

**Waukesha Reads – The Big Read  
Flash Fiction Contest  
Middle School Division Winner  
Sara Berens**

It was Halloween, the day that every kid is ecstatic about. Even six-year old Chloe Patterson, who soon learned this day would haunt her forever.

The day started out with the sun shining bright. All the birds were singing a song that was soft and cheery. Every kid was running with glee on their way to school, anxious to show all their friends the Halloween costume they were trick-or-treating in that night. Everything was as it was supposed to be on a normal autumn day. Except, nothing about this day was normal.

Chloe was especially excited that day. She loved trick-or-treating and could not wait to show off the fairy princess costume her mom had helped her sew the sequins on the night before. It was her favorite pink dress with a little bow on the back and now it was shimmering with the silver sequins. Living only a few blocks away from school, Chloe walked to school every day. Today, though, she skipped to school. Her magic wand was waving through the air and her fairy wings were bouncing behind her. As she skipped along the concrete sidewalk, she thought she saw a shadowy figure ahead, staring at her with cold, black eyes, but after she blinked it was gone. Chloe was too excited to let anything shift her mood and figured it was just her imagination. She reached the spot where she thought she had seen the figure, and tripped. She fell on the ground, scraping both of her knees, her right elbow, and right cheek. Overcome with the stinging pain of her cuts, she put her face to the ground and cried. What was once a

perfect day became an awful day for Chloe. She noticed that the weather changed as she fell down, too. The wind picked up and made every tree with leaves still attached to its branches bare. The sun was gone, and no longer made her body feel warm. The birds' song had been drowned out by the deafening sound of screaming. Chloe was frightened and didn't know what to do. She took her face off the cold pavement, but did not dare to open her eyes. In fact, she squeezed them shut, hoping she could make this all go away. The screaming became more high-pitched and seemed to move closer to her. Now she had to open her eyes and see what was going on. Her eyes were closed so tight that all she saw was blackness when she opened them. She blinked rapidly, trying to regain her vision, but right when she started to make out the colors of her surroundings, everything went black again.

Chloe awoke in a bed, but it wasn't hers. She knew from the scratchiness of the sheets on top of her that this wasn't any place she wanted to be. She tried sitting up but found that her body was restricted by a leather rope across her torso. All Chloe wanted now was to go home and never leave the comfort of her mother's arms. Her fairy wings and fairy wand were gone, but she still had the princess dress on. Everything was dark, and she could not see more than five feet in front of her. Everything was dead silent, which only made her even more afraid. She wondered if she could close her eyes and fall asleep and everything would be alright. Since she didn't know what else to do, she tried this. Her eyes were closed no longer than five seconds when she heard a high-pitched cackling. Chloe whipped her head towards the source of the sound, but could not see anything. Then, suddenly, the bed flew across the room. All sorts of shapes started to appear and the cackling continued. Chloe soon realized that the shapes were

faces, and not faces of princesses, but scary faces. Clowns, vampires, dirty and old dolls, witches with warts, and goblins were appearing; but each face could only be seen for a few seconds before it disappeared into the darkness again. Chloe was horrified. She shut her eyes, but even with them closed she could still see those menacing faces.

Then, as suddenly as everything had started, it stopped. She was back on the sidewalk, her knees, elbow, and cheek stinging. Tears filled her eyes and blurred her vision, but she did not hear screaming or cackling. Instead, she heard the birds once again. Chloe realized that the sun was out, and she felt its warmth on her skin. Her fairy wings were on her shoulders and the wand was lying on the ground next to her. The tears had dried on her soft, pale cheeks and she could see again and there was no shadowy figure anywhere in sight.

She slowly stood up, frantically looking around to make sure everything was normal. Then, Chloe decided to go to school and make sure they knew she was safe and then she would ask to call her mother. She had no idea how much time had passed. It felt like eternity, but for all she knew, it could have been five minutes or less. Chloe dragged her feet along the path and tried to stop shaking. Soon, her dragging turned to sprinting and she was at school in less than a minute. The kids were all still standing outside, so Chloe stopped running. She stood in line with her class, looking around at her classmates. Everyone was dressed up in their Halloween costume. She had to look away when she saw people dressed as spooky creatures. But then, she noticed one girl standing in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade line. She was dressed as a fairy princess too. She was the only other person in school dressed like this. The girl turned her head and

looked at Chloe. Both of their mouths opened wide and their eyes popped. The girl's knees, right elbow, and right cheek had identical scrapes to the ones Chloe had.