



# Clutter in my Closet

—Brendon G.M.C. Holden—

## About the book

Jill is an average young girl, or at least she thinks she is, never recalling the pain she buried deep inside, presenting herself to be flawless.

During a pandemic, she helps some of her newer friends escape the sickness happening on the outside world—and in doing so she uncover some new things about the new mansion her family just moved into.

Bizarre things begin to take place within the mansion, including traveling to other realms within the closets—of the mansion; some she goes on by herself and some her friends experience with her. On one of these journeys, she meets a critter named Clutter that begins to threaten her and her friends, saying, “I will burn down your house.”

She, her siblings, and friends must stop Clutter and save their fortune—to have a family and normal life once again.

Clutter in my Closet is fictitious and not to be taken in any other way. I was inspired to write this story based on small experiences that I personally experienced that I never could quite put into words—to share them with friends. An example of that would be Clutter creating gas in the closets—causing the children to behave in ways not common to their normal behaviors. I have had such an experience and wondered, *what was the cause of such strangeness?* Although it was not as apparent as it is in this story, it was enough to make me wonder how I would put that into words!

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# Contents

Chapter 01 The Mansion down the street.....	007
Chapter 02 Dad's Big Buy.....	019
Chapter 03 Making Home.....	031
Chapter 04 Extra Space.....	043
Chapter 05 Empty space making space.....	059
Chapter 06 Lost in a closet.....	073
Chapter 07 Clutter/Buried Trash?.....	085
Chapter 08 Clutter must be stopped.....	097
Chapter 09 We must save the house, we must stop clutter.	109
Chapter 10 The root to us.....	119
Chapter 11 Where are my parents?.....	129
Chapter 12 A Ms. Rug Hug.....	139
Epilogue.....	145
About the Author.....	147

Brendon Holden

Clutter in my Closet



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## The Mansion down the street

*Dad! Get out of my room, I will never, never forgive you, I hate you, I will hate you forever. I cannot believe you did that,”* I say taking my computer monitor and throwing it through the glass of my bedroom window, *“I will never forgive you,”* I bellow with tears in my eyes.

*\*Times later\**

I have been living on this street, Holden Street, for as long as I can remember; and for as long as I can remember there has been the old Mansion at the end of the street—sitting at the end of an old, winding, dead end dirt road. We must pass by the Old Mansion whenever we want to use the main road.

Whenever we passed, it had always—had me wondering, it is as if its old wood, or perhaps it was the roughly painted—half falling off shutters...something, always got me thinking when we drove by that old Mansion, thoughts that would say, *I must have that House!*

As we pass by the Old Mansion, I hear my Mom and Dad worriedly talk about the future. My Dad works as a banker, my Mom is a day-care provider. They began to ask one another what they were going to do with me.

I recently stopped schooling, because a virus moved into town, and my parents do not want me getting sick. I am not the only one—in my family that cannot go to school, I have a ten-year-old brother and an eight-year-old sister; plus, I have a regular friend that visits several times a week, along with mine and her friend Tom. We all do not go to School anymore!

Steph and Tom are over almost every day, except when their parents think they are up to no good.

Lately Tom, Steph, and I are close, we are always hanging around one another; as far as we were concerned, we were family.

Once and a while, my ten-year-old brother would hang out with us; his name is Frog, he usually brought along our sister Sally.

Frog has brown hair and brown eyes and appears to be as old as me.

I think I accidently made myself look better than him and now, he kind of fakes it, or is older—somehow. Sally has brown hair as well. Frog and Sally could be taken as twins, but Sally looks much younger. They do not go to public School—now, so they are always around my friends and I—to pretend that they are doing what they see the other children doing on television.

Steph adores—Frog and Sally; she pretends to be their Mother, it gives her a job...once and a while, I can get jealous of my siblings. I hope they are not stealing my friends—I say to myself. Most of the time—it is my problem not theirs.

Steph has beautiful purple hair. Ms. Purple, I call her from time to time—in moments of play. Her blue eyes make her an incredibly attractive young lady. She is fourteen years old and regularly spends time outside of her house.

Tom on the other hand rarely goes out...that is until he is with Steph. Tom wears circle eyeglasses, I rarely get a chance to see what color his eyes are. Big, thick, black circle glasses he wears. That is how I think of him, big circle glasses. If he were to take off his glasses, I for sure would not recognize him.

He met Steph a little under a year ago and spends a lot of time out with her. Beforehand most of the time he was in his room—working on his toy airplanes or trains.

Model Trains and airplanes is how Tom met Steph.

Steph's Father owns a hobby shop, and Tom would go in there from time to time to buy paint for his Toys. He never noticed Steph in there before, but one day Tom needed help finding paint, Steph was the person who helped him find the paint he was looking for.

He was drawn to Steph's purple hair, no one in the small town—or rather the out-skirts of a small city had purple hair.

Tom was an average boy, brown hair, and circle eyeglasses, he did not know how to treat someone with purple hair. She told him her hair was naturally purple. For not one

## Clutter in my Closet

second did Tom believe that; he was so scared about something, he never checked to see if it were true.

When she told me, her hair was naturally purple, I figured it was a cover for being plainly dull, that she invented the idea—to add some excitement into her life.

To fit in with her, I asked my parents to buy me some purple hair spray, they did, and so most of the time my hair is purple as well.

I have only known Steph for a few months, and ever since I met her, I have been drawn to copy her every move.

I try to keep her around me as much as possible, if she were wearing black, I would change into something black, just so we would have a thing together.

Tom took notice of my attraction toward Steph and decided to help me.

Tom and I met a long time ago. We met in first grade. He is the reason Steph, and I are friends. He told Steph that I was a friendly person, popular and whosoever I liked—was kind of special, and not to be taken lightly, so as soon as I started copying Steph, she thought that she was special and popular, and felt free to do as she pleased, whether at school or at home.

And as soon as she found out my Father was wealthy, she filled—what she thought was the shoes of a rich child.

She was not wealthy, her family was rather poor, living on a few dollars a day; it was—possible to live that way, I slowly figured out by being around Steph and her Family, for instance I thought everyone would shop at a grocery store, but they do not, and as far as buying a soda at a gas station or corner store, that was rather impossible for Steph.

Her family would buy beans, twenty-pound bags of beans—at one time, sort of like one would buy grain or pet food.

After spending some time with her Mother, I concluded shopping was easy; all one would need to do to feed a family of four—for a month, was buy a twenty-five-pound bag of rice and twenty pounds of beans. That is basically what they ate for the entire month; they appeared to be healthier than my family.

I could almost feel like a bad person when I invite Steph to get a soda or a candy bar. I could almost say to her, do not tell your parents, but that could be even worse. I figure if she likes it,

*the candy or soda*, she will not put herself in a situation that can cause her to lose it.

Tom said she takes the stuff, *candy, and soda*, just to fit in and pretend she is rich too; I did not want to think about it, such could hurt my acceptance of life—as it is.

Tom does not say much about this, but I think his parents are wealthier than mine, he seems to like casting the full weight of popularity on me.

Tom kind of tossed—and left the weight on me—about the whole popularity thing, looking back—I liked how Steph treated me, she thought of me as popular.

I did not actually know what I was doing, but I figured I would give it a shot, I would lead Steph. The first courageous thing I decided to lead Steph in doing was: exploring the Old Mansion—on the old dirt road, the one right down the street. I figured we would not find much trouble, because no one lived on that old dirt road.

\*

“Steph, you know, one popular thing that popular people do is: go on adventures, and I have just the adventure for you” I say.

“Like what?” Steph replies.

“There is an old mansion not too far from here. Strange, very strange things—people have said have happened there,” I disclose.

“Like what?” Steph asked.

“Well, strange things...like—puppets that move on their own, or mirrors that look back,” I influence—making it up; *I said the first thing that came to mind, I needed to impress Steph.*

“We should walk over there and look into the windows, perhaps even go inside, so we can find these strange things. Maybe there are puppets over there walking around right now—just waiting to be seen,” I exclaimed.

“Okay, let’s go!” Steph answered.

“Tom are you coming?” I anxiously asked.

“Yes,” he says.

## Clutter in my Closet

We began to prepare ourselves for the brief walk over to the old mansion, we had to make sure we would not appear as if we were going to make trouble.

“Mom, we are going behind the house, we want to walk along the river,” I said covering up what we were really doing.

“Okay, do not go too far, your Father will be back soon,” my Mom replied.

Steph, Tom, and I walk out the front door of our suburb home. Houses were on both sides of the street; we did our best to appear as if we were just taking an average walk, we did not want the neighbors suspecting anything odd—that they would need to report back to our parents.

We stayed quiet to one another on the way over to the old mansion.

Within minutes we were on an old dirt road. About one hundred feet down the old dirt road stood the old mansion, it was dark red in color, and had a small driveway leading up to it.

As we walk up the driveway Steph says, “well, we made it, this seems like the rest of the houses...nothing out of the normal.”

“That is not the rumor, we must get close to it, perhaps even walk into the inside. If we walk to the front window, and we do not see anyone, we will try the front door,” I say.

“We will look together,” Tom bravely says.

We slowly walk up to the window and peak onto the inside, we see nothing except a few pieces of furniture—covered with white sheets.

“Looks clear,” Steph says.

“Okay, now we just walk to the front door, and we walk into the inside,” I say.

We sneak around to the front of the building. We walk to the front door. I gently grab onto the door handle and begin to turn the knob—opening the door.

“Hold on wait a second,” Steph says, “how strange are the things that have happened here?”

“Do not be scared Steph—they were not that strange, just a few objects seemed to have moved on their own.” I said—making up the story to fit in with Steph’s emotions.

I open the door. Steph fearfully grabs hold of my arm—hoping to not find a ghost or even worse its owners. We walk into the insides.

“See, there is nothing to be scared about, it looks normal as can be,” I said, comforting Steph.

“Jill,” Steph says, (*Jill, that is my name,*) “I suppose you are right, there is nothing to be scared about.”

We quietly walk around the first few rooms of the old mansion. We saw nothing strange, we explored until Tom advised we should leave—so we did not get too deep in exploration and find trouble.

We listened and we began to walk out of the house. As we approached the front door, clutter seemed to have been thrown in front of the door.

“That was there when we came in, right?” Tom asked hoping that nobody was in the house.

We at first did not answer him, we just kind of, somehow—did not see it.

Once we were outside and back on the dirt road, Tom asked, “you saw the clutter, right? It was not there when we walked in!”

Steph asks, “are you sure, because that does not seem right?”

“I am positive! I looked at that exact spot when we walked in; I remember, because I was too scared to look into the room,” Tom explained.

“Even if it was not there...I did not look hard enough to remember,” I said and took Tom aside and quietly whispered into his ear, “I made up the weird and strange things happening at the mansion. It is a normal Mansion Tom!”

“No way,” Tom loudly said, “I know what I saw, that clutter—in front of the door—Jill, was not there...trust me it was not there!”

“Even if it was not there, it does not matter, it is not like it is a bad house. I want this old house. Sometimes I make believe it is mine,” I said.

“How about we go back inside and just double check and see what we find, I really, seriously do not believe it.”

## Clutter in my Closet

“I did not look at that spot when we walked in, so I do not know if it was there. But I do want to see something eerie, that is the reason why we came over” Steph said, “ghostly things happen here.”

We looked one at another, and we agreed, we would walk back to the mansion.

We arrive at the front door, and the clutter was still there. I softly step over it. We walk through the first room...everything looked fine. We arrive at the second room and I look at the closet, the closet I spent much time at, because I was daydreaming—it was my closet.

We look and notice clutter was thrown throughout the room...the stuff that was in the closet was now everywhere in that room, hats, paper, clothes, trash, etc.

“Oh, my goodness, I cannot believe this, all of this was in the closet” I say, “there must be someone else in here.”

“Like you mean a homeless man or something,” Tom asked.

“No, we should leave, what type of homeless-man would throw everything out of the closet?” I declare.

We run out of the house, not looking back, and fearing for our lives.

We make it to the end of the driveway and begin to walk home....

“I do not know what that was about, but we should not go back there,” I express.

“What is wrong?” Steph questions, “we went there to see strange things, I mean—should we not be like—excited or something.”

I try to pretend to be strong, I know I had to be strong, after all—I was the one that led us out here, trying to convince Steph I was popular. I never considered something strange would have happened. “Yes—we should be excited, that is what I meant, that is what popular people do!” I say—covering up my fear.

Tom looked at me as to comfort my confusion, “You know what Jill, it will be all-right, it was probably the wind or our minds playing tricks on us, it is not like it will follow us back to our house. Once we get home everything should be fine.

I open the door to my house—in a daze; I notice Frog and Sally running up to me, bringing me back into reality per se.

“Where were you? Sally asks.

“Yes, I thought I saw you down by the old Mansion,” Frog added.

Huh, *how could they have just seen us, I wonder if my parent’s just drove by the old Mansion.*

To cover it up I decided to test out Frog, I said, “No you could not have seen us, we were in the back yard—the whole time.”

“I was just joking,” Frog answered and began to laugh.

“Steph you said you were going to play Candy-Land with us,” Sally said.

Steph looked at me and said, “Come on, let us go play Candy-Land.”

As we are playing Candy-land, I roll the dice, the dice hit the board, Frog says, “that old house down the street, well, Dad said, it was sort of like this game: if you make believe candy-land, you will see candy gush out of the walls.”

Sally added, “he meant not real candy, but if you were to pretend Candy, or rather a nice house, to you—it becomes a nice house! Candy will not literally gush out of the walls.”

I was so lost at that moment, at first I thought Frog meant that if we made believe candy to be there—it would—sort of—like we did, made believe in strange things at the old Mansion—and then once we made believe, they—the candy or strange things—would come true, but once Sally put it into context—I could see Dad saying that, he is always telling us to pretend we are happy and in doing so—that will make us happy.

Steph looked at me after Frog’s comment and said, “maybe we should go over there—to the old mansion and see if we can make candy gush out of the walls.”

I gave her the look of no, but she insisted, “How about we all walk over—very quickly and take a look—and make believe, maybe Candy will come to us!”

“Yes” Frog said, full of excitement. Sally agreed.

“Okay—very quickly, but we cannot go inside the house, we will just quickly walk to the porch,” I said.



## Clutter in my Closet

We all agreed—and quickly got up from our board game. We hurried over there.

Once we got to the porch—Steph says, “Frog, how or what are we going to make believe.”

“Candy,” Frog says, “Candy! Candy! Gush out of these walls” he says in a loud voice—and then begins to laugh.

Nothing happened at first.

After a minute, we heard a noise.

*What could it be?*

We all looked in the direction the sound was coming from—wondering to what could be making footsteps.

The door handle on the front door begins to move.

We gasp as the door swings open. We scream!

We began to run...I look back—as I am running to see who it was!

To my shock, I see my Dad; at this point I was relieved, not considering I could be in big trouble. I could not tell which was more frightening, seeing my Dad or seeing the monster.

In the mist of fear, I was glad to see my Dad.

“Dad” I say full of surprise!

“Jill, children, what are you doing out here” my dad asks.

“Um,” I could not find the words....”

“Sorry, Mr. Flippy,” Steph says, “it was my idea. I wanted to make believe with Sally and Frog, and I swayed them to walk over here.”

“That is okay Steph,” Mr. Flippy says, “I am glad you are over here!”

“Huh,” I said out loud.

“Yes, I am thinking about buying this old mansion, it just recently was put on the market; it is advertised for five hundred thousand dollars, and that is cheap,” Mr. Flippy verbally expressed—with a convincing tone in his voice.”

We all walk back home.

On the way back, I say to Steph, “that is who moved the stuff out of the closet.... Dad!”

“Mr. Flippy says, “I did not move anything out of the closet!”

Brendon Holden

Clutter in my Closet



Brendon Holden

## Dad's Big Buy

Months went by and the pandemic got worse, my Mom totally freaked out, and began to prepare for the end of the world. “I must get a years-worth of food,” she says to Dad in a frenzy.

I can recall going to the store with her as she frantically went up-and-down the isles stuffing her cart with items that would last months.

“Mom that is fairly well—it is not the end of the world,” I said to her as her arms were pulling items off the shelves.

“Yes, but if we do this now rather than later, we will not have to come back—later when everyone is sick,” Mom says—defending herself.

“There is not going to be any sick, because there is no sickness,” I say with a bold attitude.

We rush back to the house, prepared to stay on our property for months.

Dad boards up the house per se., and we shut the curtains and involuntarily seem to expect the world to end.

Months went by and not one person on our street got sick.

We did not leave the house, nobody on our street left their house either, although my Mom and Dad would occasionally go out for business.

After some time, my Mother and Father thought it wise to invest in a bigger house.

They spent weeks researching locations and houses, they did not even find a few that would offer anywhere near the privacy that they wanted, until they were shown the mansion down the street.

The old mansion stood about an eighth of a mile away from the nearest street, a small forest surrounded the property. If my Dad were to buy the property, he would not just be buying the house, but also the one-hundred-acre forest surrounding it.

A thick deep forest of New York surrounded the

property! ...Plenty of spruce and pines for us children to play on, perhaps even build small forts...like kids houses.

\*

I heard my Mom discussing with my Dad—the old mansion a couple of times before my Dad gave the news: “Kids, we are moving into the old mansion down the street.”

He was happy, he bought the old mansion for a cheap price, three hundred thousand dollars, which included a one-hundred-acre forest.

I was super excited too, so were my younger siblings: Sally and Frog.

We waited anxiously by his side for months, hoping to catch a word about when we would move. I wanted desperately to play in the huge forest out back—behind the mansion, and Sally and Frog both wanted their own room.

“Dad, when are we moving?” I ask that year on a sunny winter.

“Fitting that you asked Jill, your Mother and I, have decided we are moving—which means you need to start packing the little items in your room; we are planning on moving at the beginning of spring,” Dad said.

Frog, Sally, and I were excited, and quickly packed the little items we could without totally ruining our living comforts and began to anxiously wait for spring.

At the end of February, once we were sure the snow would not be back for another year, my Dad began to bring our possessions over to the old mansion—that sat hidden on Holden street; we did not move all at once, he started out bringing the things we did not use daily. He slowly moved onto the bigger objects as time went on: tables, dressers, chairs, beds, etc.

Once he was sure we could move the rest of our possessions in one afternoon, he told us the plan: “Tomorrow, in the morning, we will bring the little left of our possessions to the new house, we will pack our two cars tightly—with the rest of our possessions. We can make several trips if necessary,” my Dad explains.

I was super excited; I could not sleep at all that night.

## Clutter in my Closet

Thoughts continued to cycle in my mind—throughout the night. How will I set up my room, where will I place my stuff, and mostly how deep into the forest would I—and could I explore?

Anxiously, and eagerly I waited for morning to come. I continued to look out the window in hopes I would see the sun rise over the houses across the street.

Finally, light came through my bedroom window.

Shortly after the sun began to rise over the horizon, I cleaned up and went down the stairs to the family room.

Noticing Frog and Sally playing on the white carpet, I ask, “is Dad up yet?”

