Welcome once again to the Town Crier’s annual Spooky Stories contest. Following are reader-submitted tales. As usual, we invite readers to select their favorite stories. The entry with the most votes wins first place, the No. 2 vote-getter takes second, and so on. First place will receive a prize, and all winners will receive mention in the paper. Tell us which story is your favorite by emailing bruceb@latc.com. We’ll announce winners and prizes in a future issue.

Haunted House

By Julia Im, age 13, Los Altos

“Trick-or-treat!” I hold out my bag. The woman drops a handful of candy inside and I beam at her before catching up to my friend, Rosalie. She’s dressed as a classic vampire, complete with fangs, cape and fake blood. I went for a trendier “Squid Games” green jumpsuit.

We visit more houses along Cherry Avenue before coming across an unfamiliar building with a crimson sign reading “Haunted House.”

“We should totally go,” Rosalie suggests. “It’ll be so fun. Come on, haunted houses aren’t even that scary.” I hesitate, but she drags me along anyway.

We enter the house, dimly lit candles flickering around us and smoke covering the floor. The door slams shut behind us, startling me.

“It’s probably just part of the experience. Calm down,” she says.

A fluorescent tube in the ceiling flickers on, exposing a dark corridor.

“Come on,” Rosalie says, already heading toward the passageway. Eerie music starts playing as we walk down the hallway. Suddenly, I hear heavy footsteps. Looking back, I spot two dark figures shambling toward us.

I speed up. Rosalie laughs, amused by my fear.

Strobe lights start flashing around us, blinding me for a moment.

I look back again and notice they’ve gotten closer. They’re wearing creepily realistic kitten masks, red splattered across the white rubber. I catch a glimpse of one holding a knife and the other holding a syringe.

Rosalie and I start running, the flickering light glinting off of her bloody, fake fangs as she smiles at me.

It’s not real, I try to tell myself. But do fake knives look that sharp? I spot an exit sign and run, the silent figures still hot on our tail.

Escape within our reach, I sprint toward the door.

We burst through, the fresh night air welcoming me.

“That was fun,” Rosalie pants. “Let’s.”

Her voice cuts off, the rest of her sentence replaced with a strangled scream.

I look back and only see Rosalie’s cape on the ground. As I stare at it, I realize that the blood on Rosalie’s costume was dried – this blood is wet. I inhale to scream when I hear a disembodied voice: “Oh, the fun has just begun.” I feel a prick in my neck; liquid warmth spreads through me and I go limp.

“Trick-or-treat,” are the last words I hear before I give in to darkness.

A Pumpkin Rolls Away

By Ashi Bhagat, age 3, Mountain View

There was a pumpkin and it rolled away. Mama called, “Go away!” And the pumpkin rolled away and it blew out the candle and went to sleep. Mama went to where it rolled and tucked the pumpkin in. Mama said, “Good night.” The end.
The Murderous Shadow

By Rishi Ranganathan

There was a rich couple who lived in an old house on a hill. One night, their young servant was washing the dishes when he heard screams and evil laughter coming from upstairs.

The servant ran upstairs to the couple’s bedroom to see what was happening. The door was open, and the light was flickering on and off. “BZZZT BZT BZT,” it went.

The servant spotted two bodies. It was the couple. Blood streamed from huge unusual cuts on their bodies. They were not alone. A black shadow-like figure with glowing red eyes and a bloody sword was coming for him!

The servant ran as fast as he could. All the lights went out. The servant kept running, crashed into a closet door, and fell inside. It was the junk closet. He found a bell. Soon the ghost floated through the wall. The servant rang the bell as hard as he could and the ghost shot out of the room. The servant was too afraid to go out, and fell asleep in the closet.

The next day, the servant drove himself to the hospital and lost consciousness. That night, while the servant was still in the hospital recovering, Dr. Frank, an expert in psychology, was on his night shift in the hospital. He heard thumping noises upstairs.

Dr. Frank felt like he was being watched. A black shadow-like figure swooped from the shadows. It was coming straight for him. He ran down the hospital hall, forgetting that the elevator on that end was out of service. The ghost caught up with him and said, “You are my last victim,” then drove the sword into Dr. Frank’s stomach and disappeared.

Since then, there have been several reports of bloody kills and security camera sightings of the ghost, but no one has seen the ghost with their own eyes.
Spooky Stories 2021

The Witches Potion
By Iris Cooper-Page, age 6, Mountain View

Ka-Boom! Once there was a witch. The witch was making a potion.
Ka-Bam! The witch puts black cat fur and green poison in it.
Bam! The witch puts snake skin in it. Then she stirs it.
Poof! The witch has a pet!

