

THE CURE

It's so dark. Masses of moss growing thick on the looming, ivory building. Just the sight of it, I can't believe it has really happened. I stare at the cockroaches that scurry up the walls, not a thought in my mind except...

"Ebony! Quit daydreaming. They could come at any moment."

Up ahead, the gaze of Nym pierces my skin.

"Nym, can you tell me the story again? Please?" The mousy voice of Luna pleads.

Nym glances at Luna, a puff of smoke escaping her lips.

"Fine. It started like this..."

"Five years ago, Dr. Volt was working on a concoction in his lab. Apparently, he wanted to find a medicinal cure for his patients. One that would last longer than any other type of pill would. So, he made a vial of concentrated serotonin. It started with 100 milligrams. Everything was going fine until people got sad again. He wanted it to last a minimum of 2 weeks. But it barely lasted 48 hours. Some other doctors gossiped around the institution, whispers that it drove him insane that it didn't work. He simply wanted something to fix his wife; it never was about the patients. In one of the last attempts, Dr. Volt made vials with 1500 milligrams. He knew it wasn't safe, but all he muttered was,

"Long live the smiles."

Finally, he poisoned every patient in that hospital one night and their screams echoed through every hall. As the medicine kicked in, they killed everyone- and his wife was the one who murdered him."

Chills run down my spine, but I don't believe it's from the story. An uneasiness settles in the air.

"Guys, I don't think we're alone."

Eerie laughter surrounds us; a lump forms in my throat. The Smiles inch closer, and we share a quick look before trying to run. The vines keep getting in the way, scraping our arms and legs. The crunch of fallen leaves dance with the malicious giggles of the insane horde in the dark alley. In the midst of it all, the ground meets my face and I'm left on the earth's floor. My foot is stuck and I know I won't have enough time to get out.

I look for my friends, but they're gone. Vanished into thin air.

"No! Please!" My screams fill the air, blood red and useless. Their atonal laughter like a murderous song filling my ears as they slice my thigh, the warm blood oozing down. They pause briefly and stare into my eyes, as if thinking of what to do next. Jumbled mumbles float between them and I can feel myself falling between consciousness and sleep.

I fall back into the stream, soggy leaves sticking to my body. What were they thinking?

My head is banging and all I want is to sleep, but I must refuse.

I need to carry on. For myself. And for my dad, Dr. Volt.

Madi A.