

## The Dare

Brad slammed on his brakes and admired the black rubber streak his bike tire left on the driveway. He could already hear his dad's lecture about leaving skid marks on the smooth gray concrete. Dark clouds were forming over his head, and Brad thought that maybe it would rain and wash away the mark before his dad saw it.

Brad wheeled his bike along the side of the house and stopped at the door to the garage. Leaving his bike there, he grabbed his backpack from the handlebars and went into the garage. Brad pulled the crumpled piece of notebook paper from the front pocket of his jeans and studied the list carefully: rope, flashlight, duct tape, screwdriver, wire. Brad began to gather the items and stash them in his backpack. His heart started to beat faster as he thought about the task ahead of him. "No sweat," he told himself. "It will be a piece of cake."

Next, Brad quietly opened the door leading into the laundry room of the house. He peeked around the corner to see if his mom was in view. Not seeing her, he crept into the kitchen and opened the snack cupboard. He grabbed a couple of granola bars and a bag of chips and put them into his backpack. After taking a can of soda and a pudding cup from the fridge, Brad went back out into the garage. He checked his list again and felt confident that he had assembled everything he would need.

The hours between dinner and bedtime seemed like an eternity. His parents gave him a funny look when he told them that he was going to bed early because he was tired. Brad never wanted to go to bed early, especially on the weekend. He assured his mom that he was feeling fine and crawled into bed. Brad lay in bed wide awake and thought about his new friends: Mike, Jason, and Greg. He felt pretty cool that middle school guys would want him to join their club. Especially since he wasn't going to be a middle schooler until next fall. He had to admit that he was surprised when they struck up a conversation with him at the skate park. Now if he could just get through this night. Brad's heart started to pound again as he went over the plan step by step.

Finally, Brad could hear his parents getting ready for bed. He waited another hour then slid out from beneath his covers and changed into his jeans and favorite sweatshirt. He grabbed the digital camera his grandparents had given him for Christmas, then tiptoed past the kitchen and out the side door of the house. His bike and backpack were waiting by the storage shed where he had left them. He could feel his adrenaline surge as he rode down the driveway and into the street.

The old Potter Mansion was his destination. It was about three miles from his house

on Maple Street. Brad was not allowed to ride his bike that far, but his mom had driven by the vacant old house many times. He wasn't allowed to be out this late either, but somehow he felt it was worth the risk of being grounded for life. All he had to do was spend three hours alone in that house. He'd take some digital photos of him in the house along with a few pictures of his watch to prove that he had passed the test. As soon as he showed Mike, Jason, and Greg the proof that he had completed their dare, he'd be in the club for sure. A light rain bounced off his face as he rode, but Brad hardly noticed.

The Potter Mansion was surrounded by a six-foot high iron fence. Each pole in the fence was tapered so that there was a point at the top. Brad rode up to the curb and stopped. The huge mansion looked ominous against the dark clouds. Brad tried not to let his imagination run away with him as he remembered the stories he had heard about this mansion and events that had occurred within its walls. He took out his flashlight and started to walk around the perimeter of the fence. As he walked toward the back of the house, he found a spot in the fence where the bars had been separated just enough for him to slip through. The rain started to come down harder, and Brad thought that he heard the faint rumbling of thunder.

Brad crept up to the back door and reached out his hand to turn the knob. He was actually relieved when it would not turn in his hand. Maybe he wouldn't be able to find a way in. Brad realized that his courage was faltering a bit. He walked around to the side of the house and noticed a window that was open just a crack. Brad knew there was no turning back now. He'd have to go in. He dragged an old crate over to the wall and placed it under the window. Balancing himself on the crate, he pushed up on the window. It wouldn't budge. He carefully dug into his backpack and found his screwdriver. He chipped away at the old paint on the windowpane, and finally he was able to raise the window just high enough that he could squeeze through.

