

## The Shed

Miranda usually loved spending the night at Kim's house because there was so much to do, but by 8:45 this evening, she was beginning to doubt her judgment. Kim's Xbox was broken, thus eliminating the welcome distraction videogames would offer. Kim and Miranda tried the TV, but Kim's mom had cancelled the movie channel, so only a limited number of channels were available, none of which they cared to watch. The worst of it was that Kim's mom was on a video-conference meeting for her business, which eliminated the use of both the computer and the phone line. There would be no phone calls or instant messages to friends or boys tonight.

Miranda had just broken up with her newest boyfriend. This one was named Goro. She had discussed the breakup with Kim to the point of nausea, so she didn't want to go down that road again. Kim wasn't the best person to discuss boyfriends with anyway because she'd never had one. Kim mostly just listened to Miranda angrily rant or excitedly talk-- whichever seemed most appropriate at the time-- about her boyfriends.

As Miranda sprawled on Kim's bedroom floor, Kim, feeling that she had to keep Miranda if not happy then at least amused, tried valiantly to come up with some ideas to entertain her friend. "Too bad your brother's gone," complained Miranda. "Messing with his mind would give us something to do." Feeling desperate, Kim suggested that maybe they should check out some old games tucked away in her closet.

The dust-covered game boxes they found didn't bode well for amusing a sophisticated eighth grader like Miranda. Miranda said she did remember those games being fun when she was younger, especially *Clue*. *Clue*'s emphasis on murder had always been a secret source of fright for her when she was small. While she was thinking about that delightful sense of fright, an idea flew into Miranda's head about what she and Kim might do that evening.

"Kim, have you ever been inside 'the shed'?" asked Miranda with a mischievous smile. The shed was legendary among the kids in the neighborhood. It sat alone on a vacant lot behind the foundation of an old house that had long since crumbled. The shed was clearly marked with multiple "No Trespassing" signs, and most parents considered it to be strictly forbidden, but that didn't stop some of the braver kids in the neighborhood from testing their nerves there. The courageous kids who had actually gone into the shed came away with stories of strange noises and blurry shapes.

"No, I haven't gone in there!" Kim exclaimed. "And I'm not going to, ever. It scares me just to walk past it during the day, much less go there at night!" Her eyes grew wide

with terror just thinking about it.

With a devilish twinkle in her eye, Miranda countered, "Well, just imagine what a thrill it would be to brag about it to the kids at school. Everyone's afraid to go there except a few boys. Goro and I were supposed to go there together, but then we broke up. Goro would be so impressed if we went. Kim, come on--we just have to go!"

Kim grew stronger in her resolve when she thought about handsome Goro being impressed with her bravery, but then grew faint-hearted again as the reality of Miranda's plan hit her. "Absolutely not, Miranda Perkins!" squealed Kim. "Besides, my mom would never let us go."

"We can tell your mom that we're going to the store for some candy," suggested Miranda, who had already thought through Kim's likely objections.

Kim desperately grasped for any reason that Miranda would accept for not going to the shed. "I don't think it's a good idea to go someplace with so many 'No Trespassing' signs posted all over. We could get in big trouble!" It embarrassed Kim to seem like such a wimp in front of Miranda, but going to the shed was just too scary to think about.

Miranda had thought of this objection as well, saying, "Since it's dark outside, we'll be able to tell them we didn't see the signs...unless you're too scared to go. Are you chicken, Kim?" Miranda began to chase Kim around the room flapping her elbows up and down while making clucking sounds. Kim backed her way around the room avoiding Miranda's onslaught, but she still adamantly refused to go. Kim wouldn't budge an inch.

Seeing that Kim was standing firm, Miranda stopped chasing her around the room, crossed her arms and heaved an exaggerated sigh. "Well, all right then, don't go," said Miranda, "but I'm going to go even if I have to go by myself." Miranda glanced over at Kim and said, "It's your fault, after all, for not having anything to do at your house tonight. Just think of me out there all by myself, alone in the dark. What a terrible thing to do to a friend, making me go by myself. Do you really want me to go all by myself, alone in the dark, Kim? I thought you were supposed to be my best friend, Kim."

With a strained expression on her face, Kim thought about her relationship with Miranda, and then agreed to go. "Fine then. Let's go tell my mom that we're going to the store," she finally agreed.