Pumpkin
By Linnea Cooper-Page, age 3, Mountain View

A ghost and a witch see a pumpkin.
They roll the pumpkin off the gate. The witch uses its magic and the ghost helps with its arm.
Then they carve the pumpkin. Then they put it back on the gate.
Then they roll the pumpkin all the way away until it’s on the other side of the world.

The Black Cat and the Pumpkin Patch on the Moon
By Sabina Bhagat, age 6, Mountain View

Once upon a time, there was a little black cat named Sparky. She lived on the moon and she was eating a pumpkin for Halloween. Her pumpkin was very good. It was a magic pumpkin that she was eating.

One day, her tooth wiggled. Her tooth fell out along with a little pumpkin seed when she was eating it. The pumpkin seed dropped into a little crater hole.

Sparky said, “Ooh! I lost a tooth. I’m going to go down to Earth and show my friends in the ghost school.”

Meanwhile, the seed grew into a pumpkin, but since it came from a magic pumpkin, it also made a whole pumpkin patch. The moon had less gravity, so the pumpkins floated up and flew up to the stars. And Sparky turned into a star accidentally.

An asteroid hit the floating pumpkins. The asteroid fell, it just fell! The goop fell, with the asteroid, to Earth. So first the ghosts had to find all the goop because they were in different cities.

The ghosts thought, “Oh no, what’s all this pumpkin goop?”
So they had to find it all so they wouldn’t be too confused. The ghosts all had some pumpkin pie from the goop and saw Sparky the star up in the sky. They went to bed. Then, the next day they went to a Halloween museum and they each got a cool shirt.

The end.

The Vampire Girl
By Jilly Lou Jaros, age 6
(Dedicated to mom and dad for teaching me stuff)

One upon a time, there was a girl named Scarlett and she always smiled.
Suddenly, her necklace sparkled.
And something magical happened …
She transported to a land. She saw a cottage and went inside.
There were vampires and their teeth bit her. Dun dun DUN!
She was a vampire.
But she wasn’t like the other vampires in a way.
She was a nice vampire. The rest were mean.
The necklace shined and the sun peeked out of the clouds and the vampires faded and people came out.
And the king vampire was crumpled and melted.
The end.
Boo Town
By Rhys Jaros, age 5

Once upon a time, there was a town. It was spooky.
Boo! It was home to a ghost. Boo! It was Boo! Always mad Boo!

By Kiki Gaspar, age 5, Mountain View

Once upon a time, there were 20 million molecules and they were on a walk and they spread out all over the world. Then the molecules decided to sneak up on people and hook them on the head and make them cry. Since nobody could see them, they snuck up on people very easily.

Then the little molecules decided to turn into witches and there were 20 million, gazillion witches.

The witches had green, bumpy and wicked faces and they had very, very big noses. The witches had black hats and black clothing and they rode on brooms, with a potion on the back that was green, bubbling and steaming. The potion could turn people into molecules, and then those molecules would go on to make more witches. They wanted to turn everyone in the world into witches.

They started turning people into molecules that would then turn into witches. The people started to realize and they freaked out and ran away from the witches. The witches caught them in a never-ending cage and managed to turn everyone in the world into molecules. A few of the worst people went from molecule into witches.

There were just two people left. They were guarding the never-ending cage that the witches had made to capture everyone. The two people were grown-ups and they had red outfits and they had black things over their eyes. They liked the witches and they wanted to protect them, so they did whatever the witches said.

A dragon made out of ghosts scared the guards. The ghost dragon looked like a scary dragon with spooky wings. You could see its skeleton and there was black blood coming out. The blood was like a force field, so the dragon couldn’t be touched. The guards ran away and then the dragon breathed out a ghost. The ghost saved the people, then the ghost made some of the molecules back into people. These people were wicked people. The dragon tried again a few days later and made all the molecules back into nice people. The witches turned back into molecules and were never seen again.

The end.

Evie’s Dolls
By Eloise Waight, age 11

A raven cawed. Its beady red, ruby-like eyes pierced the silver moonlit night with its fiery gaze. It cawed a second time before spreading its long silky wings and taking off into the pitch-black night. A gaunt figure behind it slipped out of the forest in long lanky strides before quickly disintegrating back into the shadows.