“Yes, he is, he is in the garage,” Sally answered.

I walk out into the garage, gasoline fumes blast me in the nose; I look around and notice my Dad, he looks at me, and says, “Good morning, I hope you are ready for the big move today!”

“Are we moving today? Great, I have been waiting to move for months,” I say surprised and anxious to complete the move.

“Your Mother has breakfast ready in the kitchen: waffles, strawberries and bacon—your favorite!”

I rush into the kitchen—my stomach now is twisting in pain.

Happily, I look at my plate full of food.

To sure myself it was mine, I ask my Mother, “is that my plate?”

“Sure is,” my Mother replied.

I quickly sat down and picked up a greasy piece of bacon and stuffed it into my mouth.

Crunch, crunch, sounded the bacon as I chewed. I reach across the table and grab the maple syrup and pour lots of the sweet stuff onto my waffles. I pick up the fork and knife; I begin to design a creative way to take apart the waffles.

Five minutes later, the waffles and bacon are gone. I quickly grab the glass of fresh squeezed orange juice—lovingly placed there by my Mother and finished the glass of juice in one big gulp.

“Jill, we are completely moving by ten o’ clock. We have other things to do today, so please talk to Frog and Sally...make

sure all of their stuff is out of their rooms and loaded into the car, it is particularly important,” my Mom explains.

“Yes, I can do that,” I answer, feeling a bit nauseous from forcefully putting all that food into my stomach.

I had two hours to make sure my siblings were ready for the move. I decided, I would encourage them with over-flavoring the idea of the move, that we would each have our own separate rooms—once we were in the new house—living in the mansion.

“Frog and Sally, once we move to the mansion, we will each have our own rooms. Would it not be great if we were moving over there today? We than could set up our rooms... We could decorate them and make home out of them,” I said.

“That would be great Jill, but it seems like we are never going to move. Dad has said we were moving for months now, and we have not moved at—all,” Frog replied.

“That is all about to end today; if you two get your things ready and you bring them down to the cars, I can promise you within a couple of hours we will be in our new house,” I said.

“Great, that is if you are not lying” Sally said.

Frog, full of excitement added, “We will pack right now!”

Frog, sally, and I rushed to get our things together, and brought them down and placed them by our parent’s cars.

My Dad noticed our belongings placed by the car—and tightly packed them into the cars.

“Are we all ready?” my Dad asked before making one last sweep of the house.

“Yes,” we said and hurried to the car.

We opened the doors of one of the cars and got into the inside.

A few minutes later and we rush out of the car and run into the mansion.

“Yes! Yes,” Sally says, as she quickly found her bedroom.

I grabbed the little of my belongings that I had placed in the cars—and brought them to my room.

Most of my possessions were already in my room.

I began to move furniture around and tried out objects here or there.



## Clutter in my Closet

I worked on my bedroom until my Mother called me for supper.

As we settled into the dining room for supper, we began to discuss the new place...

“So, how do we like it?” my Dad asked.

I forgot to think, I figured we were already beyond that and loving the place!

We all sat quiet for a moment before Frog said, “we love it!”

“Exactly Dad,” I added.

“You know children,” my Mother begins speaking.... “the school should be opening back up in the fall, and so—you three will be busy in school, plus your Dad and I will return to work. That would mean to make the most out of this summer, because once school starts back up, you three will be busy catching up on the work that you missed.”

After supper, I walked up the old noisy stairs to my recently set up bedroom and laid down on my Victorian style bed—carefully covered with an extra fluffy feather blanket.

I place my head on the pillow and began to wonder why I must go to school. I do not like school, but usually, once I am there—I do not mind it as much.

“I wish this pandemic would last until I am an adult,” I say to myself, “until I no longer have to go to school. I could then buy a home and live there for as long as people live in houses.”

I drift off to sleep visualizing my own mansion, and dream of one too.

I dreamt, I owned a Picasso dreamlike one-hundred room house, full of precious items, it had a magnificent swimming pool on the side of it.

I would, while in the mansion, in much time, lose my mind—or remembrance of reality, and get lost in the rooms and closets. I played for so long—I could not find my way back to the splendid swimming pool—I had started my journey at. But once I did, after hundreds of years of playing, children of all ages were in my swimming pool—playing!

In laughter, I run back inside and found three tiny people trying to use two hands, and then, I woke up.

Brendon Holden

*That was so cool, my favorite dream* I say to myself.

I walk downstairs, gaze out the window, and notice fresh snow had fell in the middle of the night.

I walk into the kitchen; I glance at Frog sitting at the kitchen table. We do not say a word to one another.

I pour a bowl of cereal and take it into the living room.

I make my way around the unpacked boxes placed throughout the living room to the couch.

I grab the remote to the television and turn it on—and I begin to flip through the channels until I find a brightly lit cartoon.

I stuff my mouth with the sugar in the bowl until I have quenched the morning hunger.

Within minutes Frog comes into the living room asking me how I slept.

“I slept as normal,” I say.

He continues the conversation, mentioning it is a new house, that we are in the new house.

“Yes, Frog we are in the new house. But now—it seems common, plus I am tired of not being home; all of this out of placement makes me feel lacking rest.”

Frog answers, “let us go outside, if we spend the day out there, Mom and Dad will do the un-packing, and once we come back in, we can play as usual.”

“Good idea,” I answer.

We get dressed preparing ourselves for the snow outside.

We walk out the door, I say, “Frog, let us go into the back woods, I have not seen it back there yet. Plus, Dad bought one hundred acres back there and I do not know what will happen to my mind—if I am not the first to explore the entire one hundred acres.”

“What is one-hundred acres?” Frog asks.

“It is a lot of land; we could walk out-back of our house and we most likely will never find the end of our property” I answer.

We walk into the woods; the snow made a crunching sound as we walked.

Frog picks up a stick and starts bouncing it off the trees.

## Clutter in my Closet

We walk for one hour, before Frog says, “I am starting to get hungry.”

“You did not eat breakfast?” I spoke.

“I did not think about it, I was too anxious to come out here with you.”

“Well, if we go back now, we most likely are going to have to help unpack. Are you okay with that?” I ask.

“Yes, I am fine with that, I am getting hungry.”

“I agree, I am getting really board, these woods are not as fun as I first thought they would be,” I say.

We hurry back to the house.

“Yes, we have made it,” I say to Frog.

“That is good, I am so hungry, I could eat a whole box of cereal,” Frog replies.

I open the front door and watch Frog run toward the kitchen-cupboards.

I investigate the living room to see how far my parents got unpacking. My Mom notices me looking at her in the living room.

“So, you are here! I need your help moving some of these boxes up to the attic,” my Mother says.

“Okay, which ones?” I answer—and question.

“Basically, all the loose ones—sitting on the living room floor,” she replies.

“Wow, that is a lot,” I say.

“Frog after you are done eating, I am going to need your help,” I yell into the kitchen.

As Frog was eating, I began to bring the boxes up to the attic.

The stairs were narrow, the stairs that led up to the attic.

Beforehand I had not gone up to the attic, so I did not know what to expect. Once I was up there, I was surprised, the attic seemed to be larger than the rest of the house—except the ceiling of the attic met at a point instead of being flat.

I walked through one room and then another; I was looking for the spot my Mother placed the other boxes, I figured it was wisest—seeing that—way when she went to look for something, I could say it is with the rest of the boxes.

I walked through one room and then another room, no

boxes! And then another and still no boxes. I began to get afraid that I would get lost up there, so I set the box down in the fourth room and hurried down the stairs.

I decided to wait for Frog to get done eating before I moved anymore boxes.

I walked into the kitchen and watched him slowly eat his Captain Munch. As I was watching him, Sally came walking down the stairs.

“I almost forgot we moved—” she said as she stumbled around the kitchen looking for something to eat, “is Steph coming over today, I miss her,” Sally said.

“She was over a couple of days ago,” I answer.

“Yes, but I want to play a game with her, or just hang out,” Sally answered.

“No, she will not be over today, besides, we have a lot to do, I am going to need your help today—bringing up boxes to the attic,” I said.

“Frog will be helping too!” I added.

“Let me get something to eat first,” Sally said.

“We have all day, no need to rush,” I said.

I walk back into the living room and began to organize the boxes, questioning myself, *what is the easiest way to get all those boxes up to the attic.*

I decided to bring them all to the attic.

All throughout the hallway boxes...the hallway was now full of boxes. Frog and Sally walk into the hallway.

Sally says, “How are we supposed to get to the stairs?”

“What?” I ask.

Frog says, “the boxes are in the way.

“We will climb over them,” I answer.

“Okay,” Frog says.

*Bang*

*Pop*

*Crackle*

We arrive at the stairs.

“This should be simple, in a few hours we should be done, now that I have placed all the boxes here,” I say.

“A few hours...” Frog groans.

“Come-on, if we hurry—it might only take an hour,” I

## Clutter in my Closet

say.

We each grab a box and begin our way up to the attic.

“It sure is dark up here,” Frog says.

“This attic is huge,” Sally adds.

“Yup, I put the last box I brought up straight down there,”

I say—hinting toward the further triangle roof rooms of the attic.

Without a warning we hear a bunch of noise coming from down the attic stairs.

*Bang!*

*Crunch!*

Four paws came running up the stairs.

I look behind me—to confirm my suspicion...I was right, it was Max.

“Max, I say, “I missed you so much,” while wrapping my loving arms around him.

Max full of joy—with his tongue hanging out greets all three of us. Immediately afterwards he points his nose toward the back of the attic and begins to bark.

“What is it Max?” Sally says while wrapping her arms around him.

“This does not seem right,” Frog added, “Let us go back downstairs.

“Okay,” I say.

We set down our boxes and went downstairs—to the kitchen.

“Mom, who brought Max home?” I convey. “I thought he was going to stay with Auntie until next year?”

“Your Father thought it was a good idea to bring him to the new house,” my Mother answered.

Max—my beagle, he is my dog, we grew up together, he is two years younger than me.

I do not know what I would do without him, but he has been gone for two months, and I have missed him a lot. I did not say anything about how much I missed him, I figured my Dad would not listen...plus after so many times of hearing, ‘Dad knows best,’ I figured he did.

“I am so glad Max is home, now I can sleep in comfort. I would have mentioned how much I missed him, but I figured, ‘Dad knows best,’ I said seriously to my Mother.

“Well, your Father does know best, that is why he brought Max home.”

“He mentioned something about the house being too big, plus someone seems to be moving things in and out of some of the closets,” Mom answers.

I looked at Frog wondering if he heard that...I decided to keep quiet and hinted to Frog to walk into the living room.

Once we got to the living room, I whispered quietly to Frog, “Frog, I did not tell you this, but a while ago, in the past, Steph, Tom, and I came over here—to the mansion, before we bought it, without letting Mom or Dad know.”

“Okay,” Frog said sort of embarrassed.

“Well, stuff appeared to be moving on its own,” I said.

“I do not believe you,” Frog answered.

“Mom just said Dad is having the same sort of experience, you must believe me,” I snapped.

“Tell it to Steph!”

“Mom told me Steph will be over here in a couple of hours,” Frog answered.

“Jill did you get the boxes up to the attic yet,” My Mom yells from the kitchen.

“We are working on it right now,” I yell back.

“I do not want to go up to the attic,” Frog admits.

“Come-on, if we hurry, we will be done before Steph arrives.”

“Sally, we are taking up the boxes, are you going to help,” I yell into the kitchen.

She storms out into the hallway and picks up a box—only big enough for her small arms to carry.

As we walked up the stairs to the attic, we notice most of the boxes were up there.

I looked around, looked at Frog and said, “Dad sure is quick! I guess we are done!”

I walked back down the stairs, went into the living room, and flipped on the Television and began to wait for Steph.

Clutter in my Closet



Brendon Holden



3

## Making Home

A few weeks passed living in the new house, I never accomplished what I so—eagerly expected over the winter—which was setting up and decorating my bedroom.

I had huge, ridiculously huge plans a few months ago and now I am not motivated to carry them out.

Today, I most likely will not do it, because Steph is coming over and I must help her, *help her not get sick!*

We have made plans for her to spend a couple of weeks at my house.

Her Mother and Father must work in the health department and Steph could be at risk of getting sick by the near curable virus.

“A couple of weeks might do it,” that is what Steph’s Father told my Dad.

So, she will be at my house for a while. She is going to be sleeping in the room next to mine...my Father just recently put it together. He put in an extra old bed and a dresser—he had stored in the Garage.

Ring... Ring... the doorbell rang throughout the house.

“Jill, Steph is here,” my Mom yells from the front door.

I rush out of my bedroom and rush down the stairs.

“Steph!” I say—noticing her purple hair—in the bright sunlight.

“We got a room prepared for you—” I say reaching out my hand to grab hold of hers and begin leading her up the stairs.

“You are going to love—being here...the room you will be sleeping in—is right next to mine!”

I suddenly notice she has no personal items with her, “Steph, um—”

“Where is your stuff?” I ask.

“My Dad said he will bring it over later; we were in a

rush coming over here.

“Okay, good,” I answer,”

“Anyways this is your room,” I say—opening the door to a spacious room, three stories above the ground.

“Wow!” Steph says, “this room is huge!”

“Yes, it is, the whole building is huge. I bet if we get lost in here—it could take days before we found our way home,” I say as we giggle.

“Why don't we go out into the back-yard, possibly even explore the forest outback,” I say.

“Okay,” Steph answers, “you lead the way.”

I took hold of Steph's hand and walked her outside, hot air meets us on the other side of the front door, the smell of fresh forest growth—filled the air.

“Okay, I have not really gone back here, I have not had the time since the move,” I say.

I decided to take Steph around the backyard and show her some of my Dad's work—in the backyard.

“My Dad has big plans for this place,” I say, “he has not stopped talking about it since we moved.”

I led Steph to sit down on the grass—that had recently sprung up.

Last year's grass made a crunch sound as we sat down, the smell of spring was all around—as if the winters forest festivals were being cleaned.

I take a deep breath of fresh air, full of life...knowing I had something special, more than special, but the essence of life—the beginnings of life.

We stared at the small stream—just feet from where we were. It was a couple of inches wide, fresh run off from the recent snow.

I look behind me at the back of our recently purchased house.

I say, “Steph, look back—look how big our house is, it is as big as a movie star!”

“You are right, how did your Dad get such a place for such a cheap price,” Steph replied.

“I do not know, but he mentioned something about it being part of our heritage. I did not get it,” I say, as I look behind

## Clutter in my Closet

me to see what made the creaking sound.

“Steph, look!” I say—pointing to a door, a door I have never seen before.

Steph looks behind her, “What?” she asks.

“That door, I did not notice it before,”

“Plus, it is open! We should go inside and look on the inside—maybe my Dad just went in there,” I say.

We get up off the soft grass. We approach the door that is partially open.

“Dad, is that you?” I say as we enter the dimly lit room.

“Wow!” Steph says—under her breath, “this room is beautiful.

“Look a piano,” I say, as I touch one of the keys.

The room looked in good shape. Small streams of light lit up the room. Decorative curtains hung up in the windows—some still shut.

Paintings littered the walls, beautiful paintings.

The room looked as if someone was recently staying in it, a coffee cup was on the kitchen table—and coffee was still on the inside, paperwork was everywhere—and the way it looked important paperwork.

“Steph, it looks as if someone was just here,” I say quietly.

“Yes, you are right, maybe it is one of your Dad's relatives.”

“We should go back outside,” I quietly whisper to Steph.

We quietly exit the same way we entered, leaving the door open—in the same manner as we found it.

Once we were several feet away from the house, toward the stream—beforehand that we were sitting at, I said, “that was so weird, I cannot believe Dad did not mention that room!”

“The furniture must have been in there, because I do not remember your family having that type of stuff,” Steph says,”

“Maybe he does not know about it.”

“Let us go ask,” I said. we rush into the house, keeping our mind set.

“Dad,” I say out loud.

“Yes, girls? I am in here,” my Dad replies from his library.

Upon entering the room Steph says, “Wow, you sure have a lot of books.”

“Wonderful job Dad, this room looks great,” I say—adding, “did you know about the room out-back of the mansion.”

“The one with the huge lock? Yup, but the real estate dealer said, 'there was no key,' so I have not gone inside, but maybe there is a treasure inside!” my Dad says playfully.

“That is weird, because Steph and I were just in that room, it was not locked!”

“Come with us, we will show you,” I say.

Surprised, my Dad follows us saying, “I do not think we are talking about the same room, I looked—and there was a big—old lock on it!

We rush outback—leading my Dad by the hand the whole way.

We get to the door; I look my Dad in the eyes and point to the door. I say, “Look!”

“It looks the same as it did Jill, it has got a big, old lock on it,” he says while grabbing hold of the lock and giving it a jingle.

Surprised by the look on his face, and hearing the lock, I look toward the door,

He was right, a big, old lock was on the door; it was shut so tightly—one could not even peek on the inside.

I look at Steph.

“We were just playing, Mr. Flippy,” Steph says—making an excuse.

She was remarkably familiar with being blamed for things she did not do.

Jill's Dad laughs—saying, “girls, and walks back into the inside.

“Thanks Steph! I am guessing he would not have believed us?” I express.

“Exactly, we are probably over tired or something...I mean look at the lock it is huge, and a spiders web is still on it!” Steph says.

“Maybe you are right Steph, why don't we go into the forest and play out there, maybe we will get inspired to do as I wanted to—*which is build small—little houses in the trees,*” I say.

## Clutter in my Closet

“Okay,” Steph answers.

We move some twigs and bushes out of our way as we enter the forest.

“Wow, this is beautiful,” Steph says—as she looks at the sunlight-sparkle on the forest floor.

“I bet Tom would love to come out here with us,” I say.

“Look over there...that is a great spot,” I say pointing to a patch of pine-trees, touched with love, and capable of holding little houses.

“Well, what do you want to do again?” Steph asks.

“See if Tom wants to come out here and build little houses in the trees,” I say.

“We could make them really nice, we could make a lot of them, it will be nice, like—a *fairy-tale woods!*” I say to Steph.

“Okay, where are we going to get the wood and nails?” Steph asks.

“I see some at my house, but I do not know if it is enough. But I bet my Dad would know...perhaps Tom has some as well,” I say to Steph.

“Okay, Steph says—agreeing to build, “we will build in this spot,” Steph says pointing to the patch of pine-trees, “let us go talk to your Dad and then I will call up Tom and see if he can spend a couple of days over here at your house” Steph replies.

We rush out of the forest and back onto the inside of my home.

While Steph calls Tom, I decide to quickly ask my Dad if there was any extra wood or nails that we could use for our tree-forts.

“Dad?” I say, “Steph, Tom, and I are going to build little houses in the trees. Do you have any wood or nails—that we can use?”

“Definitely—Jill, did you see that old shack by the tennis court?”

“Yes,” I reply.

“There is a ton of stuff in there; use whatever you want” Dad says.

“Thanks” I gratefully reply—and add, “can Tom spend a couple of days over here?”

“Ask your Mother,” Dad says.

