

HALLOWEEN ROUND ROBIN 2009!

There was nothing unusual about the crisp autumn day; leaves crackled and rustled as the wind kicked them up and around; families laughed and set leering jack-o-lanterns in their windowsills and on their front stoops while kids danced from foot to foot in anticipation of lighting them come All Hallows Eve. The smell of pumpkin seeds and cookies rose through the chimneys of every pristinely-kept home on the street, except the very last one. Behind dilapidated gates, the grey and boarded-up house was mundane and embarrassing to the neighborhood all throughout the year. Yet on Halloween, it became an abode of mysteries, beckoning children, just like Jordan Hill, to come inside....

He didn't really intend to step in the door, but at the taunt of his best friend, and strange excitement in his stomach, he set a hand on the door and pushed gently. Musty. Dust motes caught in his throat and he coughed, but they did not detach. He sighed, glanced back at Ray, then stepped inside.

Black; as though his eyes were closed, but in the silence, with only his breath, faint noises began to creep through the darkness.

Jordan's muscles tensed and sweat beaded on his upper lip. *Why did I agree to come in here?* he thought. He turned to try and find the knob to the front door, but the darkness was so impenetrable, he couldn't even see his own hand when he held it up in front of his face. He felt around blindly in the darkness for the door and soon his hands touched rough wood and traveled upward until he closed his fist around the cold, brass door knob. Just as he was about to open the door and escape back to the outside world, however, a sweet, melodic voice, a girl's voice, stopped him in his tracks.

"Hello, Jordan. I've been expecting you...."

He turned around, scared nearly out of his wits. The girl's voice came again, from behind him.

"Don't try to run," she said, and giggled lightly. Then, somehow, she was in front of him. Her full-tiered pink skirt was ragged, and her stained yellowed corset had scraps of fabric clinging to it. Her hair was white, and it fell in waves to her waist.

She glowed in the darkness, enabling Jordan to become entranced by her beauty, despite the dismal costume and pallor of her skin. Her eyes held no color and Jordan was drawn into the abyss for a brief moment; he felt such an emptiness. He struggled to draw himself away from her stare and stumbled as he awkwardly walked backward, away from her.

She watched him intently and shook her head as she said, "There is nowhere for you to go."

And then her image changed, like the flickering of a lightbulb, and a gaping skeleton stared back at him for a brief moment.

She shifted back into the girl's body. He couldn't tell how old she was — she was at least twelve, but younger than eighteen. She smiled again, and touched his chin.

"Why are you so worried?" she asked, in that strangely song-like voice. A wisp of hair fell and touched his face.

Her hair smelled like crushed rose petals and dust. Jordan froze, and though everything in his mind told him to run, he stayed where he was. She smiled, and he noticed a dimple in one of her cheeks. He reached out to touch her face, as she reached out to him.

"You see?" she said, her voice low and seductive. "We belong together."

Just as Jordan's outstretched hand brushed against her chin, the girl vanished so quickly and completely that it was as though she had never been. Jordan stood, dumbfounded, trying to collect his thoughts. He was tempted to simply dismiss the occurrence as a Halloween flight of fancy, but found he could not: the girl's sudden disappearance had left him cold and hollow, as if the touch had somehow bound them together only to be torn apart moments later. Trying to ignore the pain of his empty heart, Jordan turned once more to the door, taking the knob in his hand. He turned it, opened the door, and prepared to step back onto the street, where Ray was surely waiting for him, but what he saw on the other side sent a chill through his body.

Cops. Ray was being led in handcuffs to a police cruiser. Multiple excuses and apologies were running through his head when he stepped outside to surrender himself to the mercy of the law, but then pain like lightening hit his mind and body. It was electricity reeling in and out of his feet. He pulled his feet back in the door and the pain stopped.

The girl's giggle came again, from far away. She was standing beside Rocky. A surge of jealousy passed through Jordan, but then he saw. There were strings tied to Rocky's wrists, and she held the end of those strings. She was controlling him, like a simple puppet in skilled hands. And his eyes — they were a vivid green, instead of his usual plain brown.

Every small town has a cocky cop and Rocky was no exception. Jordan smirked as he watched this mystery woman control Rocky and release Ray's handcuffs. And he couldn't help but wonder if her eyes used to be green instead of the dark black that he had stared into just minutes before. Jordan closed the door slowly and groped his way around the black abyss, then sat down on what he believed to be a couch. He should be scared, right?

He should have been scared, but he knew that fear was one thing that was not on his mind. He could not stop thinking of her, and he knew that all his questions about her would be answered if he could find her again. But the room was strangely empty, empty in a way he could not define. He forgot Ray and Rocky completely, and stood up. His face was stone determination as he set off to search the house for the girl.

He closed his eyes and let his senses take over, immediately feeling rather than hearing movement above his head. Blindly groping the air and taking small steps lest he run into a wall, he found the stairs a few steps in front of him. Locating the first step, he ran up the stairs as fast as possible in the oppressing darkness and stumbled when he stepped to find there wasn't another stair beneath his foot. He opened his eyes and realized there was a faint green glow emanating from beneath a door to his right....

SIX MONTHS LATER

"Jordan, can you tell me what happened that night?"

The boy with the vacant expression sat across from Dr. Mary Stokes at the table, and he smirked as he crushed his empty pudding cup in his hand.

"The others who were there — your friend Ray, Officer Rocky — they say they don't remember anything," Dr. Stokes tried again. "Do you?"

His head was lolling back and forth, and he began to murmur the only thing he'd said since that Halloween night he'd broken into the house at the end of the street: "We belong together... we belong together...."

THE END - HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

THANKS TO:

*Joanna, Breezy, Melody, Sharlie,
Chelsea, Cara, Alyssa, Drew, and Holly.*