Her mom's business meeting made it almost easy for Kim to get permission to leave the house. Kim popped her head into her mom's office, and after quickly saying, "Mom, Miranda and I are going to the store," she shut the door. The girls grabbed a flashlight and went out the door ready to start their adventure.

"Did your mom say anything, Kim?" asked Miranda as they left the house. "My mom would never have let me out the door without giving me the third degree."

"She just waved her hand at me without even looking up," said Kim.

As the girls strolled through the cool night air, they discussed the various legends that surrounded the shed. "I heard that the shed is haunted by the man and woman who lived in the house more than 100 years ago," said Kim, "and after the house burnt down, their ghosts moved into the shed and have been there ever since."

"The story I heard is even scarier," said Miranda. "I heard that the man and woman had a baby that died tragically, and afterwards the man burned the house to the ground, and he and the woman moved away. But, the ghost of the baby lived on and moved into the shed. At every full moon, you can hear the baby crying." Both girls shivered as they instinctively glanced towards the cloudless sky and saw the pale, yellow moon returning their gaze like a disembodied eyeball.

After seeing the moon, the girls passed through much of the neighborhood in silence. Occasionally, the rustling of a cat in the bushes or the hooting of an owl would cause them both to jump, and afterwards they would exchange embarrassed giggles, but even these giggles grew less frequent as they approached their destination. Finally, they drew near the shed.

To Miranda, the small building wasn't that terrifying in the daylight. It was constructed from long-faded wood and had cracked and broken windows, visible through the tangle of blackberry bushes surrounding it. During the day, Miranda had often thought that the shed looked like the sort of long-ignored outbuilding that might be in the backyard of any old farmhouse. But at night its appearance changed, and something in the air filled her with unease and dread.

"Did you hear that?" asked Kim, grabbing Miranda's arm.

"What?" Miranda listened intently, but she didn't hear anything.

"Exactly," said Kim. "Where are the usual animal sounds we heard earlier?"

"You're right," said Miranda. "That's really strange, isn't it?" But Miranda wasn't easily deterred and pressed on, dragging Kim behind her. Within a few moments the shed was before them. Miranda and Kim both stopped instinctively, as if an impenetrable force field of danger prevented them from moving further. After what seemed like hours, they both crept slowly towards the door of the shed. The door hung crookedly on its hinges without a knob and was slightly ajar.

Suddenly, a muffled coughing sound came from the shed. Miranda's tongue turned to mush, but eventually she managed a meek stammer, "Wh-what was that?" She turned toward Kim and was surprised to see only Kim's back as Kim sprinted away at a speed Miranda didn't realize she was capable of. Despite her fright, Miranda knew that she had to investigate the sound, or she'd never forgive herself. She took a deep breath and

turned back toward the shed. She'd always been an inquisitive person, and her mom had often remarked that her curiosity would one day get the better of her. This might be the case tonight.

The wood of the door felt rough on her sweaty hands as she pulled on it. The door must not have been oiled for decades, because as it swung open, it let out a shriek that chilled the marrow of Miranda's bones, but that wasn't all that Miranda heard. Even more disturbing were the low, hushed whispering sounds that seemed to be coming from within. Then there was silence. Miranda didn't think that what she'd heard sounded very much like a crying baby, but she wasn't sure what was making the noise. Miranda kept going because she knew she would lose her nerve if she waited, so she closed her eyes and gave the door one last firm pull.

Miranda fully expected to see a spectral infant wailing in the moonlight when she opened her eyes. Instead, she saw the blur of movement out of the corner of her eye as something moved deeper into the shadows of the room. She stepped very carefully over the threshold and slid into the inky shadows by the door and waited. First, she heard the sound of running feet, and then she felt something slam into her, knocking her against the wall. "Ouch," she cried out. "What the heck was that?"

When she looked up, she saw two boys lying in a heap in a patch of moonlight on the wood floor. She was especially surprised to see it was Goro and his friend Wayne huddled together and shivering. "Wayne? Goro? What are you guys doing here?" asked Miranda.

Goro squeaked, "Miranda? Miranda, is that you? Man, you scared us to death!" He laughed a little as he got up. "What are you doing here?"

"Kim and I wanted to check out the shed to see if it was haunted like everyone says. Kim chickened out and ran away, but I heard you guys whimpering and thought you were the ghost."