On the way toward the kitchen to find my Mother, Steph surprisingly rushes towards me,

“I just talked to Tom,” Steph says gasping for breath, “his parents are bringing him over in a couple of hours!”

I quietly walk Steph into the kitchen.

“Mom,” I yell, “Tom is spending a couple days over here,” I say—hoping she would not argue.

“Okay Jill!” Mom yells into the kitchen—and adds, “once he is over here, make sure you spend time with Frog and Sally; they have been away from the others at school—so it is important for them to spend time with you.”

“Okay,” I yell back.

“Let us go up to my room,” I quietly say to Steph.”

“So—two more hours—and we will start building! That is when Tom arrives. ...*Right?*” I say to Steph.

“Yup!” Steph answers.

Within a half-hour Tom knocks on the door.

*Bang! Bang!* the steal-ball hanging on the double doors—to the entrance of our house sounds!

Steph and I rush down the ancient staircase, the old wood creaks with each step.

I swing open one of the doors. “Tom!” I say—greeting him on the inside.

“Frog, Sally!” I yell into the living room, “Mom wants you two to hang out with me today.”

Thinking they might not listen, I add “Tom is here!”

Both younger children come running into the front hallway.

“Tom,” Sally says.

“Tom,” Frog says.

“What we are going to do today—” I begin explaining, “is build tree forts!”

Everyone gives me their full attention.

“Dad said 'the wood in the shed, the shed by the tennis court is ours for the taking.’”

I notice Frog blink with attentiveness.

“First plan: we investigate what is in that old shed, once analyzed, we take what is needed to build the first tree-fort,” I say.

## Clutter in my Closet

“Are you ready for this Tom,” Steph asks.

“Yes, I sure am, my Dad said, 'I could spend the next few months here,’” Tom says.

“Well, let us go,” I say looking behind me to call my best bud over, my beagle, “*Max come-on, we are going into the woods.*”

Max hears!

Four paws running on the wood-stained floor of my parent’s new home—comes running after us. He lunges out the door full of playfulness.

I take my right hand and gently touch the top of Max's head, “*You are such a good Dog Max—my best friend, along with Jill and Tom,*” I say, looking at both—making sure I do not offend our relationship.

Max looks me in the eyes, communicating a sense of security, lacking abandonment and full of love.

Tom, Steph, Frog, Sally, Max, and I rush toward the shed.

Once there, we pop open the old roughly painted double doors of the Greyish painted shed.

“*Wow!* This place is huge,” Tom says, “if your Father lets us have whatever is in this first room, just *in the first room...* we can build more than one tree-fort!”

“I did not expect this much wood!” I utter.

“The planks,” I say, “these...will make nice floors...plus they are small enough for us to carry!”

“We can use the sheets of plywood to level everything out,” Tom added.

Frog and Sally both grabbed one of the ends of a two by four and began to walk toward the forest.

“Are we going in the right direction,” Frog yells with his back toward the forest.

“Yes,” I say—as I grab a board to lead the way into the forest.

“Right here is the spot!” I say, placing my board on the ground—in the middle of a small clearing. The sunlight shattered through the forest canopy—dancing sparkles of light, as I looked around to find a spot to start building.

“*Right here is a good spot,*” I hear Steph say—pointing

to my right, “*the branches are large and bunched together exactly right to place wood on the top of them.*”

“Okay, let us go get some more wood” I say.

“Tom, you are going to have to help me get a ladder.”

Tom and I rush to my Fathers garage and we both grab an end of the ladder and begin to carry it into the forest.

“Here!” Steph says.

Tom and I set the ladder down.

I hold the bottom of the ladder as Tom begins walking the ladder into the trees. He places the top end of it on the thickest part of the branch.

“This should be safe!” Tom says.

I climb up the ladder to investigate. The smell of pine was thick as I went up.

“Wow!” I say, “there is a whole world up here in the trees,” *a whole new wonderful world.* Birds greeted me with chirps each step of the way up—in the trees.

I gaze around.

“I think we can just lay the boards over these branches,” I say—gazing around the green world of needles—made fit for a world of creatures.

Tom says—from below, “we will start handing you up the boards.”

“Okay, toss them up here,” I reply.

Tom grabs one of the two-by-four-inch-boards and hands it to me. I carefully place it on the branches, and then another, and another.

Once I had five good solid boards in the trees, I climbed on them and stood—straight up.

“*Tom! Climb up the ladder, I want to see if it will hold your weight.*”

Tom begins to climb up the ladder. Steph follows close behind.

Tom, Steph, and I stood on the wood floor—we just made in the branches—out of five boards; we gaze around the tops of the forest. We had before never been up that high in a forest, there was a lot of new smells and sights and we had wanted to *remain up there!*

“I want to go up,” Frog says.



## Clutter in my Closet

Sally agrees.

I say, “we should get more wood up here first. I do not want you two getting hurt.

We begin to race the clock, hoping to get one good solid floor done before the sun set.

“Tom, hurry...hand me the rest of the wood,” I say after enough boards, including a giant piece of plywood—were brought to the spot of our tree-forts.

Tom hurried to hand me the wood.

I lay one board down and then another.

It is done, the final piece of the floor was the giant piece of plywood. Tom did that part. In doing so he almost fell off the ladder, the board was so heavy.

“Sally, Frog, this should be strong enough now, hurry up, come up the ladder before it is too dark to see.

They both climb up the ladder together. First Frog, and then—Sally right behind him.

“Wow, this is amazing!” Frog says standing straight up in the trees.

Sally does likewise.

“Okay, it is getting dark, we should go inside now,” I yell from below.

We rush into our lustfully-large house anxious for morning to come—so we can build more in the trees!

I did not sleep much that night. My mind was too anxious for morning to come. Throughout the night I made a mental map of what I was going to do the next day: how and what I would build next—in the trees.

“Tom, wake up!” I say walking into the living room.

My Dad thought it was good for him to sleep on the couch.

Tom quickly got up and began preparing himself for a day in the woods.

I run around the house—getting Frog and Sally ready.

Steph had the same experience as me, she woke up early, anxious to start building, she stayed by my side.

Soon as everyone was ready, we rushed out into the woods and began—right where we left off the night before.

Sally, Steph, and Frog carried boards and I put them into the trees.

We played, danced, and made life-long packs in the woods.

We spent four days building the forts...and when they were done, they were beautiful, like a fairy-tale-land in the treetops.

We built three of them, connecting all three with wide boards, connecting tree to tree or rather house to house.

From the forest below the forts were hidden—by tree branches, so they were not seen. We told one another nobody would see them either, we did not want to tell anyone about them.

On the fifth day of building the forts we decided to paint them.

We found some old paint in the shed: *eggshell white*. We encouraged one another to paint them.

We figured it could be easy—after Tom said, “if painting them is too hard, I will just—take the cans of paint and gently pour or splash the cans of paint on them.

So, we did our best to paint the small forts—that appeared to be a few boards scattered in the trees.

Finally, we were done.

“They are amazing!” Tom says.

Steph agreed.

“We will be master craftsman in our future!” Frog added.

Okay, great—everyone, let us go down and get something to eat, I am hungry.

Everyone agreed.

As we make our way out of the treeline and into the backyard, I look to my right and notice the door that Steph and I had noticed open days prior—was now open.

I look at Steph and with my head I notion to look at the door.

She sees and gasps.

“Frog, Tom, do you see that?” I ask.

“What?” they ask.

“The door to our right!”

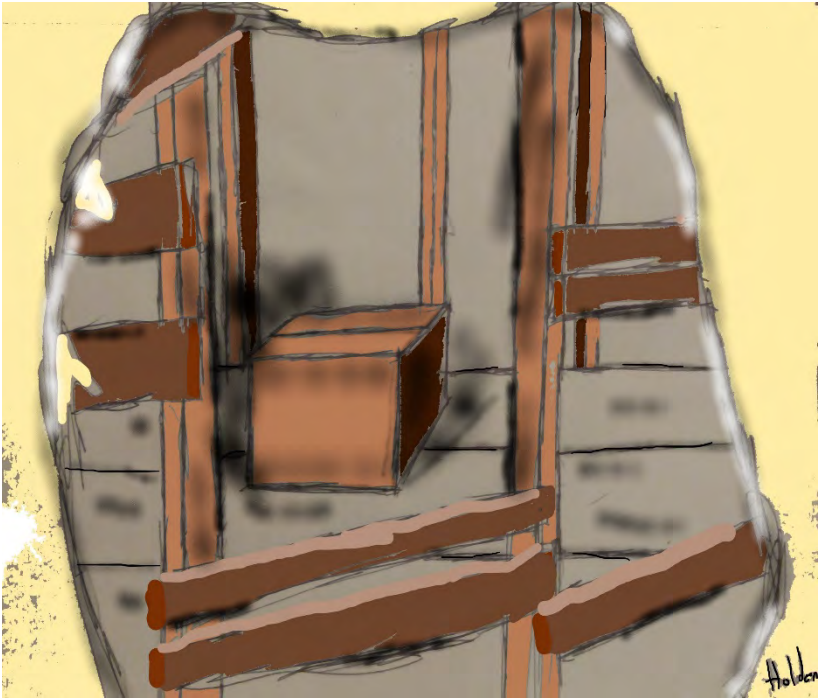
Tom says, “the door is open!”

Frog adds, “I thought Dad could not open that door!”

Clutter in my Closet

# Chapter 4

Brendon Holden



4

## Extra Space

Seeing that my Dad was a banker—he had pretty good credit with the bank. The summer we moved he took out a huge loan—to do some house *fixing-up*, finishing work on the old mansion, not a lot, just enough to give it a fresh look.

Some of the rooms he planned on stripping out the old sheet-rock and re-placing it with new, plus he planned on painting most of the inside and outside.

School had not started yet, so obviously—he wanted us children to help.

First thing he planned on fixing was the closets; he started in my room first, in the closet in my room.

“Jill, this is how you take off the old plaster,” my Dad yells through his facemask, right before he begins to swing his hammer and smash the plaster to pieces.

“You do not want to swing the hammer hard, just enough that the plaster begins to crumble. We want to keep the little boards under the plaster!” My Dad says—pointing toward the wall, that now was slightly caved in.

*Smash!*

*Pop!*

“You see that Frog? all that wood?” my Dad asks.

“Yes,” Frog answered.

“We want to keep all that!” my Dad says—yelling through his face mask, pointing at the wall.

I notice Frog looking around my bedroom; he sees a hammer my Dad had placed in the room. He picks it up.

He squeezes in behind Dad and begins to lightly tap the wall.

“Dad!” Frog says, “this side of the closet does not have the little boards.” He was on the side of the closet that faced the room Steph had slept in days prior.

“What? Let me look,” my Dad says—taking off his face mask.

“I cannot see, it is too dark in there.”

“Frog, go to the toolbox and grab me that little flashlight,” my Dad says—full of excitement—looking at Frog.

Frog moves quickly to the last place he saw the toolbox.

“Here you go Dad,” Frog says as he quickly finds the flash-light, and hands it to Dad.

“Wow!” Dad says, there is a whole lot of space in here.

“And look at that, there is some old boxes in there” he says—completely taking off his facemask and his face from the wall.

Dad picks up his hammer and gently and quickly begins to peel off the old sheetrock.

Once he made a hole big enough, he reached in and pulled out an old-looking cardboard-box; Paper Mill Corp. was written on the side of it.

Frog, Sally, and I followed him out into the hallway, eager to see what was inside.

## Clutter in my Closet

“Let me see,” I say—peaking over my Dad's shoulder as he set the box down.

Dad sets the box down on the old wood-stained-floor hallway. He blows off some of the dust that had gathered on the top of the box.

He pulled back the cardboard flaps and began to pull out papers; some normal-looking paper and some that appeared to be newspapers.

I picked up one of the papers that was placed by the box. I looked at the first page, my eyes glanced at the Title: N.Y. Paper; I scroll down to the date, may of nineteen-thirty-one—it read on the yellow stained paper.

The *Empire State building* has been complete, read the article just under the date.

“Dad, this paper is old, look,” I say holding up the paper to his face, “the Empire State Building now complete!”

“I see it Jill,” my Dad says, “it was complete in nineteen fifty though.”

Dad continues speaking, “I wonder why they hid that in the wall. It would have made more sense to extend your closet—to make it more spacious.”

He shuffled through the box.

“It does not look like much here, just some old papers, I will have your Mother go through these later, maybe there is some money in it for us.”

“Frog, these three boxes I found inside the wall?”

“Yes,” Frog answers.

“Can you bring them down to the kitchen and set them by the kitchen table.”

By the end of the day the closet was expanded five more feet—seeing that Dad could find no reason for wasting the hidden space.

The next day after the dry wall settled and dried, I painted the closet pink; Dad told me I could pick whatever color I wanted, so I picked pink.

In the next few months, he will finish the rest of the room, today it will just be the closet.

This old house is nice—I can smell the money coming

forth from its insides; *I cannot see who would leave such a beautiful place abandoned and abandoned for so long.* The place sat empty the whole time I was growing up. The outside must not have been painted for fifty years. The shutters on the house look as if a tornado had come through at some point.

I step out of the closet and gaze at my work at painting, “it looks good!” I say to myself—turning around, noticing the detailed molding—hugging the ceiling and the wall.

*This house sure is beautiful, mystic-like, and rich!*

The next morning, I woke-up—from my sleep, and stuck my feet in my warm, fluffy animal-doll-slippers.

*What could be making all that noise?*

I slowly walk to the end of the hall, looking at the simple, Degas oil ballet dancer paintings—that my mom recently hung on the hallway walls as I went.

I reach one of the several bathrooms—in the house. I gaze onto the inside.

*It is a mess!*

“Dad it looks like a tornado came through here!” I say loudly.

“Good thing you are up Jill, I am going to need your help today!” Dad says.

“Okay, let me first get dressed and something to eat,” I say.

I walk back to my bedroom.

*I cannot believe it, he ripped out the toilet, tore down the walls, and had the entire window completely out of the bathroom!*

I quickly get dressed and walk back to the bathroom.

“Okay Dad, I am ready, what do you need me to do?”

“Okay Jill, what I need you to do is clean up the broken wood and smashed drywall.”

“Simply place the smashed material and garbage in a bag. ...And do not fill the bag so full that you cannot carry it,” Dad described.

“Got it” I voice back toward him as he had his head under some plumbing.

I sat down on the floor, feeling sluggish. I consider my short skirt/dress—that I would dirty it, but I figured it was a once and a great while thing, I ought to just be dirty today.



## Clutter in my Closet

As I began to pull out the broken boards and smashed drywall—with my hands, I began finding things: shoes, papers, jewelry, etc.

“Dad there are things in these walls!” I express toward him, hoping to surprise and shock him.

“You can expect that Jill, when some of these older houses were built, the bank was not the source, or shall I say place—to store riches...the home was! Instead of the people putting money into the bank, *as they do now*, they would put it into the walls of their houses.”

“But, Jill,” Dad resumes, “to get to the money—if we or the common people wanted it, we or they would have to completely take their entire house apart, which ended the trend back in the year eighteen fifty. I followed, and so we are not going to be doing that!” my Dad advises.

I pull out of the wall a photo, I take a good look at it, I consider throwing it out, but I remember it is money, and I toss it back into the wall—down the rafters that appeared to have no bottom.

The smell of sweet wood: rich maple and pine wood—all about the room—as I gathered the pieces of drywall in my hands.

I gaze up at the carefully designed dark-stained wooden molding hugging the ceiling and the wall, “*nobody would have moved out of this house unless they were insane*,” I say quietly.

The mansion was beautiful, marvelous, and gorgeous; it was Victorian styled built in the early nineteenth century, survived two wars, and now sat deserted.

*What happened to its former residents?*

*This does not make any sense.*

As my hands dig through broken pieces of drywall, I notice a black-paper-type object in the wall.

I carefully pull it out, hoping to not lose it in the void of



empty space between the floor and rafters.

*Yes, I got it!*

I bring it to my face, a name is written on it, I cannot make it out though.

I flip the picture. It is an old black and white photo of a lady in purple, carrying what appeared to be a covered baby. A man dressed in a fine suit was partially standing behind her right side.

*"I will keep this!"* I say to myself and place the photo in

## Clutter in my Closet

the pocket of the inside of my dress.

“Lunch is down here, in the kitchen when you are ready.”

I look at my Dad, “Mom has got us lunch ready.”

“Let’s go eat!” Dad says—picking me straight up off the floor; dry wall fibers fall off my dress, making a crumbling sound.

We quickly rush into the kitchen; I glance at my usual chair and happen to notice the papers we found in the closet—still under Frog’s kitchen chair.

*We forgot about the box!*

I sit down ready to eat, the smell was so intense I could have thought I was eating. In a hurry, without consideration, I picked up my grilled cheese sandwich and chow it down in one big bite.

“Jill!!! That is not very lady-like!”

“Sorry Mom, I was so hungry,” I say and quickly change the topic, “Dad the box of papers we found in the closet is under Frog’s chair, we forgot all about it!”

“Oh ya, bring it to me, I wanted to see if maybe I could find some money in there.”

I slide out of my chair, crouch down and pick up the box. I bring it to my Dad.

He slides his plate across the table and places the box—full of papers on the table.

He begins to look through them—hoping to find some money.

I, hoping to escape work in the bathroom take the opportunity to find Frog.

I look around the house wondering how I will find him this time—in such a huge house.

After checking a few rooms, I got tired and sat down on the blue living room sofa.

I rest my mind.

Suddenly I recalled the photo I had in the pocket of my dress.

I pull it out—quickly, gazed at the lady in the photo—wondering who it could be.

I felt as if I knew the lady...she had a familiar face, *perhaps I met her in another dimension.*

My eyes began to gaze and stare long at the lady in the photo; the lady was so beautiful; it is as if something was in the photo—keeping me from turning away. Maybe it was her eyes, maybe it was her hair, something held my eyes to that photo.

The trees behind her began to sway in the wind as soft music sounded in the air. *This was coming through the photo*, as if I were there myself. The man behind her welcoming me home. I could almost hear this beautiful lady, as a mother—calling me, welcoming me to her world, to our home!

The baby in her arms began to glow bright white, or at least the clothes did, I could not get a clear picture of what the baby looked like.

*Who could it be?*

I listened to this gentle imaginary music for what seemed like ten minutes, and then I hear Frog say, “Jill you have been in the same spot for a whole hour!”

“It has not been an hour Frog” I bark back.

My Dad walks into the living room, “Okay Jill, let us go back up to the bathroom.”

“I thought you were going through the box” I responded—frustrated.

“I did!”

Later that day Steph showed up at my house.

“Dad—I am done, Steph is here.” I run down the stairs, beforehand changing out of my drywall-stained dress; I put on some jeans.

Later in my room,

“Steph come into the closet; we totally re-did it. Plus, we found empty space, and added it to the closet—so now it is a lot bigger in here.

Steph walks through the closet door; a lamp hangs from the ceiling.

“I did not get a really good look at the old closet, so I do not have anything to compare it to,” Steph says—looking at me in the back of the closet.

