

# Tick

*by* Dan Tricarico

Palms planted firmly against his temples, Travis paced the room like a caged animal. Enormous black bats screeched in his brain, their pointy wings scraping at the edges of his cranium. His sense of isolation and hopelessness had been building for months and was paralyzing. He'd stopped doing his math homework, English essays, history tests, everything. He'd talked to his counselor, but what did that old guy know? His best friend Dylan was useless. And if his dad found out about his GPA, his depression, or that thing that happened with Janie, there would just be more yelling, more hitting.

Travis needed a professional—a psychologist, psychiatrist, whatever. Maybe his grandmother could make a call. She'd been always been kind to him, especially since his mother ran off. If only he could think, he might be able to crawl out of the blackness. He could beat this thing if he tried. Maybe talking about it would help. And if that didn't work—a single thought crept through the shriek of bats—there were always the gun.