Evie lived alone with her doll collection. She was an old woman with no family, except for the dolls. This collection was made up of dolls found at the back of antique shops, or the type that people gave away because they creeped them out. Some were missing eyes or limbs, and others had no hair, or feet. They seemed to watch you, those dolls. Their eyes followed you wherever you went. And Evie loved them.

Evie lived in a farmhouse with moss-covered steps, and ivy that twined up the side of the old fence. It sat there by the edge of a deep forest.

One morning a doll was missing from her usual spot by Evie’s bed. Peculiar, pondered Evie. Wherever did she go? The doll had hand-painted eyes, a pale porcelain face, and a pink satin dress with many ruffles. The doll had been named Maryann and she was Evie’s most treasured. No matter, she decided, Maryann will show up eventually. But she did not. It was only until that particular night that Evie noticed something odd.

A group of crows began to caw loudly, and mist swirled around the grass, concealing the outer edges of the forest. Evie couldn’t see a problem, so she decided to go outside to check. As her boots swept through the dew-covered grass, the crows dispersed and a figure appeared in the middle of the pasture. Evie walked forward to take a closer look. She could hear a soft cry if she listened closely, and as she slowly creeped forward, hesitant, and a bit scared, she noticed Maryann. The wind whistled and the moon shone brightly, Maryann’s dress swayed to and fro as she watched Evie. All was silent. Suddenly, Maryann shook violently, and a spindly figure flew out of the doll. Evie screamed. “No! No! Help me!” She shrieked, and she started running, but the figure caught up quickly. She reached out a hand for help, but no one was there to grab it.

The end. Happy Halloween!

Molecules and Witches
By Leonor Gaspar, age 7, Mountain View

It’s time for spooks, and frights and candy.
Say “trick-or-treat!” and get some candy.
Ring a doorbell if there is.
You shall dress up as what you like.
Knights in shining armor, or princesses with frilly hats.
Or maybe you could dress up as bats.
If you like witches, goblins and ghosts,
You can dress up as all of those.
You can dress up as a ninja.
And have some pretend swords.
They might be fun to play fight,
You can stay up as long as you like, all night!
Get all the treats you like,
And eat them all night if you like.
You might see skeletons and ghosts hanging.
Or maybe a mix, with a skull and the body of a ghost.
At the back there will be a button,
And if you press it, the eyes will glow red.
The Night of the Definitely Not Neutral but Very Hostile Mutated Zombies

By Mani Ranganathan, age 9, third-grader at Gardner Bullis School

It was Timmy’s first Halloween night. He was walking along a street with his mom.

“Mommy! It’s a grim reaper!”

“Relax, Timmy, it’s just a kid dressed up as one.”

“Mommy, it’s a ghost!”

“Relax, it’s just a guy in a bedsheet.”

“Mommy, it’s a zombie!”

“Relax, it’s just a kid . . .”

“CHOMP! SLURP!” went the zombie eating Timmy’s mom, oozing flesh. Everyone started running in all directions. Timmy ran past more chomping zombies. By now, the sidewalk was filled with blood.

“What’s going on here?” said a police officer. “Look behind you . . .”

CHOMP! It was too late, the police officer was swallowed whole.

RRRR. A zombie was about to kill Timmy. Timmy rushed through the bush next to him and ran into a bathroom stall.

“HEY, KID, I AM IN HERE, GET OUT NOW! CHOMP!”

A zombie was under the toilet! Timmy was trapped in the stall! The zombie climbed out of the toilet. Someone had locked the door on him. Timmy raced past the zombie, who had evidently made the toilet drain big enough for 3-year-olds who knew how to swim to get through. He jumped in and pulled the flush lever.

For one second, he was choking inside some pipes that the zombie had expanded, but they were shrinking now.

Spitooooo! He fell out of the pipe, landed in a pile of poop and toilet paper, and other unrecognizable nasty stuff.

“Youck, it stinks in here,” said Timmy.

“KID, I’M TRYING TO FIX THE PIPE! AAAAA! IT’S A POO MONSTER!”

Timmy was covered in poo and pee. He was able to walk among the zombies because he looked like a zombie himself. He bought a knife and killed the zombies – stab after stab,

“You stinking mutated zombie pig-face, this is what you get for killing my mother!”

Soon, Halloween was over, and Timmy had killed all the zombies. Timmy was adopted by a family and lived happily without any memory of the incident. No one ever spoke of it again in American history.

By Laura Allan

She walked down my hallway again, past my door with a slow creak, creak, creak. I turned my face to the wall, trying not to be scared. I was always afraid of the dark, and she knew that. It would make her check on me, and I didn’t want that. I hated when she checked on me.

