

After unpacking the last of the boxes, Darren and Agatha Chambers took a well-deserved break on their leather sofa. Since moving to their new Walmer Road Victorian - style house, almost everyone seemed to be on Cloud Nine. Eight-Year old Christie was anxious to play in her new bedroom with her new friends, ten-year old Aiden was in his bedroom, glued to the iPad that his mother tried to pry him away from. Only six-year old Maggie clung to her parents, scared and unwilling to go upstairs.

"Maggie, honey, why don't you want to play in your new room?"

Maggie vigorously shook her head. "I don't want to mommy."

Darren shot a look at his wife. "We've been here three weeks now, yet she still won't sleep in her own room."

Before Darren could continue, Agatha piped up. "Maggie, why don't you want to sleep in your room?"

Maggie pouted at first, her stringy brown hair partially hiding her eyes. "Clyde wants me to follow him to the attic."

Darren's eyes narrowed. "Who's *Clyde* honey?"

"The little huntsman."

Darren couldn't recall a huntsman toy at first, but it was Agatha who remembered. "That was Aiden's toy when he was seven; do you remember how happy he was when we brought it home? The way the little arms swung his ax..."

Darren nodded. "How can I forget, he cried for days when he thought he lost it. Turned out it was buried in his closet." He turned to his youngest daughter and lovingly said. "Honey, *Clyde* is only a toy. He can't talk. If you want, mommy or I can sleep next to you tonight. Would you like that?"

Maggie, though unconvinced, nodded.

That same evening, Darren was prepping Maggie's bed sheets when he heard a faint creak up above. He craned his head to the side, and sure enough he heard it again.

"Raccoons," he muttered.

It was almost five in the morning when little Maggie found herself alone in her bed; her father awoke early to go to work. After rubbing the sleep from her eyes, her attention was drawn to her dresser. Standing in front of it was the toy huntsman from the attic. The tiny ax in the huntsman hand had an unusual gleam to it, it appeared very real. The painted eyes of the toy huntsman went from green to blood red. *Its ok child, the toy seems to say, Clyde can take you to a wondrous place. Just take my hand; I will protect you with my trusty ax.* Little Maggie's lips trembled; she wailed until her mother rushed in to soothe her.

Mister and Mrs. Chambers were called into Maggie's school that afternoon. Miss Potter, the First Grade teacher met with them in an empty classroom. She had with her a file folder.

"Thank you for coming and I apologize for pulling you from your jobs." Miss Potter took a deep breath; there was a tremble as she breathed out. "As you know, here at Fern Avenue Public School we encourage our little ones to tap into their creativity as much as possible," Miss Potter bit her bottom lip. "Not only do encourage them but we as teachers also monitor their progress."

"So what's the issue?" Darren Chambers asked after a brief pause.

Miss Potter opened the file folder and produced the first drawing. "Maggie is a talented little girl; she's drawn some very nice pictures. So I was a little taken back when she drew this."

Agatha looked at the drawing, goosebumps forming on her arms. She shot a glance to her husband. "That's Aiden's toy huntsman from the attic, but she drew it with red eyes instead of the green."

Darren swallowed nervously. "I'm sure that's just Maggie's imagination running wild."

"There's more." Miss Potter pulled out the second drawing. It was the same huntsman, only depicting it with an ax; beneath it was another toy, a Humpty Dumpty, its arm already

severed. There were streaks of red coloured in with a crayon, where the Humpty Dumpty's arm was cut off.

Agatha gasped. "Oh my God."

Darren Chambers looked on, his face a few shades pale. "When did Maggie start drawing these disturbing pictures?"

"About two and a half weeks ago," Miss Potter responded. "Maggie told another student that 'Clyde' had been visiting her room almost every night since moving into your new home. Says that he wants her to come up to his attic and take her to a nice place. Does any of this sound familiar?"

Agatha slowly wagged her head. "No, she's never told us about this 'Clyde,'" she lied, "or told us about going anywhere with anybody."

Darren saw that the last drawing was face down. "Is that another of Maggie's drawings?"

Miss Potter looked down, instinctively placing her hands on the picture. "I was hoping I wouldn't have to show this one." She tapped her fingers on the table. "This drawing...was the one that unsettled me the most." Miss Potter flipped the paper.

Mister and Mrs. Chambers were aghast. The same huntsman was drawn, and so were Maggie's parents and siblings. It would have been a nice picture, had it not shown a smiling huntsman with a bloody ax, holding a smiling Maggie by the hand and the Chambers family, with "x's" drawn as the eyes and little frowns on their faces, chopped up into pieces.

