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Popcorn Ceiling

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Popcorn Ceiling

Marissa Alvarez

The winner of our Halloween Spooky Story Contest!

Shivers run down my spine like a racehorse on a track. Goosebumps break the soft layer of my skin. My hair stands up in spikes. There is that cold chill in the air, the one that tells you something is near. *You're being stupid. There is nothing in here.* Still grasping my royal blue duvet, I slowly uncover my clenched eyes. *Open your eyes, you're fine.* I slowly open one eye, then the other. They reveal a white popcorn ceiling.

This is nice. I can deal with this. A soft breath tickles my ear. My eyes turn into globes and my eyelashes tickle my eyebrows. I am paralyzed. *Nothing is there, you are imagining it. Turn your head.* I start breathing hard, the noise filling up the room. I slowly turn my head to the left, where my bed dips off a foot or two to the floor. My left cheek finally reaches my pillow. I sigh. *When, nothing there, I'm o—*

My scream catches in my throat as I catch a glimpse of its face. Scratched out holes embody two beady white eyes, void of eyelids. Two curved slivers in the center of its face flap as it breathes in and out. Its smile stretches up past its eyes. Rows of jagged yellow teeth line its open mouth, and drool slides down its grey skin. My throat suddenly remembers that it is a cavity for sound and a blood curdling scream escapes from my lips. The creature erupts with a gurgling laugh and inches closer toward my face. *I can't move! Someone help!!!* It rests its curved flaps on my nose, its skin like wet rubber. Tears drip from eyes as I let out one more scream. It chuckles in response, then sinks its X-Acto knife teeth into my face. Its teeth hit my skull. I hear the bones cracking over my cries of pain. It laughs again, shaking my head in its mouth.

My eyes shoot open. My breath is two strokes below hyperventilating. I take a moment to study the popcorn ceiling. It is relaxing. *It was only a dream.* I wonder what it would be like to push the

paint-crested bubbles on the ceiling. Would they crumble? Or just squish around like balloons do? I sit up in my bed and rub my eyes. My room is completely empty. I smile at it. I start to giggle at my scaredy-cat ways, then realize how sore my throat is from screaming. *Water sounds wonderful right about now.* I set my feet down on the floor and stand up. A large hand grabs my ankle and I fall face first onto the beige carpet. I scream as it pulls me under. I dig my nails into the floor but fibers rip off my nails. My blood draws perfect linear lines from the floor to the wall. I scream again.

Everything is black.