

Star Dance

by Sally A. Stephenson

It comes to him in the night. When he's lying there, staring at the ceiling. The shadows dance on the white paint, forming into the monsters that get you when you sleep. The moon hangs low in the sky, dancing with the stars in a ballet that lost all movement when age and time became suspended.

They used to dance. The moon and stars. She always made them dance for him just before bedtime. They'd look out the window and he'd watch as the words from age-old literature floated around the room and into his subconscious before he fell asleep.

When the ballet had come to a sudden end it was replaced by the shadows and the shadows turned into monsters.

'There's nothing to be scared of,' Gran would tell him. He couldn't believe her. He made her check the cupboard and under the bed. In the end she refused to and he had to do it himself. Armed with a sneaker he would journey into the depths of his wardrobe for anything that may be lurking inside.

In the cold light of the new dawn the shadows become less, the monsters are defeated for another night. The sun beams and shines a light on all that is lost but it is not enough to guide the way.

The school bus arrives. Yellow and black. Students chatter loudly, music pumping from iPods and paper being thrown around. The paper balls hit him in the back of the head but create no feeling. The jeers are unheard, the commotion a blur.

Arriving at school it becomes a slew of repetitive continuum. Go to class. Sit for an hour. Go to the next class. Sit for an hour. Lunch. Cold macaroni. Morning repeated. Home.

The long driveway sprawled for miles. A lonely walk filled with uncertainty. Each step closer to the house until something is spotted. A glint of silver amongst a deep brown tree trunk. On further inspection it appears to be a shard of glass. Probably a broken beer bottle. But the beer bottles at the house were brown, not silver. Picking it up the edge delves into the skin and draws blood.

Red drops trickle to the ground. They cover the shard of glass. The tree begins to move as if rousing from a deep sleep. It stands up tall and a keyhole appears just the same shape as the shard of glass.

The key has been found. The world can be entered. Access to the place where the moon will once again dance with the stars.