"I know I'm being forward," Miss Potter said. "But I would suggest taking Maggie to see a specialist who deals with abnormal child behaviors."

"No," Darren said instantly, almost on the defense. "We'll talk to Maggie, tonight."

Later that evening, Darren and Agatha asked about Aiden and Christie's day as they sat at the dinner table. All but Maggie cheerfully told their tale. When Aiden and Christie cleared their dishes and rushed away to their respective bedrooms, Darren and Agatha turned their attention to their youngest daughter.

"Maggie, honey, Miss Potter showed us some your drawings," Agatha reached out to touch her daughter's little hand. "Maggie, your teacher thinks you can draw nice pictures, but what she's shown us today is...is there anything you'd like to tell us?"

Maggie folded her arms and pouted. "Clyde keeps coming to my room. He wants to take me somewhere." In a lower voice she murmured. "I don't want to go."

Mr. Chambers slid closer to little Maggie, putting her arm around the little girl. "Honey, I find that hard to believe. That toy used to belong to your brother, if you want, I can hide it for you."

"Ok," Maggie muttered in a small voice.

Right after tucking the kids in bed, Darren Chambers climbed the steps up to the attic. From the first day moving into the new house Darren never liked the attic. Though not a religious man, Darren had cold chills every time he climbed up to the almost one hundred year old attic.

Darren reached the top of the attic stairs. He almost turned around but vigorously shook his head. "This is ridiculous," he muttered. "I'm a grown adult."

The attic's flooring creaked with Darren's weight. He scanned about him, noticing taped up boxes and an antique cabinet in a dark corner that had been left behind by the previous owner. A flash of forest green caught Darren's eye; Aiden's toy huntsman. The small axe held firm in its hands. It sported a mini green tunic, brown leggings and tiny black boots. The little huntsman was propped up on top of one of the boxes.

"Aiden...I'm going to have a talk with the little devil for scaring his sister." Darren turned to leave when a thought entered his mind.

*It was me.*

He froze, icy cold spider legs crawled down his spine. He glanced back at the toy huntsman still propped on the box. Darren did not want to admit it, but he felt as though the

toy was staring right at him, as though it wanted to communicate with him. Darren hurried to the stairs; he did not look back to see the toy huntsman waddling to where Darren stood moments ago, watching intently but staying out of sight.

Two days later Darren's real estate agent, Ricardo Sandoval was sitting in the Chamber's living room.

"Thank you for coming on such short notice, Ricardo," Darren said as he and Agatha shook hands with the agent.

"Not a problem Darren," Ricardo said with a light trace of a Salvadoran accent. "You know, I have to admit, your urgent request to know the history of your home over a week ago caught me off guard." Ricardo slid the folder across to Agatha, thick with loose leaf papers and newspaper clippings. "I apologize if it took me this long to gather the information you requested, but better late than never."

After the children had gone to sleep, Darren and Agatha pulled up in their study and began poring over the folder. Darren had not told his wife about his uncomfortable experience in the attic.

They flipped through the mundane paperwork of deeds, titles and agreements. The one hundred year history of residents of the Walmer house was found at the bottom of the pile. Agatha pulled out a newspaper clip, dated back to August, nineteen-eighty two that caught her eye. Her eyes went wide. "*Jesus.*"

Darren snatched the article and began to read it out loud. "...police were called to the Baldwin residence just after four this morning after neighbours witnessed a screaming woman thrown from the top floor of the house. Police discovered the bodies of all four Baldwin children: eleven year old twins Darcy and Danielle, nine year old Joseph and six year old Kenneth with multiple stab wounds to the torso. All four children were found tied up in the family attic. Forty-nine year old Clyde Baldwin was found dead with a self-inflicted slash wound to the throat. Sources say the Baldwin family seemed normal the night before the killings; greeting neighbors..."

"Darren, you need to see this," Agatha said as she handed her husband another newspaper clip of the Baldwin murder-suicide. Darren looked at the photos taken of the attic, and paled. The pictures showed the attic walls scrawled with markings of "666" and upside down pentagrams and crosses. On the floor of the attic was another image more terrifying than the first; it was the image of a four eyed demon sitting on a throne with arms spread open.

"Holy shit," he cursed. "My stomach is in knots right now. You think Maggie calling the toy huntsman 'Clyde' is any coincidence?"