Clean, dry clothes hung in her way of clearly seeing toward the back of the closet.

## Clutter in my Closet

Steph sits down.



I softly walk closer and sit down in front of her.

I begin to gaze at her.

“What?” Steph says.

“Huh,” I respond.

“You were looking at me like you were in love, like you were going to kiss me,” Steph says.

Steph's hair began to appear to move although there was no wind. I gazed into her eyes—pulling stuff, either out of her, or

it came out of my thoughts of her, *whatever it was I must keep it!*

I began to dream of our friendship: pictures, writing, making life work.

*I must be mature, I must grow.*

Five minutes passed I gazed at Steph, I realized I must be causing her questions.

*I will answer her.*

“I’m not in love, I just want to make growth work,” I said—comforting her feelings of discomfort.

“Growth meaning?”

“Like fun. Why did you come over? .... *For fun!*”

“Yes,” Steph answered.

“Well, pictures are fun, writing is fun, depending on our life together sounds fun, it seems right,” I say—hoping she was imagining what I was, which was a sure world.

Steph looks at me and says—without mature consideration, “we will always be together!”

We spent hours in the closet, ridding of the pandemic, comforting one another and the world we were creating together.

At no point did I consider a threat, long ago—I had taken strength to keep away the pandemic.

We must have drifted off, because the next thing I bear in mind is waking up in the closet, Steph's head resting on my stomach.

The closet door was still open. The morning light, and its fresh appearance was just feet away from me.

Bazar aromas fill my nostrils, as if the house were full of a variety of ancient particles. Some smelled as if they were luxuries, but not what appears to be luxury—currently, but luxury from a distant, very distant past.

Through the particles in the air, I was changing. I could sense myself changing, it was as if I could not do the more, the more I was doing before...as if I had to know, tell myself to stop having fun.

“Steph wake up—morning is here.”

Steph picks up her head.

“Okay, I am up!” Steph responds, stumbling out of the closet, “what are we going to do today?”

“I want to study a picture I found; I want to spend some

## Clutter in my Closet

time in my Father's library. But first we must get something to eat.”

“What would you like to eat?” I ask.

“Something quick, something we can take into the library with us, I seriously have not woken up yet.” Steph responds.

Steph grabs a couple of swirl muffins off the counter—placed there by my Mother and we walk into the library.

“Dad can we look through some of your old books in the library?” I ask my Dad as he was walking into the living room.

“Yes, sure,” he says with a happy tone in his voice.

His library was huge, over three hundred books; they were wonderful books, lightning up the room, giving a sense of an adventure, exploration, and long life.

I loved my Dad's way of life, I wanted to be just like him.

I marvel and covet my Dad's books, wishing I could have them now—all for myself; I could collect more of them filling every cavity within me, than I shall be happy.

My hand reaches for the first—thickest book I laid my eyes on. I pull it off the shelf. Quickly I open it—longing to see what was on the inside.

My eyes will not rest, I cannot get a clear vision of the book.

I lead Steph over to the cotton and leather furniture.

I fix my mind on the book.

I see a few pictures, some old newspapers—that were part of the book.

Some of the pictures look like my house. *I wonder if it is.*

My eyes stroll down to the details of the photo.

“I do not see Holden street,” I say.

“That must be, look at the giant rock to the right; I know that rock, my eyes always drift over there when coming to your house, and I always have the same thought, *would it not be fun to live in such a rock, sort of like a doll house, a doll house—nobody knows exists?*”

I take the photo out of my pocket and ponder the picture.

“Who could this lady be, I truly love her,” I say to Steph.

“Right there!” Steph says.

“What?”

“That newspaper article says, '*multi-million-dollar*”

*family's' mansion gets a new street name—for their family inheritance—that resides in Woks Town, Massachusetts.* They named their street Holden after Clark B. Holden, the major investor and supporter of Paper Corp. Massachusetts, stating ‘Clark was the brains and money behind their success.’

“And look at the picture, that must be your house...right there in the newspaper—that is published in the book.”

“A date is written on the newspaper. Seventeen twenty,” Steph says, full of excitement—hoping to receive part of the treasure, if there was any treasure of any kind.

I flip one page and then another, “this looks like the lady in this photo,” I say—shoving the photo in Steph's face.

Steph reads—from the book, “Mrs. Rug, a daughter of Rugs Paper Co, vanishes on the property. The year eighteen-twenty.”

“I wonder if Mrs. Rug is the lady in the photo; if it is, I wonder what happened to the child?”

“According to the article, the woman, when she vanished, she was the richest person in Massachusetts,” Steph says.

“Steph, what do you think of past lives?”

“What do you mean?”

“Like, what if years ago we forgot, like amnesia, who we were, and now we can reclaim our past lives,” I say opening a fragile idea.

“When we were upstairs in the closet,” Steph begins saying, “I could almost feel the lives lived here, as if I had been living here. But I think I know why; say you froze an object, once you unfreeze it, it appears to be fresh...do you mean it is the same thing with the closet, the closet your dad found the cavity in?” Steph asks.

“Yes, that is the idea,” I answer.

“That must have been the reason for the,” Steph paused and got quiet, sort of embarrassed.

“You noticed it then!” I say—relieved I had someone to share in my experience.

“The strong smells, my Dad calls them highs; yup sure did” Steph says.

“I first noticed it in this photo,” I say picking it up, presenting it before Steph's eyes.



## Clutter in my Closet

I feel the photo move out of my hands.

“She is a beautiful woman; I wonder who the baby is in her hands?”

“Maybe it is you!” I assert.

“Yes, it could be, but a little too close for comfort; even if we had lived here in a past life—how could we have forgotten?”

“Plus, now I would be afraid to wake up to a nightmare,” Steph responds.

“That is what I thought of too, but the more I get the high, the more I daydream about....” I say and begin to drift off in my thoughts.

Steph looks at me; she utters “*what? about what?*”

“I do not know, sometimes meeting the expectations around me feels a little burdensome,” I admit—sort of humiliated.

“Well,” Steph says, “whatever is burdensome will not be able to burden us all that much longer—if we did live here—in the past!”

“Because the past is stronger—” I say looking at Steph shake her head up and down, agreeing.

“Did you probe Frog or Sally,” Steph asks, sometimes younger children can pick up on these type-things better?

“No, but we should,” I reply.

Suddenly Frog and Sally surprise the both of us—as they come rushing into my Dad’s library.

“What are you two doing?” Sally asks.

Steph still had the mysterious photo in her hands, she quickly brings it up to Sally’s face and then to Frog’s.

“We are trying to discover more about this picture,” Steph says.

“Where did you get it?” Sally asks.

“I found it in the wall of the upstairs bathroom,” I say.

“*Bathroom?* What would that be doing in the bathroom?” Frog asks.

“I do not know, but the other day when Dad was busting the bathroom walls to pieces, he gave me the job of picking up the crumbs.”

“I did not only find this picture, but shoes, papers and

some chains—perhaps jewelry” I say.

Sally snatches the picture out of Steph’s hand, turns away from us and examines the photo.

“She is beautiful,” Sally says.

“I wish I could live there!”

“That is what I thought,” I say looking at Steph.

Frog noticed the closeness between Steph and I, and turned toward Sally, and says, “let me see.”

“Where did you get that?” Frog asks—in a startled voice.

“In the bathroom wall, why?”

“I see a lady that looks like that walking outside of my bedroom window at night...sometimes she crawls up the wall and asks me to open the window,” Frog says.

All the room sounded quiet, and in dis-belief.

*You are lying!*

*That is not possible!*

*How could she crawl up the wall?*

“Do not believe me—than it just looks like that lady,” Frog says while pointing at the photo.

“What about you Sally, any thoughts on the picture?” Steph asks.

“Not the picture, but something lives in my closet, it sounds funny; after I hear it, things will start coming out of the closet, even clothes will come out; they will be tossed onto my bed,” Sally answers.

I begin to put their words into my consideration part of the brain, I consider their words.

“Maybe that thing Sally was the thing I saw last fall—when Steph, Tom, and I snooped over here—to the mansion.”

“What did you see?”

“Stuff thrown out of the closet, well actually I did not see it thrown, but one minute it was not there, and the next it was all over the room.

Clutter in my Closet



# Chapter 5

5

Empty space making space.

**E**veryday since the move, the day we moved into the old mansion on Holden street, my Dad spends hours a day in front of the television.

Some of our conversations:

“Dad will you take us to the park?”

“I must keep up with the pandemic,” he will say—while his eyes are glued to the television.

“Che will you take this out to the shed?”

“Yes, but first let me catch up on the news.”

*It is as if he steps away from the television, the entire world will die—and leave him wondering what happened to the rest of the world.*

“This could be it! This could be the end of mankind!” my Dad says.

I quickly, from time to time will watch with him, and I will take a little from the news and notice—not all that much has changed; but still—despite that fact the “people on the news,” insists on everyone staying home.

Just the other day they threw up the red-flag; the red-flag means the severe possibility that this virus could wipe out all of mankind, including many of the animals.

I do not know if I really—in my heart of hearts believe that, but my Dad seems too.

My Dad daily—must remove all doubt.

I do not know what I would say if one asked me, I have not been taught—how to respond, so I just laugh as he anxiously watches.

Steph must know something about what I am thinking, because most of the time if not always—she acts as if she understands what I do, whether around the house or at school. If I laugh at Dad, she will either punch me or give me a look like, do not Jill, *which gives the environment a lack of seriousness involving my actions.*

Again, nobody taught me anything about this, I must be right, despite Steph treating me—*sometimes* as the bad person.

“Dad can Steph come over today?”

“Ask your Mother?”

“Mom, Steph is coming over today.

“Okay Jill, but once she gets here wash her up and give her a change of clothes, I do not want you getting sick. If something is on her clothes or skin it can spread to the rest of the house.”

“Huh?” *she sure is taking this sickness far!*

Doorbell rings.

I rush to the door expecting to see Jill in front of her Fathers car.

I quickly open the door, preparing my mouth to utter Steph...

“Tom?”

“What are you doing here?”

He tosses a bag down and says, “I must stay here, tell your parents I have nowhere else to stay,” Tom says.

## Clutter in my Closet

“Wait a minute, what happened?” I express.

“My parents are in the hospital with an eighty percent chance of surviving the sickness,” Tom explains.

“The sickness, the pandemic sickness?”

“Yes,” Tom says.

Willing and anxious to help a friend in need—I say, “okay Tom, go into the bathroom, jump in the shower, do not touch nothing but the shower handle, and wash that afterwards, please, thank you,” I say.

Tom begins to walk up the stairs.

“And Tom,” I say, “Do not use the same clothes you came here with, I will ask Dad if you can use some of his,” I say.

I rush into the kitchen—beyond the rooms to where the front door is, “Mom, Dad, umm.” I pause, “Tom's parents are dying of the sickness.”

“What?” Dad asks.

“You mean....”

“Yes,” I say.

“I sent him up to take a shower, and Dad I told him you would give him some clean clothes.

“Okay!” Dad answers.

“So,” I pause for a moment, “can Tom have some of your clothes?”

“Of course, Jill, let us go get him some.”

As we make our way up the stairs, Dad says, “he did not touch anything right?”

“I do not think so; I mentioned that to him.”

We walk into my Dad's huge Victorian-style bedroom; four windows—covered with dark brown curtains were creatively placed on the outer wall.

Dad swings open the double-folding-doors to his closet.

He begins picking out pieces of clothes and placing them in my arms.

“Dad? he does not need all of these, just one set; we will wash his—so that he can change back into them.”

Dad gives sort of an embarrassed smile.

Dad picks out what he wants to give, we walk down the hallway toward the bathroom—Tom was showering in. “Tom fresh clothes are out here in front of the door,” I yell—through

the bathroom door.

“Okay!” I hear through the door—as we hear the water pouring into the tub.

“Jill is Steph still coming today?” Dad asks.

“Yes, and she plans on a couple of days here; I told you about it,” I say, hoping he was not going to reconsider.

“Anyways, Dad, the pandemic and stuff...”

“That is fine Jill, actually I am thinking they should be over more often, because if society begins to collapse—we do not want to be alone,” Dad says.

Relieved and feeling liberated we walk down the luxurious staircase—carpeted just enough to catch our feet from stepping onto the wood.

The doorbell rings.

“That is Jill!”

I open the door.

*Honk, Honk!* Steph’s Dad sounds from within his car and waves his hand at me.

I wave back.

“Steph! Good, you made it!”

“Tom is upstairs in the shower, let us wait and hang out for a moment—outside; Dad wants you to take a shower to get rid of any virus-type-stuff.”

I crack open the door—and peak inside, “Tom hurries up, Steph is here and needs the shower.”

“I am done,” Tom says—walking down the stairs.

We rush inside, glancing at Dad’s oversized clothes on Tom’s body, “those look good on you Tom,” I say—warming the environment.

I whisper to Steph, “Steph, try not to touch anything until you are super clean; I will get you clothes from my room.”

“Okay,” Steph says with a tiny bit of laughter in her voice.

I watch Steph close the oak wood bathroom door; small square designs are now facing me. *This sure is a rich house.*

I rush into my room.

I wonder... *what clothes would look best on Steph.*

*Purple!*

I dig through some of the boxes—I purposely left—after



## Clutter in my Closet

the move, thinking I was saving space. I moved so quickly—the boxes will never look the same again.

I found a couple purple sets of clothes; Steph will look good in these, she will be so happy saying, *you are such a marvelous person, such a good friend!*

My type of delight!

“Steph,” I say behind the door leading to the bathroom, “I am coming in.”

I crack open the door, hot water steam pours out onto the colder hallway.

I toss in the clothes—saying, “here are some of my best clothes.”

“Thanks—” I hear through the water splattering in the tub.

I close the door and make my way to find Tom. I needed to find out how bad his case was, were his parents dying?

I walk into the kitchen, Tom is sitting at the bar eating cereal, cereal my mother must have given him.

“Now you are all cleaned up, I can give you a hug.” I say to Tom. I wrap my arms around him, “It is a good thing you did not get sick, because you would not be feeling this hug right now, nor would I be able to be close to you.”

“You are right Jill,” Tom says—looking over his shoulder, giving me a look of acceptance, a brave look of acceptance.

“What happened at home?” I ask—wondering what was happening on the outside world.

“I do not really know Jill,” Tom says—looking at my Mother and then at my Father, he pauses for a moment, and then says, “I do not really want to say this in front of your parents, because I do not want to make my parents look bad, but reality is not reality!”

“Go ahead Tom it is a strange time for everyone,” my Dad insists.

“Well,” Tom rolls his eyes back, recalling the past few days, “my Mom had been mentioning others disappearing for a while.”

“My Dad insists that it was the people simply hiding out in their houses.”

“My Mom never saw it that way, maybe it was the fever, but toward the end of her independence she started saying, “Frank, the people, they are all gone. I cannot find any of our friends,” she would say, crying and panicking.

“I could not spend much time with her, but she sure was—in other words, freaking out!”

Tom looked at my Dad in hopes of comfort.

I almost thought Tom was going to cry as he looked my Father in the eyes.

Tom, then looked at me, put his head into his arms—resting on the table.

I could see curiosity in my Dad's eyes, as if he had a thousand questions, I knew he would not ask, mostly because the situation was sensitive. “It will be alright Tom,” Dad says—burying all his desired questions deep within himself.

I hear Steph walking down the stairs; within moments she walks into the kitchen.

I look at Steph, I say, “Tom's Mom said all the people on the entire planet have disappeared.”

“I did not say that Jill,” Tom says.

“What happened?” Steph asks.

“My Mom cannot find the reality she knows was there. She said that she has not seen anyone in months, and she has searched.”

“She is close to being dead now” Tom explains.

“What about Frank?” Steph asks.

“Well,” Tom pauses, “he was put into the hospital when he broke into the neighbors!”

“The police tied him up—as he shouted, ‘they have all disappeared!’”

“Huh, weird,” I say and look at my Dad, “you know Dad, I have not seen another person in almost a whole year.”

“Jill,” my Mother says—keeping me under her authority, under her knowledge.

My Dad adds, “Jill, I am almost sure the people are still out there, every day I turn on the news, and every day the people who are broadcasting the news are on there.

Steph says, “it could have been re-recorded.”

“That is what my parents were saying,” Tom says

## Clutter in my Closet

relieving himself.

“Okay kids, that is enough,” my Mother says—attempting to change the subject.

We all sat quiet for a moment.

Steph blurts, “I have not seen anyone either.

My father quickly interrupts, “kids enough! why don't you go play.”

We begin to leave the kitchen table. My Dad says, “and Tom you can use the spare bedroom next to ours, we just recently redid it.” my Father says—making sure he himself could ignore us and go back to work.

“Okay, Mr. Flippy, will do!” Tom says.

We walk into the pool/gaming room; we sit down on a couch my Father had placed in hopes to entertain family and friends.

Tom sets his backpack on the floor, us not noticing it could be tainted with the virus.

I at this point did not believe in it, I only did if my parents told me too.

Tom unzips his backpack and pulls out a newspaper.

“Look here,” Tom says, “last week's newspaper says two million were placed in the cemeteries—in the past five months; that is in the state of Massachusetts.”

*“All dead!”*

“What?” I grab the paper out of Tom's hand.

“Twenty of the state's cemeteries are now full to capacity,” I read out of the Wok Times.

“The weird part about that Jill, is everyone, still—has their televisions, lights, and radios on in their houses; it is like a cover up, but not a cover up. Only the educated people will know the truth!” Tom says—fearfully.

“I was not so sure my parents' were sick,” Tom says with a little doubt in his voice, “but they were acting very strangely.” Tom turns his head and mumbles, “they broke into a couple of houses.”

“Your parents did?” Steph asks.

“Yes, they needed to check on why the supposed dead people—were still using their household stuff.”

“It could have just been because—the sickness moved so

quickly, that the dead people appear to still be alive.” I add.

“Yes, it could be, but according to my mother, their, the dead’s cars were pulling in and out of these people’s garages,” Tom says.

Steph slides down into the couch, relaxing every muscle, “the whole sickness and pandemic is like that Tom.”

“Cars! Driving on their own,” Tom argues.

“Sickness and graves are supposed to not make us question,” Steph says.

“That is sort of covered up too Tom. Maybe you are accidently hitting who you are, maybe you are thinking too far out,” I say.

“You are right, I am here!”

“Plus, I could have stood up for my parents, I know that Jill,” Tom says defending himself.

Night approached and we began to fall asleep on the couch, the same couch we had been sitting at most of the day.

“Kids,” my Dad says, “it is almost bedtime. Go clean up.”

“Dad can Tom and Jill, along with me spend this night in the closet,” I ask.

“Why do you want to spend the night in the closet,” my mother asks—as she walks into the room.

I look at the blue lit background of the fish tank as my mother walks by.

“So, we can comfort Tom,” I say.

Steph adds, “his parents are sick.”

“Okay, that will be fine,” my Dad answers.

“Yes!”