Brad picked himself up off the rough, cold floor where he had landed when he dropped down from the window ledge. He shone the dim stream of light from his flashlight around the bare walls. Suddenly, he thought of his parents asleep in their cozy warm house. He hoped they wouldn't wake up and realize he was gone. He didn't want them to worry.

A sudden loud crackling sound caused him to let out a little yell. Lightning. He counted as he waited for the thunder that he knew would follow. Three seconds. That meant the lightning was close. Brad remembered the camera. He took it out of his backpack and took a picture of the room that he decided must have once been a bedroom. He also took a picture of his watch. Brad decided he didn't want to see the rest of the house. He couldn't stand the idea of wandering around a strange house in the middle of

the night.

He put his back up against a wall and slid down into a sitting position. He wondered how long his batteries would last. He turned off the flashlight to save the batteries in case he really needed the light later. The darkness gave him the creeps, and he was tempted to turn the light on again. Then he thought about Mike, Jason, and Greg and decided he could tough it out.

Again his mind went to his parents. He wondered what they would think if they knew where he was. He shifted his weight as the thought made him feel guilty. How would they feel if they went into his room to check on him and found him gone?

The lighting cracked again, followed by a roll of thunder. Almost instantly, Brad became aware of other sounds around him in the darkness. Did something just scurry across the floor? What was that scraping sound on the windowpane above his head? Was that the wind making that whistling noise? Brad's heart began to pound in his chest. What was he thinking? Brad realized that he had made a really bad choice. Not only was he afraid, but he also knew how worried his parents would be when they found out, even if everything turned out all right.

The next ten minutes were a blur. Somehow Brad made it out of the window and on to the ground below. He barely noticed the pain in his forearm as he scraped it on the rough edge of the crate he had left beneath the window. He ran wildly through the overgrown back yard. Purely by luck he was able to find the gap in the iron fence. Brad jumped on his bike and made it home in record time, even though he could feel a large bump rising on his bruised knee.

As Brad rounded the corner to his house he was relieved to see that the house was dark. Brad loved the familiar smell of the kitchen as he passed by on his way up to his room. The warmth of the house was instantly comforting. Crawling into bed, Brad knew that he'd have to talk to his parents in the morning. He had proof on his camera that he'd been in the Potter Mansion. Brad didn't think he'd ever show the pictures to anyone. This was a night he'd like to forget.

**1. How long was Brad supposed to stay in the Potter Mansion by himself?**

- A. At least three hours.
- B. As long as he could.
- C. Most of the night.

**2. What rule did Brad break when he went out at night?**

- A. He took food and other supplies from the house without telling his parents.
- B. He wasn't supposed to go to the Potter Mansion because it was dangerous.
- C. The three miles to the Potter Mansion was farther than he was allowed to ride.

**3. What was the main reason Brad decided to spend time alone in the Potter Mansion at night?**

- A. He wanted to be in a club with a group of middle school boys.
- B. He wanted to show that he wasn't afraid of haunted houses.
- C. He wanted to show that he was braver than the other boys.

**4. Why did the hours between dinner and bedtime seem to Brad like they were lasting forever?**

- A. He wanted to get to bed early to get some sleep before going to the Potter Mansion.
- B. He knew the sooner he got to bed the sooner he could set off for the Potter Mansion.
- C. He had to pack the gear he needed and didn't want his parents to suspect what he was doing.

**5. Where did Brad pack his backpack with supplies for the night?**

- A. In his bedroom.
- B. In the kitchen.
- C. In the garage.

**6. What caused Brad's heart to beat faster as he was putting the things he needed for the night in his backpack?**

- A. He began to think about how scary the Potter Mansion could be at night.
- B. He was afraid that his parents were going to find out what he was doing.
- C. He started to think he wouldn't be able to do what he said he could do.

**7. What impressed Brad most about his new friends?**

- A. They struck up a conversation with him when they met at a state park.
- B. They were already in middle school, and he wouldn't be until the fall.
- C. They had already shown they were brave by going to the Potter Mansion.