"It seems like it..." Agatha's hand absently brushed on the yellow stained file folder. She gasped when she read the contents. "This house was purchased by the wealthy Barnabas family one hundred years ago. It was passed down from generation to generation, each one more evil than the last." Agatha found another sheet of paper. "According to this last known Barnabas family member, his kin, we're engaged in animal sacrifices, orgies, Satanic rituals, the last of his people even went as far as...*oh my God*, ritual murder."

Darren finished reading the rest of the report. "The victims were cleverly chosen. They were people of lower class; prostitutes, winos, the mentally unstable and in some cases, disowned relatives and children of the wealthy. Then the house went up for auction when the surviving Barnabas members vanished without a trace. There's even more reports of strange occurrences: sounds from the attic at three in the morning, screaming throughout the house, shadows of evil entities and so on." Darren paused before wiping his brow. "We should have suspected something was up when we bought the house at a low price..."

Clyde the huntsman stood at the vent, listening. His eyes swirled a bright red when he heard the man named Darren, Maggie's father says, "*We need to sell.*"

"No," Clyde said, his painted smiley faces betraying nothing. "With my trusty ax this family will never leave from here." Clyde cackled a wicked laugh.

"I want to sleep in your bed mommy," Maggie pleaded.

"Maggie, honey, you're a big girl...you need to sleep in your own bed like your siblings."

The little girl shook her head. Darren and Agatha looked at each other, sighing.

"Fine," her father said, "but when mommy and I say lights out, it's lights out."

It was three o'clock in the morning when Maggie was awoken by a shuffling noise along the floor. Clyde the toy huntsman propped himself on the nightstand, staring at her with luminous red eyes. *Sssh, do not be afraid child; I am here to take you to a special place.*

Maggie remained frozen in place, lips trembling, but unable to produce a sound.

*Good, very good my little Maggie. But first...*

Clyde hopped onto the bed into Maggie's lap. His luminous red eyes began swirl, hypnotizing the little girl. *You are my child.* The toy huntsman said with a hush, *you belong to me now.*

Any fear that Maggie felt, had evaporated like a morning fog in the sunlight. Her face was one of tranquillity as she slid off the bed and followed Clyde to the attic. *That's right Maggie, go up and wait for me.*

The toy huntsman hopped up onto the bed again next to Agatha Chambers. He raised his little axe, a sliver of moonlight gleaming off the deadly blade.

Beside Agatha, Darren began to stir. His eyes opened; he stiffened, then sat up in an instant. Agatha's throat was cut open. He looked down to see that his bed sheets were covered in his wife's blood. Darren's own blood ran cold when he saw the empty space next to his deceased Agatha.

"Maggie," he whispered. Even before he saw the trail of blood on the hardwood floors, Darren knew where Maggie went.

The flight up the attic stairs was the longest Darren had ever felt. He'd stumbled a few times, cursing himself for nearly waking his other two children. He hesitated when he reached the attic door. *This has to be a nightmare.*

The door opened with a loud creak. Darren inched his way across the attic floor. Once his eyes adjusted to the dark, Darren saw two shadows shuffling into the cabinet. Two small shadows the same height as his older children.

Then it hit him. "Aiden! Christie! What are--?"

Darren felt a stinging sensation in his Achilles heels. He fell to his knees, fighting hard to not scream, and then dropped to his side when Darren was struck again. He looked up, with eyes as wide as saucers and too injured to defend himself, to see Clyde the toy huntsman looming over him with his bloody ax.

Although the mouth made no movements, Darren Chambers heard the words resonate in his mind from Clyde as he lifted his little but deadly ax. "With my trusty ax, you will never leave!" Over and over again the blade rose and fell until Darren was no longer moving. Satisfied with his work, Clyde scrambled back into the cabinet. "I will return for you," he said.

Maggie was in her trance the whole time, including when her siblings marched into the cabinet.

The toy huntsman returned. "Take my hand little Maggie," Clyde said. Maggie clutched the toy huntsman's hand and was led into the cabinet.

An island appeared before them. Toys could be seen as far as the eye can see. Toys in the sand, toys hung in the trees, broken toys, discarded toys...toys everywhere.

At first Maggie was elated, until she saw a pair of boy and girl toys with brown hair, hung from a branch...

"Is that my brother and sister?" Maggie asked.

"Why yes," Clyde responded.

Maggie shrieked. "They're toys...you've turned them into toys!" Maggie tried to move. "What is happening to me Clyde?!"

**"Precious Maggie," there was a deep, guttural sound in Clyde's voice. "As I told you, I took you to a nice place, and here you are." Clyde picked up Maggie, now a doll, grabbed a line from a nearby spool and tied her to a tree next to Aiden and Christie. He cackled his horrendous laugh as he finished with the knot.**