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5 February 2015

*This story is meant to be a **fiction piece**. It uses real historical FSU figures/places in a way that is intended to be creative—**not factual**. Sources with information about FSU ghosts and the Slenderman game/legend have been credited. Please support the official game release.*

Watch for the Signs

“Don’t stop. Keep writing. Don’t stop. Keep writing. Eight pages. Eight warnings. Eight chances to keep them safe,” I mutter to myself. “He may be confined to the fourth floor now, but his power grows every day. Don’t stop. Keep writing.” I recall the days when I did not believe in urban legends. I don’t have that luxury anymore. Now, I sit at my desk, bloodshot eyes unblinking. The glowing “3:00 A.M.” on my digital clock casts the crudely scribbled notes scattered about me in feeble crimson light. I have to keep going. I have to tell them. Eight pages, eight warnings, eight chances to keep them safe.

It all started during my first year at Florida State University. I was walking to Strozier Library with a friend. Pondering my impending mountain of homework, I barely listened as she rambled on about Cawthon Hall. “Did you hear about the girl who was sunbathing and got struck by lightning?¹ They stuck me in her room. Lucky me!” Her exclamation dripped with sarcasm and a hint of fear. “I hear footsteps all the time but

¹ Davis, Hannah. “School Spirits: Ghosts at Florida State.” *Illuminations: Florida State University Special Collections & Archives Division*. Florida State University Libraries, 28 Oct. 2015. Web. 19 Mar. 2018.

when I look, there's no one there. It's like she's watching me! It's so weird! I mean, it was a tragic accident, but I wonder why she's so keen on sticking around."

We parted ways and I headed for the fourth floor of Club Stroz. The scent of coffee lingered on the first and second floors as students huddled over their laptops. Some looked genuinely engaged in their work while others were chatting or blaring obnoxious music. I recalled the FSU orientation ghost tour. Sarah Cawthon Edward, for whom the dorm was named, was known for her strict adherence to proper behavior². I wondered what she would have thought of these students.

As I ventured deeper into the building, I found myself surrounded by towering shelves and the smell of books rather than coffee. The air was much colder and the slightest sound seemed thunderous. No one talked, played music, or acknowledged the presence of other students. Glancing around, I noticed that the entrance to the fourth floor staircase was tucked in a corner, as if someone had hidden it away. I found it strange until I stepped into the stairwell. Instantly, I was assaulted by icy air and a smell that resembled antiseptic. The passage was composed of a narrow staircase and sickly pale tile walls. Placing a hand on the metal handrail, I winced at its painfully chilly surface. My footsteps seemed deafening on the stone steps. Suddenly, I understood—or *thought* I understood—why people avoided this area. With dread, I continued up the steps. I probably needed the quiet for doing math homework anyway.

The fourth floor itself was no less disconcerting. Only three or four students lingered at the desks. When the sound of my footsteps announced my presence, they all looked up sharply before returning to their work. The hair on the back of my neck stood

² Davis, Hannah, "School Spirits: Ghosts at Florida State"

up. I looked around. The bookshelves seemed to stretch on for miles. Pushing aside my apprehension, I sat down and opened my algebra notes. Every time I had to rummage through my bag for an item, I dreaded the noise it made. One of the other students opened a bag of chips and began crunching them loudly. I found myself reading the same problem over and over again without registering it, unable to focus. The air felt thick and menacing.

Another student turned his music up so loud that I could hear it through his headphones. My pencil trembled between my fingers and my teeth ground together. I felt like I was taking the SAT again with Satan as my test proctor. All of a sudden, a shrill shriek filled the air—the fire alarm. The students around me jumped and clamped their hands over their ears. The sound was piercing, like it was trying to drive us away. I felt relieved that something had finally shattered the awful quiet encasing us. We all got up and made our way toward the exit. I knew there was no fire. The air was still deathly cold.

Sadly, a week later, I needed a book located on the fourth floor. I climbed the staircase once more, grimacing as the air grew colder and heavier. When I arrived at my destination, I saw that no one else was present. In spite of this, I felt like I was being supervised the moment I entered the area. Did Strozier have video surveillance? Was there a shady librarian lurking among the shelves? I decided to grab what I needed and get out. Normally, I adored the feeling of being lost among books. This was entirely different. I felt as if each volume was a trap, waiting to ensnare me if I touched the wrong one. Head low, I strode down the lengthy aisle. After a few moments, I risked a glance

backward. The study area seemed miles away, glowing in the distance like a beacon, urging me to turn back. I hadn't realized how unnaturally dark this place was.

After an eternity of searching, I found the section I needed. It was illuminated by weak, flickering lights. Halfway down the row, the lights cut off. Utter blackness lay beyond so that I could not tell if the floor ended or merely continued on into an endless, inky abyss. My head screamed at me to stop, but my feet continued forward. A dull pounding that I figured was my heartbeat resounded in my head. Out of the corner of my eye, I was certain I saw a shape in the brighter part of the room. When I looked, there was no one there.

"Get it and get out, get it and get out," I repeated like a madwoman. Retrieving my cell phone, I used its light to read the titles. The pounding was much louder now. I ignored it. My fingers finally brushed over the spine of the book I desired and I yanked it from its shelf. When I did, I saw that one of its pages had been ripped out and taped to the front cover. A message was jotted over the typed words in messy black ink: "~~Can't~~

~~Run~~.³" My blood turned frigid as I sensed another presence near me.

