

FRIGHT TIME

3 Spine-tingling Tales for Young Readers

- ZOMBIE ZONE
- AFTERSHOCK
- THIS EVIL ISLAND



BARONET
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Baronet Books, New York, New York

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Waldman Publishing Corp.
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New York, NY 10028
Phone: (212) 730-9590

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Printed in the United States of America

ZOMBIE ZONE

by Jack Kelly

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I pulled on the iron handle. The trapdoor wouldn't open. I tried it again. I heaved with all my might. The rusty hinges creaked. I struggled and pulled it up.

I was exploring our new house. I should say our old house. It was new to us, but it was built about a hundred years ago.

I looked down into the darkness. I could smell a funky odor, like wet clay. For a second I thought I heard something, but then it was all quiet.

"Max," my dad had told me, "you're going to

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love Oklahoma.”

“It’ll be such a change,” Mom added.

It was a change all right. All my life, twelve years, I’d lived in an apartment in New York City. That was my town. It was the place where all my friends were. The place where there was always somebody in the park to shoot baskets with or Rollerblade with or to hang out with. The place where we had a pizza parlor that served the world’s best pizza right outside our building.

So Dad got a job with an oil company and we moved to Yucca, Oklahoma, except, I called it Yuck, Oklahoma. I didn’t know anybody. There was nothing to do. It was just a little town surrounded by cow pastures. And what’s a cow? To me, it’s just a cow.

The kids I’d met so far in Oklahoma were okay, but they talked kind of slower—everybody did out here. Their ways just seemed so different.

For one thing, they always had to be running off to do their chores. I mean, Mom makes me clean my room every month or so, even if it doesn’t need it. But these kids have to weed the garden, mow the lawn, carry in wood, milk cows, feed chickens. It was a whole other world to me.

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So I was bored out of my skull and looking for something to do. That's when I found this trapdoor in a corner of the basement. It had some old crates and barrels and junk piled on top of it. I don't think anybody had opened it in years.

I could see the top of a ladder, but the rest of it was all in darkness. I went to find a flashlight.

Shining the light in, I couldn't see much. The ladder seemed to go down about eight feet. I didn't really want to go down there, but my curiosity got the better of me. I started to climb.

I reached the bottom of the ladder. I put my hand on the clay wall. It was damp and slimy.

I was just turning to explore the rest of the opening when my flashlight went out.

I sure didn't like the feeling of standing there in the pitch black. It feels like hands are reaching out toward you from all directions.

I shook the flashlight. It went on and off a couple of times. I tightened down the cap that holds the batteries in. It finally lit again. Whew!

Nothing much to see. Cobwebs and more cobwebs. A shelf, sort of like a wide bookshelf, on one side. Empty. Nothing else. No money, no gold, not even a neat skeleton or an old horse-shoe or something like that.

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Then I noticed another door down in the side of one wall. Not a door really, just some old boards laid up against the dirt.

I got down on my hands and knees and started pulling them away. Sure enough, there was an opening behind there.

This must be where they stashed their treasure, I thought. No question about it.

I had only taken off a couple of the boards when I heard it: Whispers!

It was quiet as a grave down there, so you couldn't mistake it when you heard a sound. I wasn't able to tell what the words were. It sounded like two people trying to talk to each other without being heard.

Now, it looked like that trapdoor hadn't been opened in years. So why would two people be behind some boards at the bottom of the hole?

Believe me, I wasn't going to sit around and try to figure it out—no way. I was going to get out of there, close the door, pile something heavy on it, get out of the basement, and then worry about it.

I started up the ladder. I hadn't climbed more than two or three rungs when the trapdoor came slamming down. I was stuck!