cause any trouble. In a few days he will catch a boat for South America. Please don't tell the police about him. If you tell the police, my wife and I will be in serious trouble.'

'What do you say, Watson?' asked Sir Henry, turning to me.

'I don't think he will break into houses, or cause trouble. If he did, the police would know where to look for him and would catch him. He's not a stupid man.'

'I hope you're right,' said Sir Henry. 'I'm sure we're breaking the law. But I don't want to get Barrymore and his wife into trouble, so I shall not tell the police. I shall leave Selden in peace.', ffxi gil,

Barrymore could not find the words to thank Sir Henry enough. Then he said: 'You have been so kind to us that I want to do something for you in return. I have never told any one else. I know something more about poor Sir Charles' death.'

Sir Henry and I jumped up at once.

'Do you know how he died?' Sir Henry asked.

'No, sir, I don't know that, but I know why he was waiting at the gate. He was going to meet a woman.'

'Sir Charles was meeting a woman? Who was the woman?'

'I don't know her name,' Barrymore said, 'but it begins with L.L.'

'How do you know this, Barrymore?' I asked.

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'Well, Sir Charles got a letter on the morning of the day he died. It was from Newtown, and the address was in a woman's writing. I forgot all about it, but some time after Sir Charles died my wife was cleaning the fireplace in his study. She found a letter. Most of it was burned, but the bottom of one page was not burned. On it was written: 'Please, please, burn this letter, and be at the gate by ten o'clock. L.L.' The paper fell into pieces as my wife went to move it. We don't know who L.L. is, but if you could find out, you might learn more about Sir Charles' death. We haven't told anyone else. We felt it would not be good for poor, kind Sir Charles. But we thought we ought to tell you, Sir Henry.'

The Barrymores left us and Sir Henry turned to me. 'If we can find L.L., the mystery may be at an end,' he said. 'What do

you think we should do, Watson?'

'I must write to Holmes at once,' I said, and I went straight to my room and wrote a letter to Holmes, which gave him all the details of Barrymore's story.

On the following day heavy rain fell without stopping. I put on my coat and went for a long walk on the moor. I thought of Selden out on the cold moor in this weather. And I thought of the other man, the mysterious watcher.

As I walked, Dr Mortimer drove past me. He stopped and said he would take me back to the Hall.

'I expect you know almost everybody living near here,' I said. 'Do you know a woman whose name begins with the letters L.L.?' 'Wedding dresses,

Dr Mortimer thought for a minute, and then he said: 'Yes, Mrs Laura Lyons. She lives in Newtown.'

'Who is she?' I asked.

'She's Mr Frankland's daughter.'

'What, old Frankland who has the large telescope?'

'Yes,' said Dr Mortimer. 'Laura married a painter called Lyons who came to paint pictures of the moor. But he was cruel to her, and after a while he left her. Her father will not speak to her, because she married against his wishes. So her husband and her father have made her life very unhappy.'

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The Letter

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