

The Fruit of Time

A ghost story

By Madeline M.

It was winter time in Sitka, Alaska. No elementary kid in Sitka liked winter time. It was a time of bullies. A time of dares. A time of ghosts.

Will stared out his bedroom window. He could see his reflection in a small murky puddle in the driveway. He could see his big blue eyes and his short blond hair. His cheeks were red and rosy from his walk home from school in the chilled air. His lips were dry and cracked and his nose was runny. But worst of all, Will was not smiling. Most Sitka kids smile when they get home, but not Will. If any Sitka kid doesn't smile, there is only one explanation. The kid got dared. Dared to go meet the ghost of Sitka lodge. Dared to eat the fruit they give and come back out . . . alive. The kids of Sitka call the fruit, "The Fruit of Time".

The kids started these dares and fruit nicknames when they heard a rumor about a girl who got dared to go into the lodge. She did. She got dared to eat the fruit. And she did. But did she ever come out? She didn't. All that was left of her was a small hourglass with her name on it.

It was a horrible story. So horrible that Will almost didn't believe it. Will hated scary stories. He hated everything about them. He hated the lodge, the fruit, the ghost, but most of all, Will hated the fact that he, Will Toppers, had been dared by three school bullies to go into some stupid lodge, eat some stupid fruit, and turn into some stupid hourglass. Is it worth it? Possibly not getting teased ever again by these stupid bullies. Maybe he could pretend to eat the fruit. Maybe somehow he could pretend to go into the lodge. Whatever he did, he did not want to be a sand timer for the rest of his miserable life.

Every kid who had ever been dared, except for the one girl, had chickened out. Choice one would be to chicken out right before you touched the rusty, cold door handle. Choice two would be to interrupt the school bullies saying, “Hey, Baby, I triple dog dare you to”-

No! Will did not want to choose choice number two because then he would be teased for the rest of his life with, “Hey look, Baby’s growing feathers---ba ba bach bach. What’s that Baby? Bach bach ba bach!”

To Will, that was not an option.

That night, Will dressed in the warmest clothes he could find: 2 sweaters his mother knitted for him that he would not normally wear in public or not under a jacket, a strong winter jacket with lots of pockets to hold a flashlight, hand warmers and extra batteries, a pair of too small gray sweat pants, and black snow pants.

As Will was ever so quietly closing the door to the front of his house, he heard someone say his so-called nickname, “Hey, *Baby*, ready for a scare?”

It was Crash, the leader of the bully posse. He had dark hair and dark eyes, but his face always seemed ever so pale. His facial features reminded Will of a crow. He had a tight jaw. He had a long pointed nose, and he had that gleam in his eye that says, “Whatever I have, it’s mine.”

The two other kids, Bryn and Jamie, were both a year younger than Crash, but just as scary and dumb. As the three boys gradually approached Will, he let out a small cry, for he was scared. No, not scared, he was terrified. Will knew he had to do it. He knew he had to try. He took a few steps forward, with the door still ajar. They all slowly headed west, for the lodge would soon be in sight.

Will was sick. Could he really do this? Could he really eat the fruit? Should he stop asking himself questions? Only God knows. Is that fair? That God knows something about Will that Will doesn't even know? He had to go for it--he had to try. With that statement and fear in his heart, he slowly turned the rusty handle and walked into the Sitka lodge for the first ... and the last time.

The lodge was a dump. There were broken bottles everywhere. The fireplace looked like it was well-loved when it was burning. The wood on the ceiling was moldy, and the plaster on the wall was falling off. The paint was peeling and there was a ghost in the corner . . . OH MY GOD, THERE'S A GHOST IN THE CORNER!! Will ran to the door, but it was locked. Will panicked. He dared to look back. The ghost was still there. It did not move. It was paralyzed. Will examined it more closely now. It was a sheet. But it was so white. How could something so white be in a place so dirty ...

“Wooooooooooooooooooooo”

A sound interrupted Will's train of thought.

“Wooooooooooooooooooooo”

There it was again, louder this time. What was making the noise? Will did not want to stick around any longer to find out. He bolted for the door. But wait, it was locked. Will froze. A smell. It was amazing. It was like all the fruits mixed together in the world. It was irresistible. It was like heaven. Suddenly, Will felt so much better and relaxed. He slowly turned around noticing the white sheet was gone, but he didn't care. He had his smell and himself now. What more could he ask for? Carelessly, he walked toward the heavenly smell of deliciousness. For it was his and his alone.

Will's smell lead through the kitchen and into a little confined spaced closet. Mmmmm, the smell was stronger and more irresistible

than before. It was amazing. What was he doing here again? Why was he at this lodge? Will could hardly remember.

“Slam”.

The door behind Will suddenly shut loudly, and all of his thoughts came flooding back to him. The lodge, the fruit, the sheet ... the smell ... ohhh, the smell. Now he could see it. The fruit. The fruit of time. He had to eat it. It was his fruit. What could possibly happen? Will remembered the story and shook his head. He didn't believe that junk anyway. He reached toward the fruit, but it vanished. Noooo--Will's fruit. Will looked up. The fruit was suspended in mid air. No, not floating. The sheet, no, not sheet, it was a ghost. The ghost of Sitka Lodge. Will wanted to panic, but the smell wouldn't allow him to do so. With the snap of the ghost's finger, the door flew open. As the ghost weightlessly drifted out, Will stumbled behind literally copying every move the ghost made. Will attempted to fly, but that was not a pretty sight.

Finally, Will looked ahead of him. He knew what the ghost was doing now. The ghost was luring Will off a cliff. But the fruit's smell was so strong now that Will couldn't do anything. He didn't care. Will carelessly moved closer. He wanted to cry, but he just couldn't. Suddenly there was a crack of lightning and a boom of thunder and something was falling, falling, falling from the sky. “CRASH”.

“BOOM”.

The sound was horribly loud and scary. The object falling was getting larger. Will could hardly make out the object's shape in the dark star-struck sky. But Will knew it was a rock. A boulder sent from the heavens. Will knew that God had sent the boulder. Maybe it was a good thing that God knows something about Will every once in a little while. For the booms and the crashes had cleared Will's mind and set him back on course. The ghost was now gone, along with that cursed fruit.

As the boulder was falling past Will's face, he could make out a small portion of a white gleaming object that seemed to be clinging to

the rock for dear life. It was the sheet. The sheet was God, and God had saved his life.

Will would probably never see the sheet again, but as Will turned around, he noticed two different things. The bullies were gone, probably scared to death by the ghost. And the white sheet was hanging on a small rusty hook on the lodge's back door. Will wanted to take the sheet so bad, but he knew he had to leave it for the next kid. For no elementary kid in Sitka likes dares.

