

INTERLUDE: THE DEAD WOMAN OF BROWNIE'S CREEK

An Audio Drama by

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MIDNIGHT BURGER

Interlude: The Dead Woman of Brownie's Creek.

SFX: CAMPFIRE WITH A SMALL CREEK NEARBY. CHILDREN PLAYING NEARBY.

JUNE

Alright y'all, settle down. Bobbie, Caroline, settle down, put your butts on the ground, y'all. You all wanted a story, now it's time for a story. Good. Thank you, y'all. Now, there's all kinds of stories I can tell around campfires, but I hear tell what y'all want tonight is a scary story, is that right?

SFX: GIGGLING.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Well, now. Seeing as how all your parents have put their trust in your big cousin June to bring their kids out here into the woods, I'm not sure that telling a scary story is the most responsible thing one could do. Can y'all promise me that if I tell you this story that you'll still go to bed in your tents tonight like good boys and girls?... Yeah?... Everybody nod your heads... Alright. Settle in.

This story is a true story, and it took place a long time ago. Here we are in 19 and 63. This story takes place all the way back in 19 and 34. Do y'all know how many years ago that was?... No? Well, that was 29 years ago, children. I wasn't even alive back then, but my daddy was. And he told me this story the same way I'm going to tell it to you now.

It all took place right here. By Brownie's Creek in Harlan County, Kentucky. See, back then, Harlan County was a dangerous place. Coal miners were striking and the sheriff wasn't havin' any of it. The Sheriff back then was a man by the name of Winston Duffy, one of the meanest men to ever set foot in Harlan County, and this county has seen some mean ones. Strikers were gettin' pulled out of their houses in the middle of the night and left for dead in the woods, leavin' cryin' wives and babies behind them. To this day they'll still find old bones among them Persimmon trees, the bodies of striking workers that the sheriff decided to disappear.

My daddy tells me that one day, in the midst of all the strife and famine, the folks around Brownie's creek were treated to a miracle. Somehow, overnight, someone had built an entire restaurant right in the middle of town. A fancy one, too. One like they'd never seen. The people in town walked in, wonderin' what it was all about, and waiting there to take their order was a beautiful Mexican lady. And she told them that all the food was free.

You see, nobody had money for food back then because the coal company was trying to starve 'em out. Wives were mixin' sawdust into their bread just to make it big enough to feed their whole family. And in the midst of all that, a restaurant givin' out free food? Have you ever heard of such a thing? They thought their prayers had been answered.

But after a whole day of stuffin' themselves full of Hot Brown and Mutton, they awoke the next morning to find that the magical restaurant had disappeared just as easy as it had shown up. They wondered if it was all a dream.

Now, I know what you're thinkin'. You're thinkin', "Miss June, this doesn't sound like no scary story to me." Well, you just wait until this next part.

For, in the morning, when they found that the mysterious restaurant had disappeared, they also found that it had left behind... a dead body!

SFX: GRASPS.

June

Now, back then the folks around Brownie's Creek were no strangers to dead folks. As I said, the Sheriff was makin' plenty of dead bodies. But this particular body was unlike anything you'd seen before. She was a beautiful woman, with no signs of violence about her, almost as if she slept there in the tall grass. But when you moved to touch her, you'd find that her skin was ice cold, and seemed to shimmer in the daylight.

Now, y'all are too young to know, and I'm sure your parents a'int told you, what it's like when a body goes from livin' to bein' dead.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

But your parents a'int here round this campfire with us, so I'm going to tell you some things you best not know. When a body dies, it begins to go bad. The skin turns pale, the eyes go white, and you begin to smell something awful. You just can't imagine the smell. Worse than ten piles of garbage, y'all. A smell so bad your eyes start to water. And then... and then come the birds. Birds of all kinds gather round a dead body. Hesitant at first, making sure that you're dead, and then they start to pick away at you... and they start with your eyes!

SFX: GHASPS.

JUNE

But with this strange body that now lay in the grass, there was no such thing. No birds, no smell, no whiteness in the eyes, like she was frozen in time. They had a hard time even callin' her dead. But with no heartbeat, no life in her eyes, and with skin as cold as the bottom of Brownie's Creek itself, they didn't know what else to call her.

The Sheriff was informed of the strange body that had appeared down by the creek, but he was in no hurry to clean up yet another mess that had been left by the chaos of Harlan County. So the dead woman of Brownie's creek lay there for days, covered by a white sheet held down by stones.

In those few days the minds of everyone in town ran wild. Who could she be? Where could she have come from?... WHAT is she? Some say she was a fallen angel others said she was a witch that had run afoul of the devil. They spoke in hushed tones as they gazed across the road at the billowing white sheet, knowing underneath lay the body. Not breathin', though not dyin' neither.