**8. Why did Brad take a digital camera to the Potter Mansion?**

- A. To take pictures to print out and put in his personal photo book.
- B. To take pictures of anything weird that he saw in the Potter Mansion.
- C. To have pictures to prove that he really did stay in the Potter Mansion.

**9. How did the old Potter Mansion look to Brad when he first got there?**

- A. Like a prison because it had high iron fences with points on the top.
- B. Large and scary, like there might be something evil about the house.
- C. Like a place where bad people might hang out to get away from the police.

**10. What was Brad like?**

- A. He wanted others to know that he was brave, but he wasn't willing to do dangerous things just to prove it.
- B. He wanted to be accepted by others and wasn't afraid to break rules and take chances to be accepted.
- C. He tried to follow the rules his parents set whenever he could, but he didn't let the rules stop him from having fun.

**11. How did Brad deal with his feelings of being afraid as he was packing his backpack?**

- A. He told himself not to worry because staying in the Potter Mansion was going to be easy.
- B. He told himself that he must be crazy for wanting to go to the Potter Mansion.
- C. He told himself that whatever happened would be worth it to impress his friends.

- 12. What happened right after Brad became aware of noises around him in the old Potter Mansion and his heart began to pound in his chest?**
- A. He realized that he had made a bad choice in coming to the mansion.
  - B. He started thinking about the thunder and the whistling of the wind.
  - C. He scraped his forearm on the edge of a window that he jumped out of.
- 13. What was Brad like when he was inside the old Potter Mansion?**
- A. He was calm most of the time because he knew he would have a reward when he got through the experience.
  - B. He was scared the whole time but wanted to go through with it when he thought about becoming a club member.
  - C. He was scared but was able to keep calm by talking to himself about how there wasn't really anything to be afraid of.
- 14. How did Brad finally get inside the Potter Mansion?**
- A. He went to the back of the house and forced open a small door.
  - B. He found a break in the wall and was able to squeeze through it.
  - C. He managed to get a window open far enough to squeeze through.
- 15. Why did Brad probably feel somewhat glad when the doorknob on the back door wouldn't turn?**
- A. He thought maybe there wouldn't be any way to get in, and then he could go home.
  - B. He thought it would be a better idea to go in through a window than through a door.
  - C. He thought the door might make a squeaking noise that someone in the house could hear.
- 16. What was the story mostly about?**
- A. What can happen to a boy when he wants to have an adventure and get a reward for it but is unprepared for the experience.
  - B. How a boy tried but failed to do what he said he would do in order to be invited to be a member of a club of middle school boys.
  - C. How a boy wanted to be part of a group so much that he was willing to disobey his parents and put himself in a dangerous situation.

- 17. What did Brad often think about during his adventure at the Potter Mansion?**
- A. What his parents might think if they knew what he was doing.
  - B. What the middle school students might say about what he had done.
  - C. What he needed to do to make a fast getaway if there were trouble.
- 18. What was the main conflict in this story?**
- A. Brad had to decide how important it was for him to have proof that he was brave enough to stay in the mansion.
  - B. Brad had to decide whether it was more important for him to get into a club than to stay out of trouble.
  - C. Brad had to decide whether to tell his parents and his three middle school friends what he had done.
- 19. Why did Brad take a picture of his watch right after he took a picture of the room he was in at the old Potter Mansion?**
- A. To use the light from the flash of the camera to read his watch.
  - B. To remember what time it was when he took the first picture.
  - C. To prove that he had been in the house during the night.
- 20. What best describes Brad after he decided to leave the Potter Mansion?**
- A. He was so scared and so anxious that he was barely aware of what he was doing.
  - B. He was scared but was able to think clearly about the best way to get out of the mansion.
  - C. He felt great relief as soon as he decided to leave and left calmly without fear.