Opening

Build Up

Climax

Resolution

Ending

The School that Stood Alone

Everyone knew the stories about it. Yet no one dared visit it. It just stood on its own, like an unwanted and abandoned person.

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The fading winter night began to draw in as Lionel and Adele played ball at the park. Even though their mum had told them to return before it got too dark, they continued to play long after this time. Rain began to fall slowly and the winter leaves were whipped up into a frenzy by the gusting breeze. It was as if a cold skeletal hand had descended on the park and had gripped it tightly.

Adele, who played football at school, was shooting at her brother Lionel. She’d scored five straight times and just wanted to make it six. This time however, the ball flew high over the bar and disappeared over the dense hedgerow, which separated the park from an unknown site on the other side.

Lionel frowned. He knew the ball was lost and certainly had no intention of going to get it, especially with the light fading so fast.

Adele smirked as she could see the fear on her brother’s face.

“Come on. Let go get it. It’ll only take a few minutes,” smiled Adele, and with that, she headed towards a hole in the thick hedge.

Lionel looked at the looming hedge and the darkness that lay beyond it. His eyes were drawn to the now descending mist, laying a blanket across the park and the first street light he saw turn on. His hands were clammy and his stomach sank. Something didn’t feel right.

“Well,” shouted Adele, “You coming or not?”

Lionel gulped heavily and considered his options - walking home on his own at this time or staying with his older sister? Neither choices were great, but his sister was the better choice.

“Sure,” mumbled Lionel, “I’m coming.”

Lionel rushed to catch up to Adele and just saw her squeeze through the whole in the hedge. Lionel followed, scratching himself on razor sharp thorns in the process. His stomach churned.

He continued to move through the bushes, sensing the rain beginning to fall and the howling wind whipped across him like wolves calling to the moon. Within a few minutes, he had freed himself of the tangles and stood on free ground at last.

A building loomed suddenly in front of him. It was neglected and dilapidated. Tiles hung limply from the broken roof and it was as silent as an eerie grave. It was almost as if the building was sad, with dread clinging to it. Scaffolding, like a rusty exoskeleton, surrounded the walls and scorch marks were visible on the crumbling walls.

“What’s this?” enquired Lionel. An uneasy feeling beginning to crawl over his skin.

Adele stood motionless. “It’s . . . Harbrooke Primary. Or it was. You know the story, right?”

Lionel stayed transfixed on the building, eyeing the ivy that crawled over the desolate building. “No. Should I?”

Adele’s mouth was dry now. “It used to be a popular school until it was destroyed by that fire. No one knew how it started but at least the children got out. Shame about the teachers though. All five of them - gone. That’s why no one likes to come here. The story is enough . . .”

Lionel felt his heart racing. He couldn’t be sure but he was certain he’d caught the glimpse of something inside the build. Something that reflected light.

“I guess the ball must have gone inside the building,” commented Adele. “Come on – let’s go find it. Nothing to worry about. It’s just rumours. I’m sure it’s safe inside . . .” Her voice trailed off, as she walked to the crumbled entrance hall.

A low murmur emanated from within – almost as if the building was calling the two children. Daring them to enter. Something was strange about this ruined buildings presence.

The broken, heavy school door opened with relative ease and the two children entered slowly. Moonlight streamed in through the brown, murky windows, illuminating the sodden and warped flooring. Crumbled walls guarded the entrance way and the eerie school sign hung limply from the wall. Ivy crawled in through the windows.

Adele and Lionel began to move further into the school, eyes still searching for the missing ball. Adele didn’t think she had kicked the ball that hard and surely it couldn’t be further inside?

Within moments, the two of them rounded the corridor and noticed the door to a classroom open on the left hand side. The door still swayed as if it had just been opened . . . They cautiously approached the door and peered inside.

The room was a mess of broken and rotten furniture. Old books lay around, crumpled and beyond use. What caught their eye though was a mirror. Not rusted or ruined but a mirror that looked untouched by the weather or the fire. It was too ornate for a school. It was too clean. It was too out of place. Lionel stopped Adele from going into the room.

“Leave it. The balls not here. Let get moving . . . please?”

Adele’s eyes were drawn to the mirror. Something about it made her want to get close and inspect it; however, her brothers words snapped her thoughts away from it.

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They watched the two children leave the room, their eyes peering from behind the glassed mirror. Their ghostly-blackened hands almost reaching from the mirror. Finally, someone new had come to meet him . . .

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As they ventured further into the desolate school, creaking sounds echoing about them, Adele couldn’t shake her mind from the mirror. What had made her want to get closer? She was here for the ball, not a mirror . . .

Just as they turned into the main school hall, a shrill soft childish giggle rang through it, followed by the shadowed movement in the corner of their eyes. The laugh had reverberated around them like hands trying to grab them. Both children spun quickly but nothing was there.

That’s when Lionel noticed the large mirror attached to back cracked wall of the hall. It was larger than the one from before but in many ways, it was the same. Clean. Ornate. Out of place. His eyes were drawn to it and all thoughts of the missing ball were long gone from his memory.

This time though, something was different. He could see movement within the glass. Not reflections but actual movement. The room’s temperature felt colder now, as if some presence had entered the room. Frosted breath fell from his lips like liquid ice. His sister hadn’t noticed anything as she was still looking in the direction the laughter had come from. What was it . . .

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He watched the boy now. Eyes focussed on the inquisitive face of the young man looking at him. The mirror was the barrier that stood between them.

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Lionel could feel the mirror calling. A soft whispered voice. It felt . . . safe. Safe and comforting. He began to step towards it, his sister oblivious to what was happening . . .

Lionel’s hands stretched out, fingers reaching for the mirror. His feet, almost moving on their own, shuffled closer forward and before he knew it before his hands had touched the mirror glass . . .

Adele spun around, aware that the temperature in the room has gone up. Something had changed and she wasn’t aware of what it was. Her eyes searching quickly to see where Lionel was and it was then she realised that he wasn’t in the room anymore. Panic welled in her stomach and a strange chilled feeling rolled up her neck like ghostly fingers. Lionel was gone.

It was then that the hushed whisper drifted through the room. A soft voice, filled not with anger but with a sense of desperation.

“There’s room for one more . . .”