"We weren't whimpering," Goro said indignantly.

Wayne added, "But watching that door slowly open, making that horrible creaking noise, made me want to die of fright."

"Hmmm...I'm pretty sure that I definitely heard whimpering," smiled Miranda, "but your secret might be safe with me, maybe. Well, I've had enough of the shed for one evening, so I'll see you guys in school on Monday." With that, she left the shed and turned back toward Kim's house, thinking about how Kim would fit in with her plans for Monday.

- 1. Why was Miranda sorry that she had come to Kim's house?**
  - A. Kim's brother was bothering them while they played games.
  - B. Kim wasn't interested in talking about boyfriends.
  - C. None of the usual entertainment was available.
  
- 2. What sound made Kim run away from the shed?**
  - A. A hushed whisper.
  - B. A loud shriek.
  - C. A muffled cough.
  
- 3. Why were the boys lying on the floor of the shed?**
  - A. They bumped into a wall.
  - B. They'd bumped into Miranda.
  - C. They were trying to hide.
  
- 4. How did Miranda get Kim to agree to go to the shed?**
  - A. By making her feel guilty as a friend.
  - B. By saying it would impress kids at school.
  - C. By making it sound like an adventure.
  
- 5. Why were the girls not able to use the computer or phone at Kim's house?**
  - A. Kim's mom didn't want them to contact boys.
  - B. Kim's mom was using them for work.
  - C. Kim's mom cancelled the internet service.
  
- 6. What was the last thing Kim suggested they should do for entertainment at Kim's house?**
  - A. Discuss boys.
  - B. Watch TV.
  - C. Play board games.



**7. What is the main problem in the story?**

- A. There was nothing to do at Kim's house.
- B. Kim and Miranda had to sneak out at night.
- C. Going to the shed might be dangerous.

**8. What had Miranda usually thought about the shed?**

- A. It looked like any other shed.
- B. It was filled with ghosts.
- C. It was a scary place to go.

**9. What made the shed such a scary place?**

- A. Its location next to a broken-down house.
- B. Kids told lots of scary stories about it.
- C. It was abandoned with 'No Trespassing' signs.

**10. What is probably the reason Miranda's mom would NOT let her leave the house as easily as Kim's mom did?**

- A. Miranda's mom didn't have time to argue with her about going out.
- B. Miranda's mom was a lot stricter than Kim's mom about most things.
- C. Miranda's mom didn't trust Miranda because of her past behavior.

**11. How many times did Kim object to going to the shed before she agreed to go?**

- A. Two.
- B. Three.
- C. Four.

**12. What made the girls expect to hear a baby cry from inside the shed?**

- A. The house next to the shed had burned down with a baby in it.
- B. There were stories that baby ghosts lived in the shed.
- C. The moon was full that night like it was in the legend.

**13. How was Miranda's personality different from Kim's?**

- A. Miranda was more popular and persuasive with friends than Kim.
- B. Miranda was more sophisticated, brave, and adventurous than Kim.
- C. Miranda was more confident and easy-to-please than Kim.

**14. What did Miranda find in the shed?**

- A. A rough door.
- B. Her friends.
- C. A ghost baby.

**15. What gave Miranda the idea to go to the shed with Kim?**

- A. Thinking about being frightened.
- B. Remembering part of the game, Clue.
- C. Wanting to impress the kids at school.

**16. What will Miranda probably do on Monday back at school?**

- A. Think of a plan to get back at Kim for leaving her.
- B. Make up a story about what she saw in the shed.
- C. Tell a story about how scared the boys were.

**17. What was the first thing Miranda suggested they do at Kim's house?**

- A. Go to the shed at night.
- B. Go to the store for candy.
- C. Bother Kim's little brother.

**18. What kind of person was Kim?**

- A. Someone who was easily bullied in social situations.
- B. Someone who always preferred to obey all the rules.
- C. Someone who was worried about what people thought of her.

**19. Why did the girls stop talking on the way to the shed?**

- A. Miranda was mad at Kim for being so resistant to go to the shed.
- B. They were getting increasingly nervous as they approached the shed.
- C. They wanted to sneak up on the shed without anyone hearing them.

**20. What best describes Miranda?**

- A. She knew how to manipulate people.
- B. She was a bully and liked to be mean.
- C. She was only afraid of ghosts.