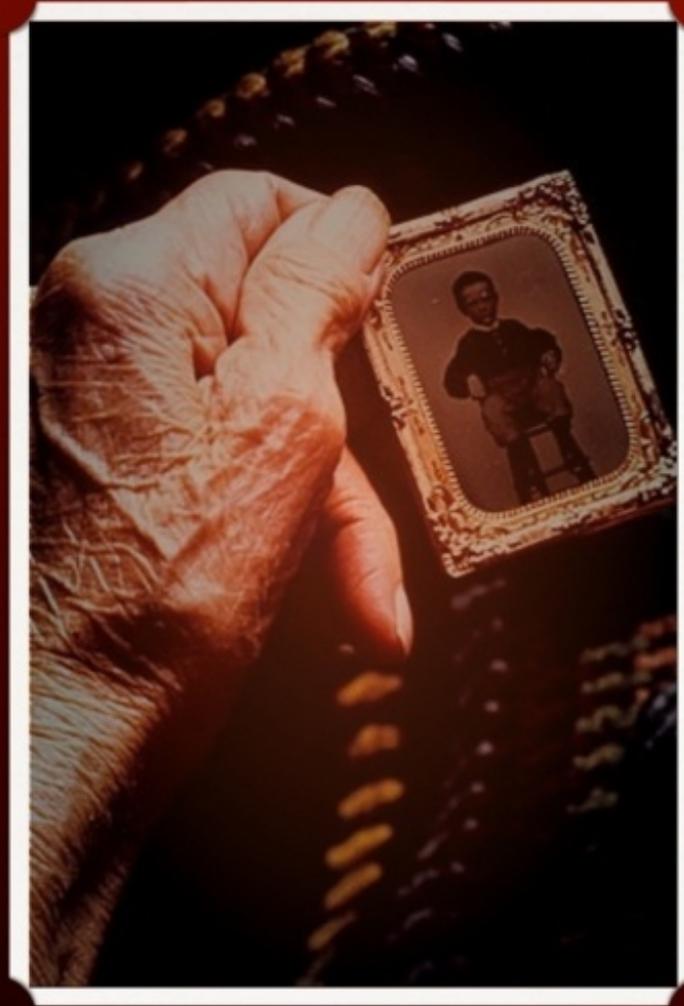


Flash Fiction



The Old Lady from 92

Bobby W. Lee

The Old Lady From 92

She lived alone on top of the hill in a modest two-bedroom clapboard house that was there when that area was still farmland, and before the sprawl of small house subdivision's built in the boom of the '80s. It's pale green paint was faded and in spots chipping off. The gutterless cornice and facial board were rotting away but would probably never see another painter's brush.

The shrubs near the house once short and decorative now towered above the roof line, full of bird nests and various species of spiders. They mostly obscured the old house that sat beside the road with its long once graveled, driveway. It was passed maybe a million times within a week, but it was one of those houses you just don't notice.

Unless you're a kid with a penchant for haunted houses,ghost stories, and things that go bump in the night. No one noticed there was no vehicle there ever, or that the elderly woman never went anywhere except into her yard to hang her wash out on the rusty clothesline or to tend the small garden behind the old house.

They didn't notice that she only wore black dresses and kept her grey hair pulled up tight in a bun. That is no one except me and my kid brother Thomas, who threatens to tell on me for everything I do but never does.

Thomas is six with curly blond hair and a quizzical expression upon his face all the time. He loves my ghost stories I make up and tell him but absolutely will not watch what he calls "booger movies" with me and plays in his room when I do. He loves one certain movie, so I have to sit through it for the ten millionth time after I get done with my "booger movies" so he won't tell Mom. She outlawed "booger movies" after she watched a vampire movie with me and Thomas and I wound up sleeping in the bed with her.

It wouldn't have been so bad but Thomas was half asleep at three in the morning trying to crawl over Mom and slipped;he opened his mouth to yawn and when he came down his teeth hit Mom in the neck. She screamed; I screamed, and Thomas screamed,letting a stream of you know what shower Mom,the bed and me as he jumped up and down.

"Booger movies" were canceled for three generations after that. However, Mom works for a retail store and can't afford a babysitter and seeing how I'm ten and almost grown; I take care of Thomas while she's at work. It's only fifteen minutes up the road, and I know the number by heart so I guess we do okay.

