

Weeds

Audra glanced outside, wafts of steam blowing onto her cold face. She held a mug of fresh coffee, trembling, as she looked out into the foggy field surrounding her trailer. The day had been bright, burning away the sea mist that crept over the sleepy town. A steady crash of the ocean had kept her hopeful, thinking just maybe the night wouldn't come. But it had.

Her watchful eyes flicked back and forth over the curling mist blanketing the cluster of mobile homes surrounding her own. The moon seemed to stare back down at her, glowing through the clouds that attempted to hide its shine. Nevertheless, the moon paled behind the overcast sky. Rage. It radiated from the glowing sphere with a baleful glare, only the raw, primal feeling of anger. No thought. Just the urge to kill. Audra reluctantly set down her mug and picked up the baseball bat propped up against the card table she called her "kitchen". She felt its worn grips rub against her callused hands.

The bat was the only thing in her life that was somewhat constant. It was carved carefully from walnut wood, smooth to the touch but warped with age. She swung it in a clear, graceful arch. The air whistled around it, charged with electricity. She grimly set it down and prepared for what was to come. Slipping on an equally as worn pair of hunting gloves, boots, and jacket, she faced the flimsy door to her "house". Turning the rusty handle, she winced at the squeak the old metal cried out. It sounded like a hurt animal. She jumped down to the hard earth and yellowed grass below, the moon glowering down at her.

She made her way to a darkly lit clearing in the tall witchgrass surrounding the trailer, wielding the bat low to her body. She crouched at the center of the glade, tensely awaiting what was soon to come. A rustle to the left. Musical, almost. She turned to face the shrubbery, rigid with anticipation. Another rustle, louder this time. She gasped, the fog taking her breath and concealing it. Suddenly, her neighbor's house cat Oscar leapt out of the bushes. She smiled, reaching down to pet the friendly shorthair. She drew back though, when she saw the cat's expression. A primal fear shone from his eyes, which glittered with terror. She backed up nervously, looking at the bushes behind the feline. A larger, more menacing rustling shook the brush, not stopping but drawing closer with every passing second. Audra tensed again, pulling the leaden bat close to her heaving chest. Five feet. Four. Two. Silence, no movement but the wind rustling the leaves on the trees surrounding her.

Then the mewling began. Quiet at first, the purring, animalistic noise grew to a caterwaul. Audra took a step back. Suddenly, the grasses surrounding her shot out, grasping at her arms, her legs, her torso. She frantically swung the bat at the plants, beating them down toward the matted earth. She lunged forward, smacking the shrubbery in front of her aside. More leaves shot out, and one thorny vine snapped around her arm, lacerating her pale skin. Blood gushed out, glinting in the red glow of the moon. The vine hooked onto her arm and began sucking the blood from the wound like a disgusting leech. She swung down hard, breaking the brittle fibres apart. Staggering, she gripped the now dying vine still hooked around her arm. With a spray of blood,

she pulled it free, taking a chunk of her skin with it. She screamed as she fell to the ground, clutching the bat to her chest. She crawled forward through the brush, flicking away the crabgrass that pulled at her clothes feebly. She began to see a red glow through the trees, brighter than the moon. One more step.

She came to another clearing now, large and filled with pulsating red light. It lied in the center of the clearing, grotesque and bloody. A heart, with vines extending from its veiny surface set into the ground. The organ seemed to feel her presence, and she began to feel, no, hear a rumbling from below her. In front of her, a root broke through the soil, sending particles of dirt into her wide eyes. She leveled the bat and smashed it, taking another step forward. *To the left.* Again, she swung forward, knocking the root away. Close now, she raised the bat above her head and leapt through the air. The heart squished under her, and she could feel its rage radiating out. Bumps began to form on the surface of the heart, sticking out farther until they burst its skin, and baby roots shot out of the bloody, matted thing. They grasped at her hair, eyes, clothes, anything, but she kept swinging.

With a thud, she felt something change on the inside of the heart. She had broken through. Now the heart was crunching under the blunt force, breaking apart into splinters. At last, the glow became brighter, blinding almost, and then it went dark. Audra collapsed to the ground beside it, a thin foam coming out of the corner of her mouth.

BRENTWOOD TIMES

Audra Burke was recently found dead of a heart attack in Trolley Woods. Her death is still puzzling the examiners, "There are obvious signs of a struggle, and strange cuts around her legs. She looks to have been



attacked by some kind of animal, but nothing large," The doctors have found no trace of poison in her bloodstream. Local police have declared it to not be murder, as the cause of death via poison is unlikely due to the circumstances. Audra has no close relatives, and her general identity is a mystery to the neighbors surrounding her trailer. Mrs. Todds says, "She was so young, I can't believe it! She only moved 'ere last week, and I just can't figure why she went in those woods! She hated th'place, said she was scared of some type a plant, prob'ly poison oak or somethin'. We've got quite a bit a that in those woods,". Her death went unnoticed for several days, as few people go into the woods due to the poison oak Mrs. Todds mentioned. The man who discovered her corpse was known

hunter John Lachowski. He referred to the corpse as, "Disgustin', really. Tons of flies buzzing around her like a buncha vultures. The weird thing, she was covered in grass.... No, like weeds, crabgrass, ya know? But not torn up. It kinda grew over her." The head scientists at Herkens University are performing an autopsy now, looking deeper into her strange symptoms, including a bizzare green foam dried at the corners of her mouth. The police hope to find some form of evidence as to her true cause of death. The same night, many neighbors lost their pets, and are now frantically looking for them all through the town. In other news, a new fast food chain, Lenny's has