I open the closet door in the hallway and pull out the clean blue and black sleeping bags—my mother stored, ready to be pulled out at any moment and used on the spot.

I hand one to Steph and then one to Tom.

We walk them back to my room.

We carefully place the sleeping bags on the closet floor, I walk toward my bed—to grab my comforter; on the way I notice the electrical outlet in the front of the closet.

*I will grab my night-light.*

I quickly grab both and bring them back to the closet.

## Clutter in my Closet

I first plug in the blue night-light.  
I lay down my comforter, my blanket.  
Clothes hung above me.

Steph says, “it feels weird not have been in school for the past year.”

“Yes, it sure does, I almost feel like I am dead; it is like if I do not do something, anything—I will feel dead,” Tom adds.

To add into the conversation, I say, “my Dad keeps acting funny, I do not notice school all that much, I just simply pretend I am on summer break; but I cannot help consider something horrible—seeing my Dad watch the news the way he does.”

In comforting ourselves into the night we fall asleep.

I woke up in the morning expecting to find Steph and Tom close by, in the same manner as we fell asleep.

*Nothing!*

*Only the closet!*

I was so alarmed I did not notice the clothes hanging above us were gone.

I pull back the comforter that hours before I placed in the closet.

I put my feet on the cold wooden floor—as I stand up.

I slowly walk to the entrance of the closet, being led by a strange light, an almost ancient light.

As I get to the door entrance—I see dirt on the floor, along with some dried-up Maple leaves.

“Steph?”

“Tom?” I yell.

I get to the door expecting to see my bed—across from the entrance of the door.

I gasp.

I could not believe my eyes.

A forest!

A strange forest lit by some strange light.

*What an odd forest!*

I begin to walk out, I pause.

*What could be out there?*

The forest almost seemed as if it were on the inside of some sort of dome, but it could not be, I could see blue sky above

Brendon Holden

the tree line.

The air was soft and warm. *I think I was somewhere rather than not.*

I will walk out.

Dead leaves crumbled under my feet.

I do not hear anyone.

I walk about ten feet to the right—of the closet door, only to notice none of the rest of the house is there, just half of my bedroom, and most of my closet.

As I got to the edge of the room the forest abruptly stopped, I could see a field; a field that sloped downward.

I sure would love to run down that hill. The environment made me feel as if I could play here for an exceptionally long time.

“Tom, Steph, are you here?” I yell into the surrounding environment. I was hoping I would hear them, I wanted someone else to share this experience with.

No answer, nothing, but the sound of a windless environment, no air, only the atmosphere of the indoors of a huge building.

I walk to what once was the front of our house, small bushes sit in the front wall of my bedroom—where there was the hallway.

I look to my left.

Apple trees, or at least I think they are apple trees.

I walk towards them.

Big red juicy apples hung from the tree.

Vines of tomato plants grow beneath them.

I pick an apple.

I put it to my mouth and attempt to take a bite—when I am startled by a sound.

I listen.

It sounds like something in the bushes.

It sounds like it is struggling or stressing to move.

I walk over to this sound that speaks a fearful, and twisted, yet wild atmosphere.

*What could it be?*

I crouch down and begin to move the tomato vines.

I look straight ahead in the vines, a small nest, a

## Clutter in my Closet

compacted area.

I see a small critter.

I feel as if it is poisoning me—with the sound it is making; I cannot look away; I cannot stop listening.

Once the sound reaches the core of my being, it asks if it can *keep me*.

“No, no” I say out loud and stumble backwards. I scramble to my feet and run toward the closet.

I look to my left—noticing the giant hole—straight through the left side of my bedroom.

I run into the closet.

I shut the door behind me.

I quickly make my way toward the back of the closet; I take my comforter with me.

I cover myself, hoping nothing finds me.

“No! No!” I utter.

Fearing I will never find home again I shut my eyes.

I suddenly hear a voice; I hear Tom's voice.

*I wonder if that is Tom or someone pretending to be Tom.*

*I will risk it;* I pull back my comforter—covering my face.

“Jill?”

“Jill? What is wrong?” Tom says—hovering over my face.

“Tom!” I yell—relieved.

“What is wrong Jill?” I hear Steph say toward the front of the closet.

*They appear to not have known.*

Moments ago, the entire bedroom was missing, leaves covered the floor to the entrance—to the closet; now all looks the same as when I laid my head down.

“Jill are you all right, are you okay?” Tom asks, giving me a look of protection.

“Hmm,” I did not know what to say. First, I must assure myself that this closet is the same closet as before.

I jump out of my blankets, rush toward my bedroom, and examine the room, the hallway, and several other rooms—before going back to the closet, to Steph and Tom.

“I do not know how to tell you both this, but just minutes ago I was...”

I stumble in my words, I cannot explain what I just saw, so I said, “I was in a different world.”

“Were you dreaming?” Tom asks.

“Dreams can be like that,” Steph adds.

“Hmm, no and yes. But I am sure it was a whole different world” I say.

They both gave me a strange look, comforting, welcoming me back into my room.

We stand there for a moment. Steph says, “I am hungry,” while tapping me on the shoulder.

Right then I knew it—was an isolated experience; I must pretend it never happened.

“*Yes, I am hungry too, let's go get something to eat,*” I say.

“My mother just bought a whole month’ worth of this cinnamon, like—bread stick; if we pop them into the microwave, they get soft, like a pancake. They are so good!”

Once we got down the stairs and into the kitchen, we began to ready ourselves for the day.

As the food was warming, Steph says, “so, Jill you were mentioning something upstairs about getting lost in a closet.”

“Yes exactly.”

“*Lost!*”

“Good thing I found my way back.”

“How did you do that?” Tom asks.

“I was running from a monster or something and hid under my covers.”



# Chapter 6



Brendon Holden

## Lost in a closet.

**D**ays went by and both Steph and Tom stayed at my house. After three weeks of Tom and Steph staying at my house—Tom's parents died, and Steph's parents got sick. According to my Father the sickness has reached a level of severity. He will not let us leave the house unless it is in the backyard.

Steph, Tom, Frog, Sally, and I pass the days through playing; we do mention the truth to one another, because we will not believe Tom and Steph's parents have abandoned them.

Over the past few weeks, ignoring the present reality both Tom and Steph—sort of lost touch with reality.

I did not need to ignore the truth, because—in my world everything was about the same except—my Dad and I, do not spend as much time together; he is usually watching the news.

My Mom does not act the way she did just a year ago. She is constantly cleaning the house, continuously wiping everything down.

My Dad will not open the windows in fear the virus could be in the air.

My parents told both—Steph and Tom, that they could permanently move in—due to their parents' hardships, that they would over the years buy them new material possessions.

My Dad already promised Tom, and they both decided for Tom to stay with us until he is eighteen.

Not long after Steph's parents also passed, leaving Steph with the same clothes she had on the last time her Father dropped her off.

My Mother and Father did the same thing with her as they did with Tom, they agreed to let her live in our mansion until she was eighteen, promising to buy her all-new material things.

Our family grew, now my parents appeared to have five children: Frog, Sally, Steph, Tom, and me.

Because the situation was so odd, and because the

schools were permanently closed—the five of us stuck together, playing all day long.

My Dad and Mom rarely noticed us, they were so tied up in civilization ending, that they could not focus on the structured system that was handed to them, so they let us do whatever we wanted.

“What to do today?” Tom says—as us children gathered in the kitchen; most of the time in the morning we would happen to get up at the same time.

I began to think of stuff we could do as I pour myself a big bowl of cereal.

“The tree forts have not seen us for a while,” I say.

“It is cold out Jill, it is November,” Steph adds.

Maybe we should add on to them, so that they are warm on the inside.

“How are we going to do that?” I ask.

Tom did not have the answer and gives an idea, “Leaves! What if we insulate them with leaves?”

Steph says, “if we use leaves, we will not be sure if another critter is in there with us.”

“True,” Tom says.

“Maybe I could run over to my parents’ house and grab some of their stuff—like insulation,” Tom says.

“That might be a good idea Tom,” I say.

“It is only a fifteen-minute walk,” Tom says.

“If you grab their stuff, how are you going to carry it all back?” Steph asks.

“Well,” Tom pauses a moment—figuring out the rest of the plan, “we do not need all that much stuff: a box of heavy-duty plastic, some foam, insulation,” Tom pauses again.

“You two, plus Frog and Sally will have to go over with me.”

I say, “my parents are not going to let us go.”

“If we do not bring Frog or Sally—we simply do not tell them,” Tom answered.

“If we are going, we better go now, Mom and Dad are usually off doing their thing right around this time. We most likely have a couple of hours before they figure out—we are

## Clutter in my Closet

gone” I say.

Steph adds, “That gives us about one hour.”

We scramble to dress and quietly make our way out the back door, mentioning to Frog and Sally we would be at our tree-forts, hoping they would not come looking for us; most likely they will not, they are slow to wake up in the morning.

We dart in the woods, by taking the woods the neighbors will not see us—I directed.

Within fifteen minutes we reach Tom's house.

Surprisingly, we find his garage doors open, Tom mentioned beforehand they were closed.

We sneak into the garage, once inside Tom directs to listen to the happenings of the inside of his house.

The television was still on, and it sounded like someone was in there.

“Tom,” I whisper, “it sounds like your parents are in there.”

We ignore the sounds, Tom rushes to gather the supplies.

I walk over to the window in the door separating the garage from the living room.

I peak inside.

To my surprise I see the electronics being moved as if someone was using them.

“Tom!” I whisper.

Surprisingly, the vacuum turns on inside the house.

“Jill, grab some of this stuff we need to get out of here.

I rush over and grab the box of plastic.

Tom grabs the insulation; Steph grabs a giant staple gun and a tub of nails.

We rush out back in the forest.

“That was odd,” Steph begin saying, “the television was still on, I could almost feel your parents still living there.”

“Steph the strange part is, this does not look the same,” Tom says.

“What?”

“The forest I cannot remember the forest! The plants do not look the same.”

“It is too dark out here to tell,” I answer.

“But it is not for me, I always come back here, because

the gas station is just over that hill; but where are the lights to the store?"

"We must go back! I am serious... Jill this is not the same forest."

"Okay, but we have to hurry, my parents will notice we are missing anytime now," I answer.

We rush back to Tom's house; once we reach his backyard—dimly lit by his kitchen light—we hear a sound in the forest, the same sound I heard when I was in the tomato patches.

I look at Tom, "that is the sound I heard the other night...the other night when we were in the closet, when I told you I was translated into another world.

Steph begins to move toward the sound—being drawn to it.

"Steph do not go toward the sound," I say.

Steph ignores me.

"Grab Steph we will run into my house," Tom says.

I grab Steph by the arm and pull her in the same direction Tom began running in.

Steph comes to her senses—following Tom and me.

We rush into the garage; Tom begins to shut the door.

We stop making noises and listen in silence.

Steph looks to the right, out a window, looks back at me and begins tapping on my shoulder. I look toward where she is pointing.

I gasp.

A lady is in the window. *Who could it be?*

I know it is the lady from the photo I found.

She places both hands on the window—making a bang sound against the glass.

We scream, we run; Tom bursts through the door leading from the garage to his parents living room.

He slams shut the door behind us.

Tom says, "follow me" as he leads us toward his bedroom.

We get to his room. I shut the door as Tom makes his way to his heavy dresser.

"Steph help me move this against the door—" Tom says pointing toward the dresser.

## Clutter in my Closet

Steph rushes to the dresser. Together they both slowly walk the dresser to the front of the bedroom door.

Tom pushes it face down in front of his bedroom door. He then rushes to his fresh appearing made bed and picks it up; blankets and bed sheets fall off—as he places it against his one and only bedroom window.

Tom sits down catching his breath.

Steph and I do likewise.

Within five minutes we hear the living room entrance door open, soft gentle footsteps gracefully walk up the stairs—leading to Tom's bedroom.

Soft singing and soft words could be heard, words that chilled us to the core of our being. It was as if I could remember her tormenting us, but I cannot pin-point to when.

Quietly we sit—crouched down in Tom's bedroom.

Small taps on the bedroom door. A small whisper comes through the door, “let me in kids, I want to make friends.”

*Tap! Tap!* on the bedroom door.

A baby begins to laugh out in the darkness of the hallway.

Chills run up my spine, my heart freezes in my chest.

“If you do not want to open the door for me, open the door for the baby. “Tommy your parents are out here; they would want you to come out and protect their house.”

*“Leave lady, Leave!”* Tom commands.

“You kids are not supposed to be here,” the woman replies.

“Come out here and maybe I can spare you the trouble,” the woman outside of the bedroom door says.

*“This place looks real, does it not Jill?”*

“Open your eyes, I bet you do not know how much control I have over you” the strange-sounding lady says.

I sat thinking about her words for a moment. I look at Tom and say, “we are dreaming, we are still in the closet.”

I reach over and grab Tom by the shoulder, as I reach over—my body within the closet—at my parents’ house, my arm is doing the same thing. Now being in two places at once Tom, Steph, and I both awake in the closet, letting go of the world we were just in.

“Steph,” I say.

She quickly picks her head up from the blanket that was covering it.

“You two were there?” I ask.

“Yes, Jill, I could have almost guaranteed that place existed.

“We never awoke,” Steph adds.

“I am hungry let's go get something to eat,” I say.

We rush into the kitchen in the same fashion we did just hours prior—before we thought we walked to Tom's house.

We begin preparing the same food as we had thought we had eaten.

“Tom do you still want to go over to your parents' house—to get material for the tree forts?” I ask—sort of joking.

“Yes, sure, that is if the strange lady is not over there,” Tom says—as we begin laughing.

“Steph, you do remember?” I ask.

“Yes, ah” she pauses for a moment, “that was not a dream. You had mentioned something in the dream, that is if you were dreaming—about going to a strange world,” Steph says cautiously.

“Well, I do not want to get so deep that we believe it,” I pause and whisper, “we could be there right now!”

Steph says, “I am still carious about the people living, but not living in their houses, we should get our mind off of this house and spy on the neighbors.”

“Good idea! Tom says, “I need to know what killed my parents or if they are even dead, what if it is all a lie!”

“My parents said something about a huge cover-up,” Tom says anticipating the biggest reveal of his life.

“But what if we get caught?” I ask.

“We already are caught if you think hard about last night,” Tom says.

“True Jill, that was not normal, everybody taught me that-type-thing does not happen,” Steph says—pointing up toward my closet.

“So, we will explore, same idea—” I said, “as in the dream. My parents are busy, but we have a couple of hours to pretend we are working on our tree forts.” I express.

“Do not tell Frog or Sally.”



## Clutter in my Closet

We quickly get something to eat and tell my Mom we are going to play out by the tree fort. We rush out the back door.

We take the back way into the woods and begin to snoop on other properties.

The first window we peak into, lights were on, and food was prepared, but no people. Something appeared to be happening with the second and third house we arrived at.

I want to rush over to my parents' house," Tom explains.

"We are going with you," Steph says.

We quickly run through the woods and arrive at Tom's parents' house.

Tom had the key, so we went inside.

Everything about the house was so strange, televisions, radios, and lights were still on. Fresh food was prepared on the table.

"This is strange," Tom says.

"Let's grab some stuff for our tree forts, just so if we get caught, we appear to have another reason."

We rush into the garage and grab the same items we grabbed the first time.

"Funny," I say, "the items are in the same spot as they were the first time—we came over here."

"Yes, that is strange," Tom adds.

We rush into the woods—hoping we would find the same woods; the woods Tom remembers.

We run through the woods never saying a word to one another.

We arrive at the back of my house, next to our tree forts.

We place the items on the ground.

"We made it," Tom says—full of relief.

"I will go get Frog and Sally, they would love to make more of our tree-forts, our winter tree-forts," I say.

Frog and Sally both came rushing into the back-yard forest.

I could see Mom was up, she bundled both children up in heavy duty winter gear: ski pants, boots, and a heavy jacket.

"What are we doing?" Sally asks—looking up at my face.

"We want to make the tree-forts weatherized, so we can play in them in the winter, once it starts snowing," I answer.

As Frog is climbing up the ladder, with a sense of leadership he says, “hand me up the plastic.

We spend the rest of the day at the forts, Steph, Tom, and I do not say anything to one another about the dream last night; we were hoping to not wake up while playing with Frog and Sally.

Glad to enter my warm house after a day in the cold. I take off my winter jacket, excited to run up to my room; I had much daily to do in my room, writing, coloring, dressing my dolls and now talking with Steph and Tom.

As I enter my room, I turn around expecting to find Tom and Steph, but instead Frog and Sally come rushing into the room.

“Can we hang out in your room tonight,” they both ask.

Shortly after, Tom and Steph enter the room.

I look at Frog and then at Sally, “yes, sure, you both can hang out with us tonight.”

I began to think, *I wanted the moment to talk to Steph and Tom about our experience in the closet*; I wonder if Frog or Sally have had any strange occurrences.

“Frog,” I begin saying, “do you remember the day we were in our Fathers library and you mentioned something about a lady who climbs up your window at night?”

“Yes,” Frog says, “she usually wants me to let her in. The other night I almost did!”

“What happened?” Steph asks.

“Well, she jumped or flew off the window as I began to open it. I suppose she had other business she had to attend to.”

“But” Frog adds, “she said something stranger than the previous nights, that she was a friend.”

“That is why I began to open the window, because I was no longer scared of her.”

Sally mentions, “if that is the same lady, she sure is scary; over the past couple of weeks, I have seen her out my window; I did not want to tell anyone this—because confessing her makes me feel stupid.”

“What does she do out there?” Steph asks.

“She walks around the back yard, scaring me. Her face is

## Clutter in my Closet

white, white! And her eyes are black as nothing—that is the scariest part, her eyes!”

“I always hope when I look at her, she does not notice me—to look back at me with those eyes, black eyes stuck inside of her white, white face!”

“She eats causing me fear, sometimes she makes sounds without making sounds,” Sally says—crouching down—stabilizing her mind.

“She is a very scary lady,” Frog adds.

“Sally can you take us to your room and show us where you see her?” Steph asks.

Sally gets up off the floor and leads us into her room.

Three rooms down and Sally points into her room, toward the back window.

Steph leads the way over, “I do not see anyone over there right now,” Steph says.

Steph turns around to face Sally, suddenly I gasp, I point my finger out, outside the window, “Steph look!”

Steph comfortably turns around, “Oh my goodness” Steph says—with horror in her voice.

“There is a woman out there!”

Steph too scared to look—she turns her head; my eyes were fixed on her.

“That is the lady in the photo,” I say—as I begin hearing the soft music in the wind, as I watched her hair blowing with the sound.

She appears as if she is welcoming me to her private world, a lovely world. I wish I could live with her.

Steph and Sally begin screaming.

“Hey, you too, why are you screaming” I ask.

Frog is pulled toward the window, “she appears the way she did the other night, she is being nice to us.” Frog says.

The girls calm down.

Tom looks and says, “maybe she is one of your neighbors, although it does look like the lady that was in my house the other night.”

“Do you all want to go out?” I ask.

“No!” Sally says.

“I am going out,” I say.