I'm Ian, by the way, sandy brown hair and freckles. Mom says I belong to the Milkman cause both her and Thomas have blond hair, but I've never met him. Mom dated a mechanic once, but he didn't last too long, Mom said he had bad habits, but I don't know what she meant. He always seemed really happy when he was around, but he couldn't talk just right and fell down a lot. He liked "booger movies" though and let us watch them when he came to visit with Mom at night after work. Mom still couldn't watch them though, and they would go into her room and shut the door while Thomas watched his movie in his room, and I watched "booger movies" in the living room.

They played some kind of card game Mom said, but I don't think I'd like it cause you have to shout and holler when you play it, and it sounded like you was getting hurt. Nevertheless, they would always come out smiling after playing,what times I was still awake. Then he would go home, and we wouldn't see him for days.

One day when Thomas and I were with Mom to pick up her paycheck and get groceries I looked up at the pictures hanging upon the block wall of the entrance.I wish I had never done that.Mom was busy at the customer service a few feet away and Thomas and I walked over to the movie box and toy grabber machine.

He was watching the prongs grab for toys, and I was looking forward to seeing if any new "booger movies" were out. I looked up and right into the eyes of a little girl thatI went to school with when it was in on the wall with several other pictures of missing kids.Chills ran down my neck and back.

I grabbed Thomas's hand and flew back to Mom. She was just finishing,and we got a buggy and went to grocery shopping. I usually run to get the buggy, so I can push it fast and ride it for a minute

on the way back to Mom and Thomas but this time; I held back and let Mom get it. I didn't want to see anymore. We got groceries and Mom let me and Thomas get a toy, and we headed toward the checkouts. I had forgotten about the pictures until we checked out and started past the movie box.

Funny how "booger movies" don't scare me a bit, but seeing those pictures had given me th "Willys." I tried not to look with every force in my ten-year-old grown-up body, but it was like those pictures were a magnet, and my eyes were metal shavings. They did just what I didn't want them to, and they looked anyway. I froze like a chicken below a hawk. Those eyes were staring, begging me to help them!

I came to, and Mom had me in her arms crying and saying, "lan, baby are you alright. It's okay baby; it's okay!!!" I could have killed her on the spot! Right there in the store, in front of everybody! You don't grab a ten-year-old man up like that! You should have just let me lay there a minute to get myself back together! I was so mad I was crying! In front off everybody in the store and that just made me madder!"

We got home and put up the groceries, and I went outside to play while Mom cooked, and Thomas played with his new toy in his room not wanting to associate with grown men who fell out in retail stores and cried.

I went outside in front to climb the apple tree next to highway 92 that ran past our front yard. That's the first time I really noticed her, hanging her wash out on that rusty old clothesline. She felt me looking; I swear, and turned around and stared at me sitting on that limb in the apple tree.

For the second time, that day I felt cold chills down my neck and back. Everything went black again and when I came to this time Mom was screaming like a Banshee, running with me to the car. Thomas was already in it, and my arm felt funny.

Mom threw me in and didn't even buckle me in as we tore out the driveway and up to the road! "Don't look at it lan, baby!" She was saying as she locked her eyes on the road and for the second time that day my eyes did what I didn't want them to, they looked! My arm was bent all funny and "Bejeezus", there was an honest injun bone sticking out of my skin! That's when the pain hit me and man or no man, I howled and shrieked!

A couple of minutes later we were at the emergency room with Mom snatching me up again and screaming at Thomas to hurry up and come on. She was screaming so loud all the nurses ran out in the hallway when she burst through the doors with me.

One of them snuck around where she thought I couldn't see her and stuck a needle in my arm! The hurt one! I commenced to howling and shrieking again for all I was worth, but got real sleepy and nodded out dreaming about the Wolfman fighting with Frankenstein.

When I woke up I couldn't remember who won, but I was at home in my bed with a shiny white cast with, "I love you, Mom and Thomas!", written on it with black magic marker. I could've killed her on the spot! Everybody that might walk by could see that! What would they think about a grown man having silly stuff like that on his wounded arm!? I've got my pride after all! I didn't make her wash it off, but I did make her take those silly flowers and balloon out of my room! She put them on the table in the living room where nobody would know they were mine.

She stayed home from work with me and Thomas a couple of days to make sure I wasn't gonna die or nothing and then finally went back to work cause we had to eat she said.