Days later, Sheriff Winston Duffy finally arrived to address the issue. Everybody watched from afar as he tore away the sheet and circled the body. No one knew wether to be scared of the body, or scared of the sheriff. Now, while the people in town all let their imaginations run wild about this mystery, the sheriff found himself without a drop of curiosity. Not one bit. He didn't care that the body of this woman defied the laws of nature, and he didn't care about any stories of the vanishing restaurant that had apparently dropped her off.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

His only thought was to bend down and roll her body up in the sheet and throw her in the back of his police car.

But when he reached down to do away with her corpse, he felt an ice cold hand wrap around his neck. And he locked eyes with the otherworldly face of the Dead Woman of Brownie's Creek.

"Winston..." She whispered to him.

The Sheriff jumped back so far that he nearly jumped out of his skin. And the townspeople watched in horror as the dead woman slowly rose to her feet like she was pulling herself out of hell. The Sheriff's face went white as he stumbled backward. She spoke his name again.

"Winston," she said. "You killed me, Winston."

Nobody but the Sheriff recognized the voice that came from the woman. He knew that voice all too well. It was the voice of his wife. His wife who had mysteriously disappeared not six months ago.

The voice of his wife emerged again from her mouth. "You buried me in the yard. In the yard?! Under the swing set?!" As she spoke she lurched toward him. Now covered in sweat, the Sheriff drew his gun.

"You stay back. I don't know what you are, but you stay back!"

But despite his warnings she continued to move toward him.

"All those years, all those children and you buried me under the swing set?!"

Three shots rang out as the Sheriff pulled the trigger. But as I'm sure you can imagine, you can't kill somethin' that a'int alive. They say you could hear the bullets bounce off her skin like she was made of steel. Three more shots rang out and she still kept comin'.

"You think you're the big man cus you got that gun?! You took my life now I'm gonna take your soul, Winston!"

And the Sheriff, a grown man, started screamin' like he was no older than you all. He jumped into his police car, hit the gas and tore off down the road, leaving his nightmare in the rear view.

... The Dead Woman of Brownie's Creek gave no chase. Just stood there as the sheriff's car kicked up dirt and sped away.

She stood there, and stood there, and stood there. For hours. You'd never seen something so still. The people in town sat in the safety of their homes and watched her. Waiting for hours for her to do somethin'. Anything. While they waited, they wondered. Wondered how the woman could suddenly wake from her slumber and take on the voice of the Sheriff's wife? And what was all that talk about her bein' buried under the swing set?

As the sun began to set, there was one young man in town who decided he'd waited long enough. He was going to approach the Dead Woman who still stood as like a tombstone just a few hundred feet away. That young man was my daddy.

My daddy crept out of the corner store where he was hidin' and slowly made his way toward her.

Now, my daddy was a paratrooper during the war, and he jumped out of airplanes with only a parachute on and dropped down into enemy territory, and he told me the fear he felt when he was jumpin' out of a plane was nothin' compared the the fear he felt, walkin' toward the Dead Woman of Brownie's Creek that day.

He approached her real cautious like. And when he was half-way convinced that she wasn't going to leap toward him and rip his soul from his body, my daddy simply said "Ma'am, what is it you want from us?"

And then suddenly she turned to him. She turned to him and said with a hollow voice, "Where's Caspar?"

Then she fell once again to the ground. Lifeless. My Daddy was desperate for this day to end. The town couldn't spend any more time bein' held hostage by this woman. So after taking a deep breath, he bent down, rolled the body up into that sheet, carried her to the deepest part of Brownie's Creek he could find and tossed her cold body into it.

She sank to the bottom like a stone and disappeared.

And that was that.

My daddy never found out what she meant by what she said. Who was this Caspar? Why was she lookin' for him? It was the strangest day of his life.

You know what else was strange? Two days later Sheriff Winston Duffy confessed to the murder of his wife. I suppose his encounter with the Dead Woman of Brownie's creek shook him to his core. And over the years they began to call her a saint, for she had rid Harlan County of the Sheriff and he was one of the most evil sons-of-bitches this county had ever seen.

SFX: GIGGLING

JUNE

That's right, you heard me, I said sons-of-bitches. They say you can still see her body sometimes when the sun shines real bright on the creek. And my daddy told me, that the place where he dropped her in the creek... is right behind us right now.

But don't be scared, y'all. That was, as I said, 29 years ago, so I think we can all rest assured that the Dead Woman of Brownie's Creek has found her final resting place.

And speaking of resting places, my story has ended and it's time for y'all to get into your tents and get a good night's sleep. Go on now. We're gettin' up real early to go fishin'.

SFX: KIDS NOISILY MAKE THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR TENTS.  
FOOTSTEPS IN THE MUD TO THE EDGE OF THE RIVER.

JUNE

Night, night, You. Hope it ain't too cold down there.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY. SOUNDS OF THE RIVER AT NIGHT.  
THEN SOMETHING STIRS IN THE RIVER, THEN HANDS AND FEET IN THE  
MUD, THEN TWO FEET STUMBLING, THEN SILENCE.

THE EX

...Where's Caspar?

END