“I will go out with you Jill,” Frog says.

“Yes, I will too!” Tom says.

We in a rush got down the stairs—hoping that she would not leave.

Frog and Sally stayed by the back door, leaving the door open.

“Hello,” I say to the lady. She does not look at us, she just stands there with her head down.

“Hi, do you live around here?” Tom asks.

“Maybe we should not bother her,” Frog says—changing his mind—about going to meet her.

“My younger brother says that you occasionally come out here and look into his bedroom window,” I say.

The lady looks up. Black, dark eyes investigate mine. Her dark, black hair described her hidden world of a great being, like that of a king or a queen, a ruler of many.

“If you do not make it any less wonderful out here...you just might get lost out here,” the lady says, “but you cannot stay here!” the lady says, giving a girlish giggle.

I could not take my eyes off her, I was in love; her entire environment was all that I could think I was living for, but I feared it was a worm on a hook or peanut butter on a mouse trap.

Overtaken by the atmosphere, I say, “well I will, I will come back, I will tie a rope around me, so I do not get lost and gonzo will not eat me.

“You mean Clutter, that critter will not eat you, he eats tomatoes,” the lady says. “Darling a rope is out here; it is in the buried trash. If you and your friends come out, and you get lost, follow the trash home,” the dark eyed lady adds.

“Okay, nice meeting you,” I say—still entranced by the atmosphere around her and begin walking toward the back door.

“See that Frog she seems like a nice lady,” I say walking toward the back door.

“Who was it,” Steph asks standing in the entrance of the door.

“Good question Steph, good question” I say.

Clutter in my Closet

# Chapter 7



Brendon Holden

## Clutter/Buried Trash?

**F**rog, Sally, come-on it is spring, you two are always anxious to go outside in spring.”

Frog and Sally refuse to go outside after the end of last fall’s encounter with the black-eyed lady; they say she continues to laugh at them in the night, saying, “I will eat you; it is only a matter of time before you come out here, and I will eat you; and Clutter will burn down your house.

Steph nor Tom believes her.

Steph mentioned to me she felt fine with the lady with black eyes. Tom liked her too, he said, “I wonder if she is looking for a husband, because I would make a great man for her.”

My feelings toward the lady, I loved the lady, I looked out my windows several times in hopes she was out there, but I never saw her.

I will not forsake Frog or Sally, so I invite them.

On the day I got them to go outside with me, I was in my Father’s library and I was looking in a book, the same book Steph and I were looking at last fall, the one with the newspaper article on the inside.

According to the book, in an article written by Corin Stewa, the family who lived here—in this mansion—long ago was fined for throwing much garbage into the woods out back of the house.

According to the article trash could be found miles into the woods.

I suddenly remember the black-eyed lady mentioning, “if we got lost out there—to follow the trash home.”

“I must tell that to Frog and Sally, I must tell them there is nothing to fear, if we get lost out there, we will follow the trash home.”

I will have to mention this article to them.

*Knock! Knock!*

I open the door to Frog's bedroom. I see both, him and Sally sitting on the floor with many toys scattered around them.

"You two," I say holding up the book article.

"We should go outside and explore the woods."

"According to this article—there is a ton of trash back there in the forest, who knows what we could find."

"Plus, if we get lost, if we get lost, we simply follow the trash home," I say.

"I do not know Jill, what if there are bears out there? Frog asks.

"I want to go out" Sally says.

"Come-on Frog," I say.

"Okay," Frog says, getting up.

He walks over to a chest and begins pulling out clean clothes.

"Sally go get ready, meet me downstairs in the kitchen by the back door," I say.

I open the back door, spring air blasts me in the face. I take a deep breath, taking in all that spring has to offer dead grass, leaves that have been disposed of—after soaking up last summer's sun light, and all the mud in the back yard.

I stand in the kitchen in between the kitchen and the backyard—in between the door leading to the backyard.

Within five minutes Frog and Sally rush into the kitchen, "where is Steph and Tom?" Frog asks.

"Steph, Tom we are about to go outside are you coming?" I yell into the living room.

They both—at the same time get off the living room couch and walk into the kitchen.

"So, what are we going to do out there?" Tom asks.

"We are going trash digging," I answer.

Steph adds, "my Dad at one point had me follow him into the woods to dig trash, he said some of the trash is worth thousands—this day and age."

"So, you have done something like this before?" I ask.

"Yes, a lot of the people did on my street, they would call it digging."

They were kind of like archaeologists.



## Clutter in my Closet

“What I remember was a good time, like a treasure hunt, always anticipating a great find with each layer of dirt removed,” Steph answers.

“Actually, I did not think hard about this,” I say running over to the cupboard—grabbing a plastic bag and a small garden shovel.

“Okay now we are ready,” I say.

We walk off into the woods keeping an eye out for any wildlife or dangers we may find, especially the lady with black eyes.

“I hope we do not get lost here,” Sally says.

“I do not see any trash” I mention.

“It probably is miles down that way,” Frog says pointing into the deep forest.

“Right, but think about it, who would carry their trash all the way down there—if they could leave it right here,” Steph says.

“I am going to try digging right here,” I mention.

“Hold on a second there is a dirt hill to our left; whenever my parents brought me digging, we always dug on the side of a bank,” Steph says.

“Most likely true Jill, it is common for people to throw their trash over a bank rather than on the flat ground; that way when they come walking through—they will not walk on the trash,” Tom says.

“Okay, let us walk over to the bank and there we will dig,” I answer.

We carefully walk over to the bank.

I peak over.

“Wow, there is a ton of stuff back here, glass, old toys, pottery and tires,” I say.

Tom adds, “there must be one hundred tires—” pointing to one tire, then another.

Steph grabs the small garden shovel out of my hand, “I will show you what my parents showed me.”

Steph crouches down slightly standing at the beginning of the slope.

She begins to move dirt with the shovel.

As she does, she says, “all you need to do is gently remove the dirt, we do not want to break anything below it, so we must carefully remove the top layer of dirt.”

“My Mom said, certain items that can be found are worth thousands, like an old glass maple jar—with the log cabin on top, that one could be worth two thousand dollars,” Steph says.

I crouch down besides Steph, noticing worms with each shovel of dirt, old pottery pieces are all about—rolling down the hill as the dirt is removed.

Tom walks over to our left and pulls out of the ground a glass jar; no lid is on the top.

“Wow, this one sparkles in the light,” Tom says.

I pick my head up to see if the lady with black eyes could be seen, but I saw nothing.

Suddenly I felt a load of daily pressures fall off my back as we began to play in the forest, I began to lose my sense of time.

We dug and dug.

Without noticing and not wanting to notice time—we begin to dream of lasting days.

“These items are so nice, we should make a pretend store,” Tom says.

“We can do a house too” I mention.

As I began collecting stuff for our pretend house. Steph says, “let me pretend to be your husband.”

I forgot all about time, I sort of lost my mind and I intended too!

I could sense something in the woods, perhaps it was the colors in the sky or maybe it was the ancient trash, something out there inspired me to lose my living behavior.

It must have been years out back behind our house. I built an almost fortress with furnishings.

I collected an old sink, a couch, pots, and old blankets.

As Steph and I are playing married, a lady shows up in the window of our stick house. She says, “you two make a good couple, that must mean I will not be taking either of the two of you home today.”

Steph and I were over excited to see her and began to flirt.

## Clutter in my Closet



“The woods around here are more, I have been living in them for hundreds of years,” the lady with black eyes says.

Frog amazed, comfortably walks into our little house in the forest. Frog had done the same thing as us, losing his sense of time.

“Hi,” Frog says to the lady.

“Hi,” the lady says back, “good to see you children out here, and remember if you get lost out here, simply follow the trash home.”

“Okay,” we say, but we did not understand what she meant, we were having so much fun.

“Did you notice something about the trash Jill?” Frog asks.

Sally walks into the little house.

I say, “I did notice something, that I am having an extremely fun time.”

“That is because of the trash,” Frog says.

I think about it for a moment, noticing the lady with black eyes had moved away from the window and could no longer be found.

We sure have been out here for a long time; I cannot remember a time in my life that I had so much fun.

I began to fear I would never return home.

*What could be doing this?*

I think hard.

I began to think about Frog's words, 'it is because of the trash.'

Maybe you are right Frog, "maybe the trash is giving us an extremely fun time."

I begin to express my concern to the others.

"We must get home," I say, "this is not normal."

Steph agrees.

"How are we going to get home?" Steph asks.

"The lady said to 'follow the trash home' I answer.

Steph looks up and begins to think.

Tom interrupts—knowing he is somehow different, "huh, um, maybe we should have been home now."

Steph looks at Tom and barks, "Tom I know what I am doing, I do not use drugs."

"I do not either," Tom argues.

I say, "this is not all that bizarre, times have changed."

"I did not mention that you do drugs, I mentioned I do not do drugs," Steph says—looking at Tom.

"Come-on Steph, I do not do drugs either."

Tom begins to act different, paranoid—as if he were separated.

As Steph began to talk of drugs—Tom began to appear as if he did, so much so, I could not help but treat him as a recovering drug addict.

"What were we to do again?" Steph asks—looking at me.

"Maybe we are supposed to go home," I answer.

I fail to think, I sit down on the leave covered forest floor.

Steph began to talk to Tom again, but she was not treating him as normal.

Days go by and we failed to think about how we were going to get home.

I pretend to marry Steph, and Frog pretends to marry us, and Tom, well he appeared to be different all together.

We would involuntarily talk to Tom as a different entity.

## Clutter in my Closet

We watched him fit in with this creature we made of him and through that creature he attempted to explain that he was inhabiting the strange life like force.

“Jill, Steph it is Tom, I am stuck inside of a wart or something,” Tom says.

“Okay Tom, sure,” Steph replies.

“Do not treat me like that,” Tom argues.

“You are absolutely on drugs,” Steph says.

“I do not have the thing that helps me think at the moment,” Tom answers.

“You are a wart?” I question.

“I am not a wart, I am attached to the growing thought-wart that is esteeming badly,” Tom says.

“So, you are a thought wart?” I ask.

“I have to pretend that I am what Steph esteemed me to be.”

“Which is on drugs?” Steph says.

Steph picks up a small branch and throws it at Tom’s head.

“Stop Steph,” Tom cries.

I started realizing I was partially asleep, that we all were acting out of character.

“Steph,” I yell.

“Tom does not know,” I said laughing at Tom.

Tom explains, “this is not me; I am only pretending to be what you made me out to be.”

“Okay,” sure Tom.

Frog could tell something was drastically different and knew he had to act fast.

He crouches down next to Sally and says, “follow me.”

“I am going home,” Frog yells, “we will get lost out here.”

I panic, “come-on you two, we have to follow them.

We run off into the woods yelling, “stop you two, wait for us.”

After thirty minutes of chasing them we caught up to them and came to realize we were totally lost in the forest.

“What are you two doing?” I yell.

“We got to get home,” Frog says.

Sally adds, “our parents must be worried about us.”

“Plus, Tom seems to be having a problem,” Frog adds.

I began thinking about how deep we are in the forest and how my mind is far away from my known reality.

“Like I said Jill, I am just pretending to be this thing you are making me out to be,” Tom says.

I knew I should not respond; I must think, *how are we going to get home?*

I look at Frog.

Frog looks at me and at the same moment we say, “we follow the trash home.”

“I know what to do, this began when we started moving the trash around,” I say.

“So, the trash is moving us around,” Steph says.

“Maybe the trash can speak, but not in our language,” Sally adds.

Tom says, “well it does have a shine to it, possibly saying something about this distant past.”

“What if we take our recently make-believe house and store—and listen to the trash; what if we place it where it appears to belong?” I question.

Good idea.

We rush back to the spot we had spent several months at and began to rearrange the objects we pulled out of the dirt.

“This looks like a jar that belongs in the bushes,” Tom says—picking up a glorious jar.

“This jar, is beautiful,” I say pulling it out of Tom’s hand, I have never seen anything like this before.”

“It almost says plant me in a plant pot,” Tom adds.

Tom digs up some dirt and places it in the jar; he gently digs up a small berry plant and places it in the jar, he begins to carefully add water to the recently planted berry plant.

He gently places the berry plant on the counter of our wood and stick pretend store.

“It looks like the jar is saying, I am the mystery,” Steph says.

“So true,” I add.

“Well, if this is the beginnings of the mystery, we should try some more objects and finish it.

## Clutter in my Closet

Without eating or sleeping we dig.  
We found plates, jars, stoves, car parts, and precious objects.

Thousands of pieces we pull out of the ground, we gaze at them.

“I would never want to leave these objects,” Tom yells.

They were stunning and marvelous.

“What are they saying,” I ask.

*“Answers”*

*“A Store”*

*“A toy factory”*

*“Our stuff”*

I wait, pause, and say, “objects that belong to us, something given to us, something we use to imagine life.”

Steph yells. “exactly, it says we make the laws to our surroundings.

At that moment we woke up in Frog’s closet, to the board game Frog and Sally had been playing before we decided to explore the forest.

I look around Frog’s closet and attempt to question the others.

“That was so weird,” Frog says—picking up the board game.

Sally follows him.

The moment was awkward, so I said, “well we did not get lost!”

Brendon Holden



Clutter in my Closet



Brendon Holden

## Clutter must be stopped.

**J**ill what do you think happened a week ago—when we played in the forest for months?” Frog asks.  
I look toward him sitting across from me.

Steph to my left, sitting on the couch with me, begins to say, “Frog...” but forgot what she was going to say.

I expected that answer from Steph because I did not have an answer myself.

In the moment of Steph’s pause I glance over at the television.

“4G cellphone networks are completely covering the Country,” the man representing a wireless network says.

“Is there anything we should be worried about?” the host of the show asks.

“4G can send frequencies above 24 GHz, the advertiser says.

The host gives him a serious look, many questions expressed on her face.

“24GHz can expose—if directed at a particular individual—to such radiation that the heat of the radiation could cause blood and tissue loss,” the person representing the wireless network says.

I look toward Steph, “this is it!”

“What?” Steph asks.

“4G networks,” I answer.

“You mean to answer Frog?” Steph asks.

“Yes, Frog maybe it is 4G.”

“4G can cause blood loss and due to our blood loss, we hallucinated the whole forest journey,” I answer.

“Maybe,” Frog responds.

“Jill, if it was due to blood loss, how could we all have hallucinated the same thing?” Steph asks.

I consider the question for a moment.

“I do not know I answer.”

We put our faces down towards the floor.  
I say, "I wonder what that forest journey was about."  
"I am going up to Frog's closet," Steph says raising herself up off the couch.  
Frog and I follow.

Steph quietly walks into Frog's closet tapping on the walls as she completely walks in.

I tap on a couple walls myself.  
Everything looks normal in this room," Steph says.  
"I need answers," Frog says.  
"Where is Sally?" I add.  
"She is in the tub," Frog says.  
"She said that things get tossed out of her closet, maybe we should go over there and investigate."

Frog leads the way.  
Walking into Sally's room I glance over at her tiny bed, wrapped in a bright pink blanket, a small white child's desk was to the right.

Frog peaks into the closet.  
I do not see anything odd or out of place.  
I peak over Frog's shoulder, "okay" I answer.  
We slowly walk away from the closet.  
Steph says, "where is the clutter? that closet is the same closet that clutter was thrown everywhere—years ago when we disobeyed and came over here against your parents will.

"Jill, Steph," I hear Tom say.  
"In here, in Sally's room," Steph answers.  
As Tom enters Sally's bedroom, I hear that sound that was in the tomato patches.

Suddenly, without warning some of Sally's possessions were thrown out of the closet.

Balled up in a pile of clothes, in Sally's closet was what appeared to be a creature.

*Grunt!*

*Grunt!*

"Oh, my goodness," Steph says.  
"This is our chance; this is our chance to figure out why these strange things are happening."

## Clutter in my Closet

“Who are you?” I yell across the room, into the closet.

*Rumble!*

*Grunt!*

“I am Steph,” Steph yells toward the creature.

“*Grunt, Grunt, Yes,*” the creature says within the closet, under a pile of clothes.

Slowly the top of his head peaks out from within the clothes, exposing just his eyes.

“I am Clutter” the small little hairy black/brown colored thing says.

I began to hear the sound I heard in the tomato patches, the sound of deep crud and a burnt environment.

“I remember you,” I yell.

“Okay,” Clutter says chewing on something.

“Hold on,” Steph commands, “what is all this about, this is not normal, things like this do not happen in normal life.”

“Okay” Clutter says.

“Why do the closets take us away from time to time,” I ask.

Clutter pauses.

The strange sound Clutter makes still coming from the closet.

“Um,” Clutter says, sounding like a cat speaking, if a cat could speak, “I will burn down your entire house,” Clutter begins to laugh.

“I am turning on the gas inside the closets right now,” Clutter says.

“Why?” Steph asks.

“You cannot do that; we just want to know why we are taken places from inside the closets.

“Ms. Rug wants to keep you for herself, you can live in her gardens amongst the tomato patches,” Clutter says with excitement in his voice.

“*No!*”

“No! she cannot keep us,” I say.

“Then we will burn down your house.

Steph runs over to the closet door and slams it shut, pushing the clutter tight into the closet.

We rush out of Sally’s bedroom and hurry downstairs.

Tom says, “what the heck is going on,” as we rush down the stairs.

I suddenly remember Sally in the bathtub, “I got to get Sally.”

I rush back up the stairs, Sally just getting out of the Tub, I wrap a towel around her and lead her down the stairs and into the kitchen.

We sit down on the bar stools of the recently set up bar—my Father had built.

“What was that?” Tom again says.

“Do you think he will burn down the house,” Steph asks.

I notice Tom, once again seeing him as foreign; Steph seemed to notice it as well.

“Tom why do you not know what is going on?” Steph says snorting.

“Ya, Tom, it is like you are all screwed up, how much drugs did you do today?” I say laughing.

Tom noticing, he suddenly is shocked and begins to do as he did the last time, which is play the scar we just had made.

“Think about this Tom you have no clue what is going on,” Steph says and begins to laugh.

Tom knowing, he was smart, smarter than both, Steph, and I, says, “I know where we are, we are in a magical land,” Tom says disgusted with this thing we were making out of him.

“Seeing that you know, how are we going to get home? How are we going to stop Clutter from burning down the house?” I ask.

“I smell gas,” Steph says.

“That means Clutter turned on the gas in the closets.”

Tom says, “I know what to do, it is the 4G, the 4G is the gas.”

“Does 4G mean Dad’s internet?” I ask.

Tom playing us stupid—to fit in with the extra growth we made of him.

“Ya Jill. We all are 4G and on fire.”

“Shut up Tom, do not be stupid” Steph says without meaning.

## Clutter in my Closet

“I am serious Steph, 4G according to my Dad—mildly warms our body temperature.,” I say.

“I do not think that is what Clutter was talking about,” I answer.

“I smell gas! Nobody make a spark,” I command.

We sat there for a moment in breathing in and out the gas coming from the closet.

Without sincere consideration Steph and I begin to mock Tom.