Slowly, dreadfully, my head turned toward the darkness. My hand lifted my cell phone in an almost mechanical manner, letting its light fall upon the shadows. I saw him—his eight-foot tall form clothed in a jet-black suit, his skeletally thin figure with unnaturally long arms, his hands tipped with razor-sharp claws, and his humanoid white face that I could not decipher. He stood still, his claws twitching slightly. His gaze pierced my soul, yet I could not make out his eyes⁴.

³ "The Game"

⁴ "The Legend"

The pounding I had mistaken for my heartbeat was deafening now. I might have stood there forever, waiting for the end, if an electric-like sensation had not snapped me out of my shock. It flashed in my vision like white static and jolted me back into action. I ran down the aisle, walls of books acting as a labyrinth. The rhythmic noise continued—the sound of beating invisible drums.

In my panicked dash, I grew disoriented. I turned down a random aisle that looked a little brighter than the rest. Catching sight of another note taped to the shelf, I halted.

“~~No~~, no, no, no, no,⁵” It warned in frantic letters.

I ripped it from the shelf. Turning, I gave a painful intake of breath as I nearly ran straight into the creature. He was only about three feet away now. His gaunt form emitted a horrid smell—paper, decay, and a nauseating sterile scent like the odor prevalent in hospitals. I could see his face clearly now; or, more specifically, his lack of one. His skull was pure white, starkly contrasted with his raven-hued suit. I could make out indentations where his eyes, mouth, and nose should have been. The longer I stared at him, the harsher the indentations became. Long, sharp tentacles began to sprout from his back like arachnid legs.

I shoved my way past the monster, yelping as the vile cold of his body assaulted me. Shuddering violently, I ran toward the light of the study area. The invisible drums urged me onward, growing fainter as I drew closer to my safe haven. After what felt like an eternity, I found my way out of the shadowy maze. The drums ceased. The static shrouding my vision cleared and the overpowering scent of death dissipated. I realized I was still clutching my book as well as the two notes. I ran like the devil himself was

⁵ “The Gam”

chasing me—he probably was. I ran, clutching the book to my chest, clinging to what little proof I had that I had not lost my mind.

It took a fair bit of digging to put all of the pieces together. I already knew of several urban legends on campus—the girl in the 70’s who was struck by lightning; Sarah Cawthon Edward, former dean of Florida State College for Women, whose fastidious obsessions led to a nervous breakdown; and the Civil War cadets who continue to march to the beat of ghostly drums on the ROTC parade grounds⁶. All of their stories were unique, but they all haunted Florida State’s campus. What kept them in limbo?

He was the answer. Decades ago, Florida State University was home to a zealous librarian. His dedication to his work gradually twisted into an obsession. To him, Strozier Library was a sacred place and he was its protector. After he passed away, the students joked that his creepy presence lingered among his beloved books. Such theories should not be taken lightly. If housed within an already fragile mind, obsession is a lethal brand of poison. It blurs the lines between right and wrong, normal and abnormal...even life and death. That was why the slender man was left behind—black and white like the pages of a book, his face forgotten like the librarian himself. Likewise, his victims linger on, desperate to prevent others from sharing their fate. I owed them everything. Because of them, I was the only survivor.

Nowadays, I know much more...too much. I smirk bitterly as my hands continue ripping pages out of my spiral notebook, scribbling warning after warning. Each fledgling spirit leaves its own warning: the sunbathing girl tears pages from her murderer’s beloved books and writes messages on them for the unwary. Poor Sarah

⁶ Davis, Hannah. “School Spirits: Ghosts at Florida State”

Cawthon Edward was not overbearingly strict of her own accord. What people took for an obsession with quiet and order was actually her attempt to protect her students from Slenderman's wrath. She was stalked day and night by Slenderman, who saw the unruly students as a curse on his hallowed ground. Like many of his victims, she suffered a psychological breakdown and was sent to a sanatorium. I have no doubt she is the source of the hazy vision that precedes the creature's arrival. Lastly, there is the pounding noise that grows louder as Slenderman approaches and fades as he retreats. It is a warning. As fearless in death as they were in life, the Civil War cadets beat their drums to alert potential victims.

*These spirits do not stay in the world of mortals for their own pleasure. They stay to protect the living from **him**, as do I. However, I fear our efforts are futile. Slenderman has already claimed many souls. His autonomy grows. He will not always be confined to Club Stroz's fourth floor; although, that is where he is strongest. He is a blight on this earth and plague to the living—one that is neither seen nor heard until it is far too late.*

*To whom it may concern: I join Slenderman's ghostly victims in leaving you these eight pages as warnings. You will find them where angels fear to tread—the places where shadows are endless and the air, reeking of death, freezes in your lungs. There you will find **him**, but be warned. Once you step into his realm, you are a mere pawn in his twisted game. Turn back if you are wise. If not, do not look lest he take add your soul to his gruesome collection. I cannot help you. None of us can. The only things we may leave*

you are these eight pages: No, No, No, No, No; Help Me; Leave Me Alone; Follows;

Can't Run; Fear the Fourth; Always Watches, No Eyes; Don't Look or It Takes You⁷.

⁷ "The Game"

Works Cited

Davis, Hannah. "School Spirits: Ghosts at Florida State." *Illuminations: Florida State University Special Collections & Archives Division*. Florida State University Libraries, 28 Oct. 2015. Web. 19 Mar. 2018.

"The Game." *Gaming Unity*. Wheldon Media. (n.d.). Web. 19 Mar. 2018.

"The Legend." *Gaming Unity*. Wheldon Media. (n.d.). Web. 19 Mar. 2018.