We spent the day playing inside and when Mom got home, I was bored and wanted to go outside.

Apparently climbing apple trees was outlawed too as Mom told me fifty times not to be climbing and not to get my cast dirty. So I just moseyed around on the front porch watching the robins hop around the yard hunting worms.

A noise caught my attention, and I looked across the road just in time to see "The Old Lady From 92" dragging a kid, a little girl about Thomas's age with brown pigtails through the shrubs and into the house. The little girl was crying and screaming until I heard the door slam, and everything got real quiet. It worried me! I went in and told Mom about it, and she just laughed and said it was probably the woman's granddaughter or something.

Mom had gotten a new cell phone, and she was busy playing with it. She told me to get Thomas and for us to get scrubbed up for supper. We were having spaghetti, my favorite (Thomas's was meatloaf) supper ever, and Mom had made brownies for desert!

After supper, we watched a couple of shows together. I think Mom had a crush on One of the personalities. Then it was brush our teeth and bedtime. That night I had trouble falling asleep, I kept thinking about the pictures at the store and the little girl the "Old Lady from 92" dragged into the

house kicking and screaming.

My dreams were tortured by visions of Mom then Thomas dragged in that rotting dilapidated house! I woke up late and Mom was already gone. Thomas was asleep in his bed, so I went to the kitchen to get me some brownies for breakfast and while I was getting the milk I looked gazed through the window, and there she was, "The Old Lady From 92", working there in her yard digging in her garden like a man with an ancient shovel.

I chewed on a brownie and watched as she dug a big hole and then went into the house coming outside out a few minutes later with a black plastic bag that looked heavy. She dumped it in the hole and started filling the hole back up. Her boots sticky with the red Georgia clay.

Something moved behind me, and I screamed, throwing brownie and milk all over the kitchen. Thomas rubbed his eyes and stared at me with his quizzical expression. "Jeez Luiz you can't be sneaking up on people with broke arms! It just ain't right!" I told him.

"I want a brownie,whatcha doin?"he asked sleepily. Watching "The Old Lady From 92," I said matter-of-factly "Whaaat?" he asked walking to the window temporarily forgetting the brownie. I don't see nuffin he sleepily, looking back quickly to make sure I wasn't pulling a fast one and eating the rest of the brownies.

Sure enough,she was gone leaving nothing but the disturbed earth behind. She was right there I said,pointing. However, Thomas was interested in only the stack of brownies steadily disappearing. Thomas headed back to his room to play, and I tried to watch a "booger movie"but I couldn't get my mind off of what I had seen.

I thought about it long and hard,recalling movie after movie,and finally decided "The Old Lady From 92" was a witch. She was trapping these kids and doing gosh knows what to them,and then burying them in the back yard. I knew Mom wasn't going to like it when I told her and was probably going to be mad, so I wanted to find something to prove it to her before she did something drastic like get the belt or make me stand in the corner.

Thomas was taking his afternoon nap, so I decided to check things out. I eased out of the house and crossed the road keeping to the wood line circled around behind the old woman's house. I was scared to death as I ran to the side of the house in a spot not covered by bushes and flattened myself against it like they did in the movies. My hurt arm itched like crazy inside the cast, but I ignored it and edged over to the window and peered in.

What I saw almost stopped my heart. There lying in the floor of the bedroom I was looking in was Thomas's new toy. I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, but there it was. I ran back to the wood line and retraced my steps until I crossed the road. Then I lit out for the front door scared to death. She had seen me. I ran in the house and shut the door.

I caught my breath and went to Thomas's room to tell him. He wasn't there. I ran through the whole house looking for him and calling him,no Thomas. I was getting scared now! I started screaming for him and ran out into the yard and around the house calling his name. No Thomas. I almost called Mom but the fear of what she would do to me for losing Thomas was too great.

I went through the whole ritual again when suddenly an idea formed in my mind. An ugly idea that turned my blood to ice water; She had him! "The Old Lady From 92!" I was in the kitchen and frantically looked around for a weapon. The only thing I saw in my frantic state that even came close was a lighter Mom used to light the heater with. I snatched it up and ran out the door and across the street. I crept around to the window and looked in just in time to see her leading Thomas down the hall gripping him by the wrist.

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I went berserk. There was a lawn mower beside the house with a gas can half full so I snatched it up and charged through the front door taking her completely by surprise. I swung the metal gas can

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