

# MACABRE

I loved Halloween. I loved it more than Christmas and my birthday combined. Halloween was the one time of the year when you could be anything or anyone. There was a certain thrill about walking the streets as a child, hidden behind the anonymity of a ghoulish visage. A strange feeling of power and excitement came with it.

I looked about the Halloween party; they'd really gone all out this year. Shying away from the tacky decorations, the whole venue was made up to look like some sort of ancient mausoleum. Wax candles adorned the walls, sarcophagi were being used as tables, and cobwebbed skeletons hung in gibbets, or lay in dugouts on the walls.

Despite my love of Halloween, there was something that chilled me deeper than any of the tacky old horror films I used to watch by candlelight. That fear stemmed from an old legend from my home town; 'The wandering creeper'.

The wandering creeper was a prankster who emerged around Halloween time; dressed in a blood spattered funeral shroud, wearing a blank white face mask, and carrying a knife, he would appear in the gardens and windows of local people, staring at them with an eyeless

gaze.

Each year the prankster returned, surfacing in different places. We'd taken photos one Halloween night when I was seven. When the pictures were developed, what we saw chilled us to the bone. We stood in a line dressed in our costumes; in the corner of the photo, there stood the Wandering creeper, peering at us from a distance.

Two years later, another picture showed him, this time closer, clutching his knife at his waist.

At eleven years old, he was even closer, standing almost directly behind us, his knife raised above my head.

“Hey John!” my colleague Steve said as he approached me, “What’s going on in that head of yours?”

I laughed as he stroked my head. My chosen costume tonight was a masterpiece, I'd spent hours creating a headless body from cardboard, dressing it in a shirt, and placing it over my shoulders. My head sat in the arms of the body, creating the illusion of a decapitated man carrying his own head.

The Pièce De Résistance was the pump I had hidden away in my hand, when I squeezed it, fake blood shot out of the neck wound, showering those around me.

Steve moved to the side of me, raising his camera phone in the air to

take a photo. As he took the picture, I squeezed the pump, showing him with fake blood.

“Why would you do that!” He said, rubbing the fake blood off his face, “It’s everywhere!”

I grinned wickedly as Steve wiped the blood off his phone, holding it up to show the picture. I looked into the image on phone, Steve’s face grimacing as a jet of blood shot from costume, splattering him with blood. My grin faded as I noticed a figure in the background holding a knife directly over the neck wound on my costume.

*The wandering creeper.*

I looked around the room quickly.

“Hey, who’s that guy?” Steve asked.

Where was he? I’ll find him this time.

“I don’t know.” I said urgently, moving around the room in panic, looking for the prankster.

I looked to the corner of the room –there he was– leaning over one of the sarcophagi, staring directly at me. I lifted my costume off my head, dropping it to the floor and marching directly towards him. As I approached, he moved deftly around a corner and out of my eye sight.

I marched briskly, impatiently wading through the crowds. As I turned the corner, I watched the trail of his funerary robe disappear into one of

the old stockrooms. The corridor was empty, I ran towards the stockroom door, yanking it open and stepping inside. The room was totally dark, and I reached for the light switch. The fluorescent light flickered on, dimly lighting the room. The wandering creeper stood in the centre of the room, clutching his knife; the red of the blood spattered funerary robe seemed to glow brightly, as his eyeless stare fixed upon me. He stood motionless, almost as if he was levitating lightly above the ground.

“Who are you?” I asked, stepping forward.

The figure stood in silence, as a strange fear gripped my insides. I reached my hand forward, grabbing the white mask in my hand, reaching my fingers into the eye sockets and pulling it from his face swiftly.

At once, the funerary robe fell to the floor in a crumpled heap. I dropped the mask to the floor, staring down at the empty funerary robe. The fluorescent light flickered out, and darkness consumed the room once more.

Q: What does the story symbolise?

A: The inevitability of death.

Q: What was the Wandering creeper dressed in?

A: A blood spattered funeral shroud with a blank white face mask, and a knife.

Q: What happened when he grabbed the wandering creeper's mask?

A: The funerary robe fell to the floor in a crumpled heap.