

# FRIGHT TIME

3 Spine-tingling Tales  
for Young Readers

- NIGHT CREATURES
- WHO AM I?
- CEMETERY SCHOOL



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# NIGHT CREATURES

by Shannon Donnelly

## 1

**W**e call him Zooman.”  
I looked at the girl who had said that. She stood on the sidewalk not far from me, real close to the ambulance. I had seen her in front of the house across the street. And once at school. She had black hair and big dark eyes. I looked back at the ambulance and its flashing blue lights.

“No one knows his name so we call him Zooman,” she said.

This time I frowned at her. I didn’t want to make friends. I didn’t want to like this town. It’s

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only another boring town, I told myself. Just like the last three towns we had moved to. A boring town with boring people. I really wanted to believe that so that I wouldn't mind when we moved again.

"Don't you want to know why we call him that?" she said, starting to sound like I'd hurt her feelings. Shifting my backpack to my other hand, I looked at her again. She blinked and stared up at me.

I stuffed a hand in the back pocket of my jeans. "'Cause he works in the zoo, right?"

She shook her head and smiled. Then she pointed to the top of the wall.

I looked up at it, and didn't see anything but stones and a cloudy sky.

"Don't you see them? You can see the heads of some. Right near the top. Come on, you can see better from my house. They're called topiary," she said, pointing to the wall again.

"Topey-what?"

"Top-i-ary," she said slowly, like she was reading. "They're plants cut so that the leaves grow into animal shapes. See..." She pointed to a lump of green that looked like a picture of a dragon's head that I'd seen in a book. Its mouth

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was open. "There's the ears on top and that's its nose and those bumps are its spine. Isn't it cool?"

"Yeah, I guess." I shrugged and started walking back across the street. She followed.

"He's got more. In his yard. Some are *really* cool. I saw them once when he first moved in and left his gate open. He moved here a long time before you did."

"Yeah, and I bet I move away before he does, too," I said. Not that I cared. Still, it was kind of different. I like animals. But it's hard to keep them when you move every year or two. "What kind of animals?" I asked.

"Not real animals. They're all make-believe. There's this really, really big bear with giant paws, and a lion with wings and . . ."

"Does he have any live animals? You know, like a cat?"

She shook her head. "Plants are alive. But I don't know about a cat. Do you have a cat?"

I shook my head. I'd had a cat, but I'd had to leave him behind when we moved.

Then I saw a blur of white.

"Watch out," I said and pulled the girl back.

The two ambulance guys came out through the gate as if the house behind them was on fire.

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They had a stretcher with wheels. It looked like a long, flat shopping cart. One guy pulled, the other guy pushed. An old man lay on the stretcher, a blanket pulled up to his chin.

“Shut the gate, kid, will you?” the guy pulling the stretcher asked.

I nodded and grabbed the black iron handle. I had to push with both hands to clang it shut. Then I turned around.

As I did, I heard the old man talking. “Can’t leave . . . won’t let me . . . they won’t . . . have to feed . . . animals . . . feed . . .”

I looked up to ask the guys if they had seen any cats or dogs in the yard, but they were busy.

Blue lights flashed. The siren started screaming again and the ambulance drove away.

When it had gone, the girl looked up at me. “Do you really think he was talking about his plant animals?”

I shrugged, then I walked back over to the gate.

The gate must have locked when I shut it. I pulled at the handle, but it didn’t move. “Hold this,” I said, giving the girl my backpack. I found a part of the wall where the rocks stuck out a lot. “Warn me if you see the bus,” I said. Then I