“Tom is the gas to you, better than the drugs you do?”

“I do not do drugs,” Steph.

“That is what drug type people usually say, they did not do it,” I say.

“Okay I do drugs, you got me, that is why I said, 4G, 4G does not warm our bodies,” Tom says.”

Tom dude, man you are so screwed up” Steph says.

“I am going into my room; Steph are you coming?”

“Yes!”

We both get off the bar stools and began to approach the hallway leading to the ancient staircase—that leads to my room.

“Wait for us,” Frog exclaims.

“Tom are you coming?” Frog asks.

“Yes.”

They both catch up to us and we make our way up to my room.

“I am going to sit in the closet,” Steph expresses.

“Why the closet,” I say laughing.

“There is an adventure in the closet.

Frog agrees and hurries in front of Steph.

We sit down on the wood floor.

I wonder if something bazar will happen to us,”: Steph voices.

“What about Clutter burning down the house?” Tom asks.

I did not notice but Sally had been following us in her pink towel the whole time.

“Sally you have not gotten dressed yet,” Steph says—as Sally cuddles up in her arms.

Brendon Holden

As we were talking and making fun of Tom, we found ourselves in a North American forest like the one-hundred-acre forest behind our house.

We were so out-of-our-mind we forgot to be surprised by finding ourselves in the forest.

I look to my left, towards Steph and attempt to yell. I freeze, I cannot move.

I see Ms. Rug crawling on all fours.

She reaches.

She grabs Sally's foot and drags her off into the forest.

Her towel falls off and I watch her in her bathing suit get dragged off into the dark forest.

We scramble to our feet.

"Sally!"

We run after her into the darkness of the forest.

We run for about one half an hour, following the drag marks of Sally being dragged by the ankle.

We get tired and stop for a moment.

"I cannot keep going Jill," I hear Steph say—as I begin to move the thick leafed branch in front of me.

"Wow, look!" I speak.

Tom and Steph peek through the foliage,





## Clutter in my Closet

“Houses.”

“In the middle of the forest.”

We walk out onto the small square paved road that appeared to begin at the forest line and end one hundred feet down at the other end of the forest line.

“Sally!” Tom yells.

We hear nothing.

We quietly approach one of the smaller houses, the white one.

We hear nothing but a windless forest.

We peak into one of the windows, the one closest to the paved road, the road that goes nowhere.

We see Ms. Rug place Sally down on the bed.

“You stay here, and be a good girl,” Ms. Rug says—while walking into another room.

Tom starts banging on the window, I soon join him.

“Sally!”

“Sally!”

Sally looks in our direction.

As she attempts to get out of the bed, Ms. Rug rushes into the room with a knife!

Sally screams.

We wake back up in the closet hearing Sally scream and Ms. Rug laugh.

I look at Sally wrapped in Steph’s arms.

“Are you okay Sally,” I ask

“Yes, I am fine.”

“Do you remember where you just were?”

“Yes, I was in a room with the lady with black eyes.”

“You did not get hurt, did she hurt you?” Steph asks.

“No! No, I do not think so.”

“That was so bizarre.”

“Tom probably was drugged up the whole time,” Steph adds.

We both laugh.

“Okay, it must have been the 4G,” Tom says.

“My Dad’s internet?” I ask.

“No Jill, I am just pretending to be this to keep my mind intact,” Tom says.

“No, you’re not Tom you are screwed up,” Steph says.

“Okay, it is the 4G going around, yes, it is your Dad’s internet, and you two have been heating up and now we are beginning to break up,” Tom says.

“What do you do about that?” Frog asks remembering what he did in the forest—which was run away.

“I pretended to be losing reality so I can keep it,” Tom says.

“Like an undercover cop,” Sally asks.

“Yes, for myself,” Tom says.

“As of right now I am thinking that the radiation comes at us, and the 4G code is making voids and we have to make something out of it, we pretend something is there.”

“The more we do this we begin to see what we want, breaking up our bodies in the real world, which is sort of like a fire.”

“We are no longer mortals—the same way we were before we started making something out of the radiation,” Tom explains.

“Tom you are just pretending to be you right now, how do you know that information because it makes sense,” I say.

“Ya Tom, just this morning we were watching on television about 4G,” Steph says.

“I do not know,” Tom answers, maybe it is the radiation.

Once Tom was other than being made fun of, he got more than mean; mean was not Tom’s character.

“You know Steph, you are basically a brute beast,” Tom says.

“What!”

“Basically, you really need to shut up from time to time.”

“Is that the radiation too,” Steph asks.

“Whatever! I do not actually remember you.”

“Seriously, I did not think you were that uninformed,” Tom says.

Steph begins crying a little.

“Tom do you need help to be put on some more drugs,” I say.

## Clutter in my Closet

Tom looked at me, full of rage, he was about to freak out and I was going to enjoy it.

I punch the back wall.

I look at Steph with small tears in her eyes, I look at Tom and say, “corrections officer,” and begin to laugh.

“I am leaving” Tom says getting up off the floor.

“I suppose we are going to be set on fire as well as this house,” Tom says walking out of my bedroom.

I look at Steph.

Steph says, “I suppose it could be true, Clutter might be burning down the house at this very moment.”

“Why are we finding these strange worlds?” Steph questions.

“Maybe Tom is right, maybe Clutter can tamper with the internet and cause us to be other than the reality we were,” I say.

“Tom,” I yell into the hallway.

“Tom walks into the room.

“Tom if Clutter is tampering with Dad’s 4G internet, what should we do about that?” I ask.

Tom puts his head down and begins to think.

“I do not know the answer if you are being serious,” Tom says.

“So, you in your own words, ‘pretending to be what we made you out to be,’ have now become an all-knowing god,” Steph asks.

“Yes, exactly,” Tom answers, and adds, “somehow.”

“Well in that case,” I say, “who am I?”

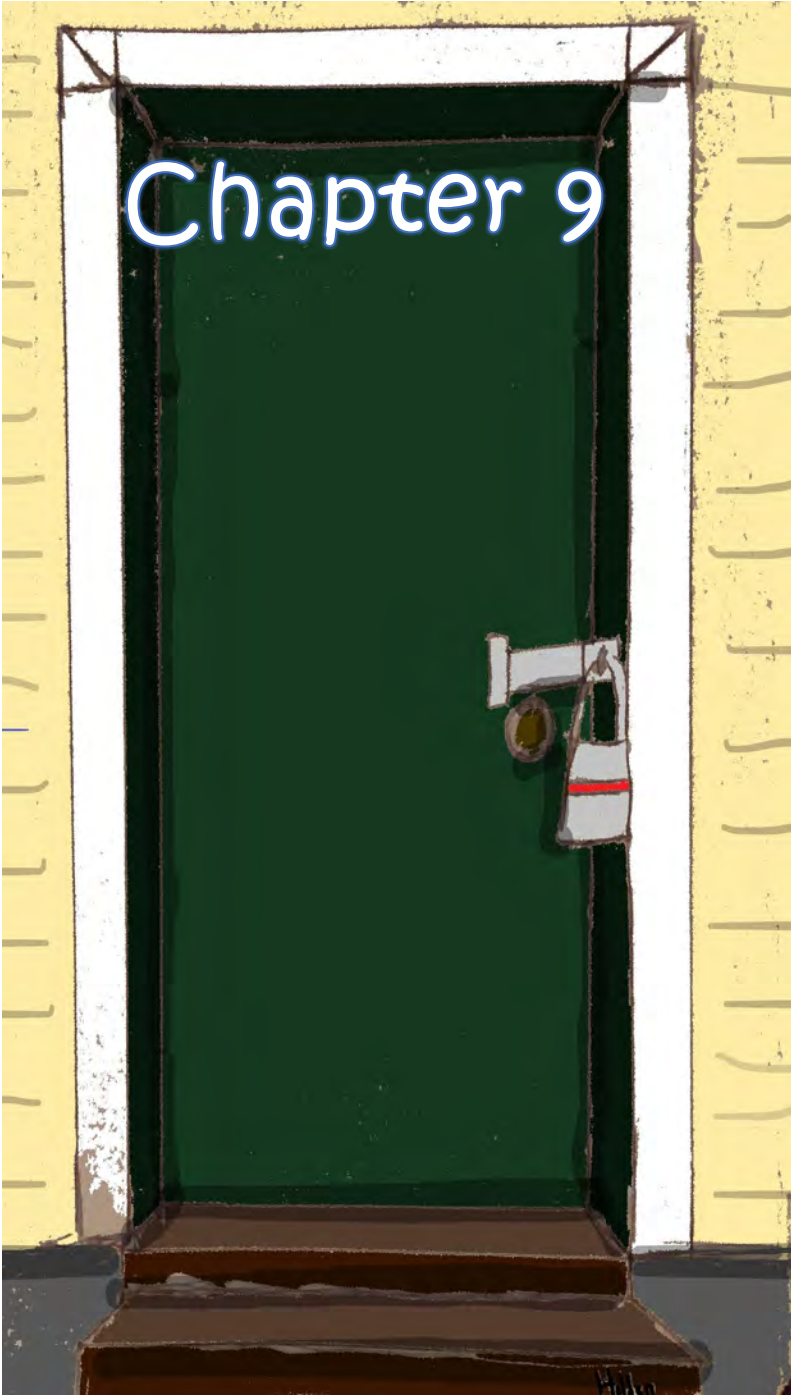
“I cannot know though,” Tom says, “I was faking being the dope, the dreamlike state, it is like I could, but maybe it was only so I could pull us out of the fire.”

At that moment banging could be heard on the closet walls, not just mine but throughout the upstairs.

“You all will Burn and your little dog too,” Clutter says—sounding like a loud—talking—cat.

Brendon Holden

Clutter in my Closet



Brendon Holden

We must save the  
house, we must stop clutter.

Tom put it down,” Steph says running over to him and ripping the spoon out of his hand, “brat, brat, bad people cannot eat good food,” Steph kids.

“Get off the drugs Tom,” I tease.

Tom whimpers.

“This is so unfair.”

He looks at me informing me he was at his breaking point.

I laugh, hoping to drive him over the edge in a fit of rage.

Tom suddenly seems to alter his being and begins to solve problems.

“Clutter must want to burn down this house for a reason,”

Tom says.

“Maybe he thinks we are sick, like pandemic sick, and he wants to remove the sickness off the face of the planet,” Tom says.

“We must stop him,” Steph answers.

“We should go up to the closet and have a talk with him, tell him we are not sick, he does not have to burn down our house,” I say.

“Okay, let’s do it.”

We walk up the stairs, we walk into the closet.

“Clutter, you do not have to burn down the house, we are not sick,” I say into the closet.

Suddenly Frog, Sally, Steph, Tom, and I are translated into a field of tomato patches.

I look around.

A few apple trees could be seen in the distance, an old white farmhouse was behind me.

“Where are we?” Sally utters.

Brendon Holden

I look around, I begin to be drawn towards the soundless sound of dirty farm crud music, touched with dirty curiosity.

I look to find where the sound is coming from.

I walk through some of the patches of tomatoes, I notice some of them moving.

“Clutter, where are we?”

Steph and Tom look at me and walk over.

“Clutter, we are not sick,” Steph says.

“Clutter sounds to reject our idea.

“I want Sally,” Clutter demands,

What do you mean, you cannot have Sally,” I declare?

“Give her to me or I will burn it down.”

“Even if you do not, I will burn you down and steal her from her room.”

“She likes me, every night we spend playing games,” Clutter says.

I look at Sally in dis-belief, “Sally...” I begin saying.

“I play with him from time to time,” Sally forcefully admits,

“You cannot have her,’ I say and begin walking toward the farmhouse, the others follow close behind.





## Clutter in my Closet

I begin without consideration peeking into the windows of the tiny farmhouse.

I turn around and look at the others, “where is Sally?” I ask.

Tom gives a confused look; I do not know.”

“She was right by my side a moment ago,” Steph says in confusion.

“We must find her,” I say.

We bust through the door of the small house, “Sally!”

She lies asleep on the old planks of the old wooden floor of the small old farmhouse.

Tom picks her up into his arms and rushes her sleeping body back outside, I follow.

“Sally!”

“Sally”

“I am up here,” Sally says.

“Where?” I ask.

“Up here in the closet.”

We open our eyes and sure enough we were still in the closet.

I hug Sally,” good thing Clutter did not take you.”

“No, he will not take me, he wants all of us,” Sally says.

“He is not getting you, nor is he getting all of us, he is not going to burn down my house,” I cry.

“Why would he want Sally in exchange for not burning down my house,” I express.

“I thought Ms. Rug and Clutter liked us,” Tom says.

“We should find the lady with black eyes and ask her,” Steph says.

“Good idea,” I answer.

We get up off the closet floor, I tell Sally, “get dressed quick, we are going out behind our house.”

“Good everything still looks normal out here,” I utter while walking out the back door.

We search the backyard we peak into the woods; we look on the side of the banks of the river, and no Ms. Rug.

As we walk through the woods Tom mentions that it is a very real possibility that Ms. Rug is threatening us because she wants us out of her house.

I say, “Tom if it is still her house, then—what are we doing living here?”

Tom reveals, “the question is not so much what are we doing here, but rather are we here.

“That truly is scary Tom,” I say.

“Ms. Rug,” Steph calls out.

“*Ms. Rug!*”

We hear a sound in the bushes, it was Ms. Rug!

“Yes” we here in an elegant voice, “what can I do for you?”

“Why are you trying to burn down my house?” I ask.

Tom adds, “do you want us to leave, we can—if you truly need us to leave.

“No children, I do not want to keep you all, I do not want to burn down your house, nor do I want you to leave,” Ms. Rug says.

“Why is Clutter threatening to burn down our house,” Tom asks.

Ms. Rug casually walks out of the bushes, taps each child on the shoulder.

“Can I have Sally?” Ms. Rug asks—as she takes hold of Sally’s hand to lead her out to the woods.

“No, you cannot” I say.

All us children open our eyes, and we find ourselves in Sally’s closet.

“This is so weird!”

“We have no power if gravity and the truth that our feet are walking into the woods are no longer there,” Steph says.

“Perhaps this is what being on fire feels like,” Tom adds.

“Whatever it is we must stop it,” I say.

Steph suddenly says, “I think I got it.”

“Jill do you remember that room downstairs, the room that has a big lock on it?” Steph says.

“Yes, I remember, the room with the piano on the inside.”

## Clutter in my Closet

Steph asks in suspicion, “what if it has something to do with that room, what if we touched something—that would cause all this to happen.”

Tom decides, “we could go down there and investigate if you think it would help.

“It had a giant lock on it,” I react.

“Your dad had bolt cutters in the garage, I had seen them when we grabbed the ladder,” Tom says.

Not sure if we should; I pressed my lips together in defiance, but I knew we had to. Reluctantly I say, “okay Tom let’s do that.”

We rush out the back door, I look up noticing the small raindrops falling out of the sky.

“It is starting to rain,” I say.

We walk left of the back of the mansion—to my father’s garage.

We enter the side entrance.

Here is where I saw them, and here they are,” Tom says—picking up the bolt cutters.

We walk toward the back of the house.

Tom aims the bolt cutters to the huge lock on the back door.

With one quick snip the lock falls off.

Tom pushes open the old green door.

The bottom of the door rubs the concrete floor as Tom opens the door.

“This is a nice room,” Tom states as we enter.

“We must be careful,” I say, “if we did touch something, and this is the reason why Clutter is screwing with us—and we are being threatened, much worse could happen if we touch something bigger.

Steph walks over to the couch covered with a white sheet; she sits down.

I sit on one of the kitchen chairs, hoping to stumble upon the answer—and fix all the mess and save our house from burning down.

I look out the only curtainless window, heavy raindrops are now splattering off the window. Small sounds of thunder could be heard from the clouds. Sally left the door open as we

entered, I could feel the warm air outside, pushing itself inside the house.

Pine sways in the wind.

“Well Jill here we are, but seriously, I do not know what to do from here,” Tom says.

“The last time I came here,” I say, “I touched a couple of the piano keys.”

I sat gazing at the rain for about an hour before I moved to explore the locked portion of our mansion.

I slowly without consideration moved toward one of the un-lit rooms.

I flip on the light.

The room looked familiar.

Some of the objects in the room appeared as if I had seen them before, but not only seen them but at one point owned them.

I touched the paperwork; I began to flip through photos. I lost my conceived reality and unconsciously decided to pretend to know what I was doing, that I knew who the people in the photographs were.

I storm out of the room that I was in, I take a photo and lift it to Steph’s face, “I know this man, he is my uncle,” I say—making it apparent that I was playing.

I present it to Tom, “see Tom I am much more than you think!”

“I in the past played the piano for you, I stayed in this room,” Tom reveals.

“And I am your sister” Steph says,

“Exactly, I am a millionaire, it is all coming back to me now,” I say jokingly yet wishing I were being serious.

As we are making believe, laughing and having fun—a fire erupted on the stove—of the small kitchen—of the room we were in.

*“Fire!”*

*“Fire!”*

We rush outside, Frog picks up Sally rushing her out in the pouring rain.

Cold heavy drops of rainwater quickly drenched my shirt I was wearing.

“It is pouring out here,” Tom yells.

## Clutter in my Closet

We look back to see how much the fire had spread, smoke began pouring out the door, windows began to pop.

I began to run toward the front of the house, “I got to save Mom and Dad” I cry.

Tom grabs me by the shoulder, “wait Jill.”

I look at the house. The fire must have ruptured a gas line, the house exploded in flames.

The entire house was on fire.

“Mom, Dad” I squeal.

I fall to the rain drenched—thick-grassy-ground of the backyard, my head down and my hands resting on the wet grass.

I open my eyes. I look at my surroundings. I am wrapped in a blanket in Sally’s closet.

I look directly in front of me. I see Tom.

Tom says, “that was so weird, the house burned down!”

Steph adds, “this sure is strange, there is no way we can live like this. At first, I was having fun, I did not think much of it, but now I see, this is no way to be.”

“What do you think Frog or Sally?” I express.

“Mom and Dad did not tell us this,” Steph says.

Frog adds, “we do not know what we should do, should we tell Mom and Dad, can we tell Mom and Dad?”

“I cannot believe Clutter is trying to burn our house down,” I say. I pick myself up off the closet floor and walk downstairs,

The others followed me.

I walk into the kitchen, toward the back door. I open the door and walk outside.

The sun is shining, the air is warm.

“Where are you going Jill?” I hear Steph ask.

All followed close behind,

I walk to the door, the door that just moments ago Tom cut the lock off,

I touch the lock with my hands,

“You must not have cut it,” I say to Tom.

“Like I said Jill, this is so weird, unstably weird, we must do something—or truly we will be no more.

Brendon Holden

# Chapter 10



Brendon Holden



10

The root to us

**A**fter the house burned down or we thought it had burned down, we no longer wanted to explore on our own. Tom insisted we should tell my parents everything.

I agreed.

“Dad, Mom, where are you?” I say attempting to find them after what seemed to be months exploring the closets.

