

Haunted Hill

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Deep down in Autmnvillie lived a town full of cowardly people, who were too scared to adventure into the unknown and presumed the worst in humankind. When this town first met Mr. Gotham, they thought he was a brilliant addition to their neighborhood, that he was someone who could bring in wealth and fame. However, they were quick to adjust their view on him and label him as a deranged man. Mr. Gotham got this reputation for pretending to be a mad scientist one Halloween night. He was walking around with kids, and they loved having an adult partake in the fun. He even had an imaginary accomplice who would communicate with him and only him. Once word got out that he wasn't pretending to have an accomplice, but believed he was actually talking to the man, the town was overcome with fear. Who was this man, and what was wrong with him? No one wanted him walking the streets of Autmnville, so he banished himself to his grotesque mansion on top of the hill. In his backyard, there was a drop-off cliff, falling down to a creek, which made it even more mysterious. The locals nicknamed the mansion Haunted Hill.

"Excuse me sir, do you know where Elden Gotham lives?" asked the elderly lady in a solemn manner.

"Well, he resides on Haunted Hill, but I'm not sure that he's actually present anymore," said the shoe store clerk.

"What shall you mean? Elden and my son went to university together. He's a fine young man."

"Mr. Gotham hasn't been seen since October 31st, ten years ago. He pretended to be a mad scientist and walked down the street with the kids. Now, this may seem fairly normal, except he was thirty years old and his acting was far too realistic. Since that day, everyone thought he was insane because he was talking to his imaginary sidekick and friend, Albert Sin. The town was beyond terrified of him. He hasn't shown his face since, so now everyone says his hill is haunted and no one has crossed its path," explained the clerk.

"His hill may be haunted, but that doesn't mean he won't want some company. Is there a way I can get up there?" questioned the lady.

"Ha, that'll be a day's walk, and no one dares to bring a carriage up there. Good luck."

"I must be on my way then if it's a day's walk. Do you have any good walking shoes I can buy?"

"Oh, yes. Only the best in town, I recommended these one's Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Sin," she interrupts.

"Excuse me, ma'am, you can have these for free," frantically says the store clerk, as he flees to the closet.

What should the experiment be today? Maybe I should go outside again. No, no that sun hates me, and the people will sense my doors opening. Oh, shut up, Albert you don't like the sun either. Let's try to create new electricity, that sounds like a magnificent idea—unless it explodes my glorious mansion.

Ding Dong.

Why is there a human ringing my doorbell? Albert, did you put someone up to this? WHAT IS YOUR MOTHER DOING HERE? Did you tell her I killed you? How am I supposed to hide you from her, this situation is nearly fatal to me.

"Open the door Elden. She's waiting for you," responds Albert.

The door creaks open.

"Hello, Elden, do you remember me? I am Albert's mom, the boy you went to university with."

"Yes, madam, I know who you are, but my real question is what are you doing at my mansion."

"Dear, don't you have any reverence? I am allowed to come visit whenever I intend."

"But WHAT are you doing here? I do not want you here, I do not ever have visitors, nor do I know how to act with them."

"If you must know, I came to get closure on my son's death. I've been tracking you down for years. You are the last missing piece to his murder. I'm hoping you will be able to answer my questions and bring me some contentment."

"I know nothing about your son dying. I left university six months before he passed away—Albert, get out of the kitchen!—excuse me, ma'am, I need to attend to my kitchen."

"Stop. You said his name. Is he here? Do you see my son right now?"

"I can assure you I have no idea what you are talking about—Albert don't touch those."

Elden runs toward the kitchen and Mrs. Sin follows.

"You know, Elden, killing someone is a sin. That's how I got my last name. I too was a killer. You can tell me where you hid his body. I know you did it."

"I only did it because he was valedictorian of our class. I helped him study every night, and he got all the glory. Now his ghost haunts me every day, right here in my own mansion, and this whole town thinks I'm deranged."

"The only way for you to be at peace is for you to be in the same dimension as him. Elden, you're going to have to die for him to stop haunting you, and I will die with you."

"No, no that will not do. I cannot die, who will take care of my mansion on the hill? And why will you die with me?"

"The people of your town already believe you are gone, so it will not make a big difference. And I need to die with you to repent my own sin of killing someone. You see, I knew you killed my son because you and I share the same sin. When two people share a sin, one can tell when the other is lying."

"But I cannot tell if you are lying."

"That's because I have nothing to hide anymore."

"Well, fine, if we are both going to die together, I have the perfect place. Let's go to my backyard."

The door creaks open.

Mrs. Sin and Elden Gotham both willingly plummeted to their deaths in his backyard, jumping from his hill to the creek, in an attempt to free themselves from sin. Though no one knows if they lived free after their lives, it is said that the house on the hill looks more haunted than before. Lights still twinkle on and off by themselves in the distance. As for Albert, his murderer was discovered, but he learned a heart wrenching truth about his mother, leading him to stop his haunting forever.

Honna Westlund is a sophomore here at the University of North Dakota, where she's studying secondary education and English. She is in pursuit to start her career as a high school English teacher and hopes to one day work towards her master's degree to become a professor. Her time here at UND has helped her fall back in love with both worlds of fiction and nonfiction writing, where she can showcase both her imaginative side and write for relief of her reality. When she's not writing she enjoys spending her free time with family and friends, working on her family farm, and traveling the world.