

# FRIGHT TIME

3 Spine-tingling Tales  
for Young Readers

- THE WHITE PHANTOM
- NIGHTMARE NEIGHBORS
- CAMP FEAR



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# THE WHITE PHANTOM

by Eve Marko



**T**he footprints were big. *Real* big.

I noticed them right away because it rained last night. They were animal prints in the hard mud, the biggest I've ever seen.

I was on my way to Hunter Ridge, but now I stopped and looked all around me. Nothing made a sound. Below I could see the blue water of Hurley Creek. Up above, Hunter Ridge was full of trees and forests.

I looked down at the ground again. Who—or what—made these tracks?

All around me, the bushes were flattened out.

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Some were even cut in half, as if some gigantic animal had come rushing through the forest and trampled them down. The tracks came down from up on the ridge and then back up again. I looked down a second time and saw the gray stones of our house just below the hill.

This is crazy, I thought. If I didn't know better I could swear some gigantic animal had stood here last night and looked down at our house!

I looked at those footprints again. They were much bigger than my feet. They were much bigger than my *dad's* feet. I knew there were deer in these forests, but it wasn't some deer that had made these tracks. It was something else. Something I'd never seen before.

There was a noise behind me. I jumped. A family of wild turkeys came into the clearing where I was standing. They stopped when they saw me, but since I just stood there watching them, they continued on their way down to the creek, probably to have a drink of water.

I'd never seen wild turkeys this close before. They were big purple and gray birds with long red necks and angry red eyes. I looked down at their feet as they passed. Their feet were tiny compared to whatever it was that made the

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enormous tracks in the hard mud.

Something hit the ground in front of me with a loud crunch. It was a small rock and it landed just three feet from where I stood.

Suddenly there was a loud commotion. The wild turkeys squawked loudly and flapped their wings hard as they rose up to the trees, disappearing as fast as they could.

“Did I get any?” a voice asked from behind the trees.

A girl came running into the clearing and looked up at the birds that were flying away. She wore shorts and a T-shirt, a red and white L. A. Dodgers baseball cap, and red sunglasses. “Did I hit any?”

“You almost hit *me*,” I said. “Are you crazy, throwing a rock like that? You could have hurt somebody!”

She looked at me through her red sunglasses. “Why would anybody just be standing there looking at a bunch of birds?” she asked, shrugging her shoulders.

“I’ve never seen wild turkeys this close before,” I told her. “And I’m not anybody, I’m Andy Baker. I just moved here yesterday.”

“Are you the family that moved into that big

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stone house at the bottom of the hill?"

"That's us."

I put out my hand. She put out hers.

"I'm Jenny Humphreys," she said, "but everybody calls me Shades on account of my sunglasses."

We shook hands. I looked down at her arm. There was a big Band-Aid around her elbow and a couple of long scratches up and down her arm. "Shades, you look like you play football," I told her.

She smiled. She wore braces on her upper teeth but you could tell that nobody dared tease her about them. "I play everything, especially baseball," Shades said. "But I got these scratches because I spend a lot of time up on the Ridge. Only sometimes when it's dark I can't see where I'm going." She had a blade of grass in her mouth and she started chewing on it.

"You walk up here in the dark?"

"Sure," she said. "What's the matter, are you afraid of the dark?"

"Don't be such a smart aleck," I told her. Then I remembered the footprints. "Hey, Shades, what do you think of this?" I showed her the footprints in the hard mud.