

The Outhouse

By Pete Clark

It was late Fall, 1944: the evening was warm and very dark but the children played on, the gloom helping them hide from the older, larger girl who was It in their game of Hide-And-Go-Seek. Two of the four hiding gamesters had been found by the girl, who felt it was time to end the game and called "Olly olly oxen free." Three of the children said their good-byes and turned towards their home, a duplex down the graveled street. Shirley, the older girl, led the youngest child, Pete and his older brother Bobby to the front door to his family's part of the duplex where they had been romping around and playing games.

Mrs. Clark opened the door in response to Shirley's knock, happy to have her kids coming in as it was close to their bedtime. "Shirley, thank you for keeping an eye on the boys while they were outside," Mrs. Clark said.

Shirley opened her mouth to reply, but before she could speak, Pete cried out, "Mommy, I need to use the outhouse!"

Shirley, thinking of the possible money to be made as a baby sitter quickly stated, "Mrs. Clark, I can take him around back to the toilet."

"That is very nice of you Shirley," Mrs. Clark said, "just bring him on inside when he is finished."

"Yes Ma'am," Shirley said, taking Pete's hand and beginning the journey to the rear of the lot holding the duplex. She led Pete along the front of the duplex, turning toward the back of the building, passing by the last window whose pale light was unable to mitigate the darkness. Shirley stopped at the rear corner of the duplex, her lips curling into a mischievous smile as she noted the faint rectangle of the outhouse barely visible in the darkness, ghostly and resembling an entrance to another world. She would have some fun with the little guy before she took him into the outhouse to do his business.

"Pete," Shirley said, "there is something in the outhouse!"

"What's there?" asked Pete, "I need to go to the toilet!"

"I don't know what it is," Shirley said, "but I saw something move in the doorway. Maybe I should go up closer so I can get a better look at what is in there. You wait here while I sneak up on it."

"No!" Pete wailed, "Don't leave me here by myself!"

"Be quiet you little scaredy-cat!" hissed Shirley. "You will make the thing mad with all that noise."

"Don't leave me by myself," the boy cried, "I really need to go to the toilet."

Shirley silenced a giggle and snapped, "OK, OK, you can come with me, but be ready to run and don't blame me if something grabs you." Pete held onto Shirley with both hands as they crossed the backyard, walking slowly toward the dim outline of the outhouse.

Shirley screamed, "I saw something move in there!" and Pete no longer needed the outhouse.