

The Black Cat

By Brenda Hu, G7

“Trick or treat!”

It was the night of Halloween. Above me and my friends hid a red moon, its glaring beams of red light dimmed by the clouds. As my friends and I took handfuls of candy from the last house on the block, I thought about how exciting tonight was going to be. After trick-or-treating, we would head back to my house for our sleepover.

“Yes! I got tropical skittles. My favorite!” William, one of my friends, shouted. He was dressed up as a bear cub. Next to him, Austin, who was dressed as a devil, rolled his eyes.

“Nah, regular skittles are better,” he said, waving a fun-sized bag of them in the air. “the original is always the best!”

William shoved him jokingly and turned to me. “Alicia, what do you think?”

I paused, chewing on a lemon starburst. “I agree with William,” I managed, mouth full of sweetness. “original skittles have strawberry flavored ones. I hate strawberries.”

Austin pouted, his devil tail swinging as he spun around. “You’re only saying that ‘cuz you think my costume is dumb!” He eyed me dubiously. “You’re a baker. But where’s your rolling pin—AAH! SPIDER! STOP!”

“Never!” I laughed as Austin ran away, screaming. I’d put a plastic spider on my rolling pin, knowing he would freak out.

“That was not funny!” Austin yelled as he ran back over.

“Yes, it was!” William snickered. Before I could respond, Jo, who was a loaf of bread, stopped suddenly ahead of me. She was pointing to a sleek black figure that stood several yards away. “Look! A black cat,” she said.

“Here, kitty,” Rita, who stood a few feet away, cooed. She was dressed as a dinosaur going to the beach, with sunglasses and flip-flops. “Oh my gosh! It’s so cute!” I looked at the cat, dread creeping over me. Usually, I wasn’t superstitious, but a black cat crossing my path on Halloween night was too strange to be

coincidental. I'd never even seen many cats wandering around in my neighborhood. I grabbed Rita's hand before she could pet the cat.

"Don't do that! You know it's a bad sign."

"Geez, Alicia, it's just a kitten. What harm could it do? Also, who believes those superstitions?" Rita shrugged my hand off, and I watched helplessly as she bent down and ran her hands over the kitten's shiny black pelt. It purred, emerald eyes blinking shut.

"Check it out! A haunted house!" Austin called, already 10 houses down the street. I was so deep in my thoughts about the cat encounter that I didn't even realize that he and William had gone on. For a moment, everyone was silent. We all knew Austin loved to play tricks on us.

"Um, Austin," I said. "We just walked here a few minutes ago."

"Alli, I'm serious! It's real. Come see for yourself."

I walked slowly down the block, Jo trailing close behind me. Rita was still petting the cat. Expecting Austin to leap out of the way and jumpscare me, I grasped my rolling pin tighter. What I saw, however, nearly made me drop it. A gloomy house loomed over me, cobwebs obscuring the windows and fog shrouding the lawn in a sickly humid mist. There was no house number, and the forest in its huge backyard seemed to stretch for miles.

"You guys...." Gulping, I grabbed Jo's shoulder and pushed her forward. She looked just as surprised as I was, and worried too. Footsteps sounded behind me and I jerked around. Rita ran up behind me, unaware of the strange house in front of her. "Aww, the cat ran away! Just as I was about to give it a name!"

"What—but—Alli, this is your house!" Jo stammered. Rita finally realized what was happening and her dino sunglasses fell off in shock.

"What?!" I looked around at the other houses, and I realized that she was right. Sweat creped down my back, and I didn't feel so safe anymore. What was going on? It had to have been that cat!

"This is so cool!" Austin squealed. "We should go in."

"Um. No way," I whispered, panicked. "What is going on? Austin, please tell me this is one of your pranks."

“No,” he shook his head, smiling. His warm green eyes shone with shards of bright red, reflecting off the moon above. “No...what do you mean?”

I whipped my head around as Rita screamed behind me. She was gone, and so was Jo. I looked back at Austin and William, or, rather, what was left of them. A singular bag of tropical skittles lay on the ground. A red bag of original skittles lay beside it, strewn open. I gasped.

“Oh my god. Oh, no. Austin?! Jo?! William?! Rita!! Please, come out here!”

Only the wind answered.

The skittles. There was only the strawberry kind. They lay cold and hard on the sidewalk, glowing with the deep scarlet hue of the moon. Of Austin’s eyes.

There was no one around.

Hands shaking, I turned slowly to look at the house. This had to be one of Austin’s pranks. I didn’t want to think of what I would do if it wasn’t. *Maybe they’re in the house waiting to scare me, and it’s all just a fun little prank.* Fear swelled inside of me. I didn’t even believe it myself.

Even more aware of the darkness, I took a deep, shaky breath and walked to the door, trembling. What I saw made my heart freeze. Pawsteps littered the ground along the path toward the door of the house. They were small and black. Just like the cat from earlier. Although I had only just seen the cat, the minutes felt like hours. I thought I could see the soft emerald glow of the cat’s eyes through the cobweb-ridden windows.

“It was you, wasn’t it?” I whispered to nobody.

My hands shook as I turned the knob, the rolling pin in my grasp slippery with sweat. The door creaked open.

It was pitch black inside, and I yelped in fear as the door slammed shut, bringing me crashing to the floor. “Eeeww!” I screamed internally as my hands were covered with a warm, sticky liquid that stained my pants and hands with the color—red. A lump lay in front of me. I squeezed my eyes shut to avoid looking at it.

Wait. How could I see? There was a pale glow coming from behind me. Shaking, I slowly twisted my head around to see the black cat standing in the

doorway, its emerald eyes glinting. The exposed red moon colored its fur a glossy red. It took a step toward me, lips peeled back to show its small white teeth.

And now I could see them, under the illuminating glow of red.

Human teeth.

Human eyes. Green eyes.

Austin?

“What the h-AAAHhhhHH!”

I woke up, screaming in the darkness. Thunder crashed outside my window. I groped around, expecting to feel the sticky dark blood that I had felt just moments before. Instead, the softness of my blankets warmed my fingers.

I sighed, my breath easing. It was just a dream after all. I looked at my clock, which displayed neon red numbers. It was 3:04 AM. The morning of Halloween. My friends and I would go trick-or-treating at night.

Just then, lightning flashed outside my window, and that’s when I saw it. The silhouette of a small black cat, curled up in the darkness outside my window.

The End