Sure enough, she leaned through my door. I heard her creak, creak, creak open, then she whispered into my room.

“Are you OK, Tina?”

I didn’t answer. I didn’t want her to know how scared I was, that would just make things worse. “It’s OK to be afraid,” she said in a creaky voice, as if reading my thoughts. “Lots of people are afraid. I was scared of plenty of things at your age. So was your mom. You can talk to me about it though.”

I didn’t want to talk to her, it wouldn’t help. I bit my lip and kept quiet as possible while my shoulders trembled under my blanket.

“Tina, why won’t you tell me what’s wrong? Is it the dark? Something else?”

I hoped so hard she wouldn’t come into my room. That she wouldn’t see me trembling like this. It felt like forever passed. Then, at last, when I didn’t say anything, she moved away from my room. She creak, creak, creaked down the hall until I couldn’t hear her anymore. I turned on my bedside lamp to make the darkness go away, but I still didn’t feel much like sleeping.

Only a few minutes later, I heard footsteps outside my door again. It opened a little wider and I heard my mom’s voice.

“Tina, what are you doing awake?”

“I … couldn’t sleep,” I said, and I hated how scared my voice sounded.

“Oh, sweetie,” Mom said, and she moved to my bed. I felt her wrap her arms around me, and she kissed the top of my head. It made me stop shaking a little. Only a little.

“Hey,” she said very gently, “I know you’re still very sad that Grandma passed away last week. And it’s OK to feel sad. Just remember, she’s always here with us. In spirit.”

I swallowed hard as my eyes traveled to the creaky door, still open to the darkness filling the hall.

“I know,” I whispered.

The Halloween Dance

By Kaija Wade

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Annie. She had one brother named Jack and one sister named Kaila.

One day while walking through the town, Annie spotted a sign. It said, “Halloween Dance Saturday, Oct. 30, 10 a.m.”

Wow, she said to herself.

When she got home, she told Jack and Kaila and they said yes, they wanted to go.

When they got everything they needed for the dance, Jack said they should see if the dance studio needed Halloween decorations, but when they got there, it was terrifying!

There were real-life witches and zombies and ghosts. But most of all, there were so many monsters. Fire monsters, ice monsters.

Annie, Jack and Kaila were so scared, they ran all the way home.

Creak

By Mani Ranganathan, age 9, third-grader at Gardner Bullis School

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Moon Eats People

By Mira M., age 3

There’s a moon that likes to eat people and it’s spooky. People said, “Oh no, a moon that likes to eat people, that’s spooky!!!!” And then the moon said, “Oh no, I’m not scary too much, I’m just a moon that likes to love people, too.” And then the moon said, “I am not afraid of you guys.” And then the people said, “Well then, we’re going to eat YOU, moonie!” Because the people were really hungry. And then the moon said, “You guys cannot eat me, I’ll eat you guys first!” And then he did that. And then he had a tummy ache.

Next story: “Pumpkin Eats Moon.”

The Little Witch

By Ada M., age 5

Once upon a time there was a little witch. She lived on top of a grass mountain and the only thing she wanted was a best friend. “I want a best friend!”

And then one day she found her missing broomstick and she flew off the grass mountain to find a best friend. But then she came to a spooky moon and the spooky moon said, “Witches are clever but moons are wise, so nobody travels with the moon who’s wise.”

And the witch was focused – she’s just trying to figure this all out in her head.

And then one day she came to a bush of camellias and the camellias had a very nice smell and that smell made her float back up into the moon and the moon gobbled her up!

And then the moon burped and she went flying out of his mouth. And then she found a bottle of crushed-up lipstick and that lipstick was actually a greedy, hungry ghost! And then it turned into its real self and gobbled her up and then it burped, too, and the witch flew out again and then a ghoul said, “Clever? No! Clever? No! Clever? No!”

And then another pumpkin plus pumpkin plus pumpkin came, and they invited her to a wedding they found, but the wedding was a spooky wedding, so it had ghouls, ghosts, pumpkins, witches, vampires and wizards.

And then she found a baby moon and she figured out the reason the moon ate her was because the moon was missing his child, so the witch jumped on her bream and flew up to the moon, and at first the moon didn’t see the baby and thought she was just coming up to bug him, so he was, like, “rah rah wagh raara,” but then she showed him his baby and they were so happy to meet each other again.

And then after the moon had gotten his baby daughter back, the moon and the witch became best friends.