“Steph, I cannot find my parents,” I say—feeling very weak.

“Jill please tell me you did not lose your parents,” Steph says.

“Dad has lately been in his partial office watching the news, I figured he still would be in there,” I say.

“Mr. Flippy!” Steph says in a loud voice.

“Do you all remember what I said about my Mom saying all the people disappeared,” Tom mentioned.

“I do not want to think of that right now Tom,” Steph says.

“Seriously where are Jill’s parents” Tom says.

“Tom, I do not want to panic,” Steph says,

“Everyone, we must solve this, quick let us split, lets search every room.

We scramble to find my parents.

“Mr., Mrs. Flippy”

“Mom, Dad?”

And nothing. We searched every part of the house.

The sun began to set and small fears began to enter our bodies.

“Jill where is Mom or Dad,” Frog asks.

“Frog, hold that thought, what do you and Sally want to eat tonight?”

“Brownies.”

“Cereal.”

Brendon Holden

How about your favorite, Peanut-butter, Fluff and Raspberry-jam on toasted bread?

“Yes”

“Please Jill.”

“Okay, follow me into the kitchen,” I say.

I pull the tasty items out of the cupboard.

I toast the bread in the oven.

Five minutes later, once the bread was toasted, the other children load their favorite toppings on the toasted bread.

Fluff, Peanut Butter, Jam and Chocolate lit up the kitchen.

Once we were done, we were left with an extremely sticky mess.

We were so happy to eat we forgot about our fear, I knew to keep it this way.

We will just leave the mess for another day; I am going to watch television.

I sit on the blue sofa; my belly is full of fluff and raspberry jam. I pick up the remote to the television, I press the power button.

Dad must have been watching the news the last time this was on.

We stared at the television, mostly everyone fell asleep within five minutes, except Tom and me.

Making headlines.

Mrs. And Mr. Flippy disappears from inside their small suburb home in Wok’s Town Mass, police are still searching for the children.

“I did not see the Police over here today or yesterday,” I say to Tom.

“It is because they are lying, similar to what my Mom and Dad had mentioned before they suddenly disappeared,” Tom says,

I did not want to wake the others; I did not want them figuring this out.

“Tom let’s keep this between me and you,” I say.

I pick up the remote and turn on some cartoons, we sleep.

We all wake up at the same time in the morning.

## Clutter in my Closet

Frog immediately says, "I miss Mom and Dad."

Sally agrees, "I am scared, where is Mom?"

"It will be all right," Steph says, wrapping her arms around both.

I was concerned, but I was not all that upset by Mom and Dad disappearing. I could use an adventure.

Wondering what we will find next I invite the others to re-explore the mansion.

"I will search upstairs with Tom and you three search the downstairs," I say pointing to Steph, Frog and Sally.

"I do not know if we should Jill," Frog says, "what if that lady comes in here or we get lost in a closet."

"We will be fine," I say.

Reluctantly Frog goes with Steph to search the bottom floor. Tom and I search the second floor.

One half hour later Steph, Frog and Sally walk upstairs, "we did not find anyone," Frog says."

Strange, very strange," Tom says.

Suddenly it occurred to me we have not explored the attic.

"What about the attic," I blurt.

"I have not been up there since we first moved in" I say.

"Okay, you lead the way," Steph says.

We slowly walk toward the attic.

"Mom, Dad" I say.

I hear nothing.

"I hate this attic," Sally says.

"We will go up really quick and come back down," I say.

I run up the attic stairs, kind of freaking out.

It was dark up there, lit by only a small window in the back.

"Tom will you grab the light switch and turn on the light," I ask.

"Sure Jill," Tom replies.

He stumbles in the dark looking for the string that flips on the attic light.

*Click!*

Lights!

"Wow."

“Amazing.”

“This is wonderful, I wonder what made Mom and Dad do this,” I say.

“Maybe they didn’t,” Tom argues.

I could not believe my eyes, fudge, brownies with candy on top, cookies, pastries of all sorts, and soda, placed on tables in the attic!

We rush to the nearest table and immediately begin eating.

The food looked wonderful; I could not restrain my hands from grabbing more than enough.

“Why would Mom and Dad leave this up here,” I say with a mouth full of food.

“Maybe they didn’t Jill,” Tom says.

“Maybe we are dreaming,” Steph adds.

“Do not say that! This is too delicious,” Sally says.

With a cookie in my hand, I begin to explore the huge attic.

Through one room and into another.

“Hey look! There are sweets down here too!” I yell from two rooms down.

The others rush to where I am.

“This is surely a dream Jill, your parents would not have left this amount of fresh food up here,” Tom says.

“We could not eat this in a day, most likely not even a week,” Tom says.

“Whatever it is I do not want a problem at the moment,” I say still exploring the attic, an attic that seemed to have no end.

Through one room and then another.

“Jill was the furniture up here when you moved in?” Tom asks.

“I guess so, I rarely come up here, so I would not know,” I answer.

“It is so nice and comfortable,” Steph adds.

“Exactly,” I say, “I would live up here but my parents, they most likely would not let me.”

I began to think, “Oh yes, they are not here anymore,” I say relieved, “good thing, now I can live up here!”

## Clutter in my Closet

I look at Steph, suddenly realizing I verbally uttered that I did not appreciate my parents.

“I thought you loved your parents,” Steph says.

I put my head down, listening to my own thought, *I thought I did too!*

“Jill hates Mom and Dad, and I am going to tell them,” Frog utters while singing.

“Mom and Dad are not even here,” Sally says.

I snap back into reality, “we must find Mom and Dad,” I say.

“We should go back downstairs and watch television.”

Steph asks, “should we call the police?”

“I do not think they will understand,” Tom says.

“I think we can find them,” I say.

“We must stay focused.”

We rush back downstairs and sit in front of the television.

“Jill, turn on the news,” Tom utters.

I flip on the news.

The first channel looked like the world news, so I changed it to another news station.

As soon as I changed the channel, I hear Steph say, “Jill look!”

I look.

Tom and Steph both say, “Jill that is your parents on the news.

I get close to the television.

*“Flippy family strangely disappears from their small suburb home; food was prepared on their table, and the cars were in their driveway, but no family, the case is classified unsolved,”* the news anchorman says—presenting a picture of my parents, Sally, Frog, and I at Yellow-stone-national-park—taken before we moved.

“That cannot be true,” Tom argues.

Steph adds, “it said, Flippy family.”

“But Jill you are not dead,” Tom reasons.

“Neither is Frog or Sally,” I state.

“Well, they must have screwed up!” Tom admits.

“But where are your parents?” Steph questions.

“I do not know Steph,” I express.

Brendon Holden

“Well, it is not like you loved them,” Steph states.

“What?”

“That is what you said when we were in the attic,” Steph teases.

“Whatever Steph,” I express.

I get off the couch and walk into the kitchen.

I notice the back door is open.

I walk out into the sun lit grass.

I take a breath of fresh air.

I look around, careful to listen to the bird chirps.

I casually look to my left.

I see the door open, the door that should be locked, the door that leads to the piano.

I slowly approach the door. I peak into the inside. Nobody is in there.

I walk into the inside.

Looks the same as it did the other day when I was over here. I pick up one of the pieces of paper sitting on the upright piano. I look at it, it was addressed to Ms. Rug.

Huh....

I begin to read. Ms. Rug I know times are hard right now, most people have had hard times. You should not bring yourself to a point where you, your entire existence becomes repulsion.

I set the letter down.

Strange, I could understand that letter, rarely do I read, most of the time I glance at the words, but I do not read them.

I look at the windows, the curtains covering them, I ask myself, *am I repulsing life?*

Why do I feel as if I am happy about the other people disappearing?

Why am I happy that I cannot find my parents?

I do not even care if my parents come back, if they do at some point I will have to go back to school.

I walk into the back room, thinking about my reality, my reality at this present moment.

I pick up a photograph.

A handsome man, in a fine suit, proud to be him stands looking at me in the picture.

## Clutter in my Closet

I could almost think I have known the man, but I brush it off as a symptom of the pandemic—happening on the outside world.

I set the picture down on the photo piled dresser and begin to think.

I hate my parents.

I hate school.

I recall watching my Dad sit in front of the news playing on the television. It was as if he was waiting for the world to end.

I recall as he was doing this, that I too—was hoping that it would all end, and not only the world to end, but him, forcing me to go to school.

I hated him and my Mother for that.

“Jill!”

“Jill!” I hear from the back yard.

It was Steph.

“Yes, Steph I will be right out.”

I walk out onto the sun-drenched backyard.

“What were you doing?” Steph asks.

I stuff my emotions deep inside, hoping that my feeling towards my parents—would not show up—on the surface. “The door to the locked room was open, so I went inside. I did not find anything though,” I say and begin to change the subject, “I am hungry,” I say.

I walk inside the kitchen and begin to wander through the cupboards, “there is not much in here.”

“My Mom is beginning to shop like you Steph, very simply.”

“What do you have in there?” Steph asks.

“Baking soda, Flour, Raspberry Jam and Beans.”

“You have Jam?” Steph blurts, I know what to do with that!”

“What else do you have?” Steph asks.

I begin to move items around the cupboard.

“We have some baking soda, not all that much else.” I answer.

“I bet with these few items we can make biscuits or something like biscuits,” Steph says.

“Okay, you lead the way.”

Steph pulls out a giant bowl.

Sally, and Frog heard things moving around the kitchen and came running out to see what we were doing.

“What are you doing?” Frog asks.

“Making biscuits and Jam,” Steph answers.

“That sounds good,” Sally says.

“How do we do that?” Frog asks.

“My Mom said to mix Baking-soda, Baking-powder, Flour and Water in a bowl, mix it just enough so it is thick and then simply put some heat to it,” Steph answers.

“Sounds simple enough,” I say.

We make a big batch, pouring the dry stuff all together in a bowl and then pouring the water on the top.

We take the loaf of dough and place it on a cookie sheet and pop it in the oven.

Fifteen minutes later Steph pours the whole jar of raspberry-jam on the top of the now baked bread-loaf.

We wait for it to cool.

We wildly rip chunks off the bread-roll with our hands, stuffing our mouths, satisfying our bellies and our hopes of another day.



# Chapter 11



Brendon Holden

## Where are my parents?

**D**ead silence in the neighborhood as I gaze out the window onto the February snow. Cold wind could almost be felt as I watch the snow blow toward the trees, making funnels of clouds.

“I have not seen anyone in months,” Tom says.

“Food is running out Jill,” Steph states.

“There are no people out there, maybe we should run over to one of the neighbors and steal their food,” I assert.

“Stealing is not stealing if your life depends on it,” Tom adds.

“Let’s get dressed and put on our winter gear” Steph includes.

We walk out onto the cold snowy steps of my house, buddled up in winter gear: *ski-pants, gloves, hats, scarfs*.

All five of us decide to go together, hoping we would lose none by the end of the day.

First house just two houses down from our street.

“Jill the neighbors are probably watching us,” Tom states.

“If they are not, they will definitely see our footprints later,’ Frog adds.

“This is all too strange to consider, *why do I not know where Mom and Dad are?*” I respond.

I peak into the first window.

Lights are on, dinner is ready.

Tom shoves his head next to mine, “that sure is strange Jill!”

“What do you think we should do? Like break in and take their food?” Steph asks.

“Exactly,” Tom says pressing his hands against the window, opening it up.

“I will go in first to investigate,” Tom says, “you all wait out here.”

“I am going to throw the food out, and you four put it in the packs,” Tom says.

“Okay,” I answer watching Tom squeeze all the way through the window.

Within seconds Tom peaks his head back out the window he went through,” it is strange in hear, it looks and feels like people in here, but the truth is, there is no people,” Tom says—placing some pasta in my hands.

“Plus, it smells like the oven has just been on. I put my hands on the food and it feels like it just came out of the oven,” Tom says before disappearing into the bedroom.

Tom showed back up at the window with some candy, muffins, and soda, before we left to investigate the rest of the houses.

“Let’s go to the blue one,” Tom says running across the street to one of the blue houses.

We follow.

“Just knock on the door Tom, if no one answers we will break the door down,” Steph says.

*Knock!*

*Knock!*

No answer.

“Kick the door Tom,” I say.

Tom begins to kick the door down.

*Crack!*

*Pop!*

The door pops open.

As expected, fresh food was prepared on the kitchen table—as we storm the house.

Frog and Sally rush toward the food; they begin to eat.

Cookies, ham, pizza, and cake.

Frog and Sally began to stuff their mouths with the goodness on the pre-set tables.

As they were eating, I look around the house we were in. It is all so strange, the entire street seemed to sit desolate as if we were the last survivors of some mega disaster, yet all the homes were presented as if they were inhabited.

## Clutter in my Closet

Such a strange nuclear environment, if such a thing exists.

“This almost looks like a town covered in radiation,” I say.

Tom nods his head up and down in agreement.

Steph says, “I think I know what you are talking about, I saw something just like that on television now too long ago.”

“That city?” I ask.

“Yes, the one with the nuclear power plant explosion.”

Its appearance on television looked—the same way it appears on this street.”

“Maybe it has something to do with the 4G cellphone towers,” Tom says.

“I miss Mom,” Sally says.

“I will find her.”

I look toward the horizon at the end of the street.

A patch of pine trees stood on the distant end on the street.

The sky radiated bright pink just above the pine trees.

The soundless wind said the world has come to an end. No cars driving by, no sound of the neighbors, only a sound of radiation from a strange moment in time.

“We should get home,” I say.

We walk our stolen food back to my house, not saying a word to one another as we struggle through the snow to get home.

I toss my knapsack down in the kitchen and grab a cloth and begin to wash the food, hoping no radiation or sickness would come inside of our clean house.

The rest did the same thing.

We place all the items on the kitchen floor, there was not enough space on the counter.

“That should feed us for about a month,” Tom says.

“This does not feel right without Mom or Dad here,” I say.

“We will find them Jill,” Steph says.

“I cannot believe the world is ending,” Tom says.

“The world is not ending,” I bark.

“Okay Jill,” Tom says.

Brendon Holden

I begin to wonder what happened to my parents, what happened to Tom's parents?

This is not okay; I only recall several years of living and this is something I would not have expected!

Months went by and we see no one.

The initial excitement of my parent's disappearance left weeks ago. The television stations went black, and the power was shut off to our house.

I do not talk much; I have nothing to talk about except trauma.

I sit in my room next to the window. The little light the day offered would soon end.

I gaze at the replaced window—that appeared to me—to be replaced by my Father against me, the one—that not too long ago I through my computer monitor through, hating my Father. Still the rage inside could almost be felt, but I was too comfy to check to see if it were still there.

“Where could my parents be?

I hated them in ways, or I thought I hated them.

*Why were my parents living on Holden street to begin with?*

*Why am I here?*

I begin to recall my younger years. I remember when my Dad brought me to my first day of school. I loved that day, and that entire year.

The second and third at the school were great as well.

I remember a young boy in fourth grade giving me a hard time. I told my Dad about it.

My Dad thought to bring me to school and bring me before the younger boy, express to me—that the young boy was a good boy, which gave him a seat—not only at school but in my family as well—and left me with no seat in the least.

I put my head down, I recall how upset I was when all the children abandoned me for the attention of the young boy, the young boy that was giving me the hard time!

I hated my Dad for that!

## Clutter in my Closet

Later, in the school year, the boy came up to me and seemed as if he were welcoming me to his world—which before was my world.

I hated my Dad for that.

I hated, hated my Dad for that!

My Dad is rich, we were supposed to be better than everyone, *but I guess not.*

I put my head down and began to whimper.

Suddenly my tears turned into laughter, “I know what I will do, I will do the same thing to him.”

Dad you can come out now the pandemic was not a bad thing; this house is not a bad house.

Steph walks into the room, “Jill who are you talking too?”

“My dad, I am welcoming him into the paper corporation,” I say giggling.

Steph follows me down the street and out onto the back yard—of the mansion, we walk over to the secret door, the lock door located at the back of the house.

“Good it is unlocked!” I say walking inside.

The room looks about the same as it did the first time we were in here—although some of the paperwork and pictures were moved, plus a fresh cup of coffee was placed on the piano.

First, I must make sure my parents are not in the house, “Mom, Dad,” I say into the partially lit room.

I glance over at the pictures on the piano.

I look at the arrangement.

“Steph look, these appear arranged as if they are trying to say something.

Steph says, “those look like pictures of you.”

“This one looks like you,” I say pointing at a picture.

“Whoever put the pictures here must have wanted those who saw it to celebrate the paper corp.”

I pick up a photo of a young girl in front of a sign that read Paper Corp.

The next picture was of the young girl lovingly hugging her parents.

I pick up the news article next to the pictures it read: Rugs family buys their daughter a small business, *Paper Corp.*

“They bought Paper Corp for Ms. Rug,” I say.

She looked so happy in the pictures.

I began to long for such love and happiness.

I wish I were closer to my parents.

Steph looks over at me, “Jill,” Steph says, “what happened with you and your parents?”

“What do you mean?”

“From time-to-time you will accidentally mention you do not like them, or you will say you hate them,” Steph says.

“I never thought of it a severe thing,” Jill begins explaining, “but sometimes I wish they were a little more on my side, that they protect me,” I say.

“They seem to do that,” Steph says.

“Yes, they do, but I am sure if a better person was over here, they would rather be family with that person.”

“It is definitely not like these pictures, a strong chain of love, it is rather like a few weak links.”

“Do you remember when you first moved over here, and we were in the closet and we began talking about possible past lives?” Steph inquires.

“What if these pictures are your past life,” Steph conveys.

“And look here,” Steph says pointing to a photo, “what if I lived in that rock. See the rock with the two girls standing by it?”

“Yes, I answer.

“That was me and you in the past, you always said you were my Mother,” Steph says.

I put my head down, I began recalling small amounts of information.

If this is my past life—it sure looks like a dream life, that nothing could be better than this; an entire business for me and I sit here feeling as if I am unloved.

*What if my Dad bought me an entire business?*

Once the invitation was given, I lost the known reality and while chuckling said, “well I am your Mother and you hated me constantly hanging out in your room, so my Dad built you a hidden room in a rock.”

“Yes exactly!” Steph says excited.

“Your Dads Dad lives in this room, his Dad lives in the attic and his Dad lives in the woods; he was always your favorite



## Clutter in my Closet

because he does not regard gravity-reality when he is with us—and lets us do whatever,” Steph says.

I laugh and smile recalling the time in the woods,” that store was awesome, Grandpa must have helped us build it.”

I snap back into reality hoping I will not be suddenly hurt by an unexpected moment.

“Let us go back inside, we do not want to bother Grandpa’s music studies.

“Buy grandpa,” I say walking out onto the back yard lawn.

We shut the door behind us.

“Trust me, you love this home, you have always loved this home!” Steph declares.

Brendon Holden

# Chapter 12

Rugs Paper Corp.



Brendon Holden

## Ms. Rug Hug

**M**onths of living without my parents and fighting off Clutter I grew tired; all I could want is my parents. I would love to cast the burden of protecting the house into their hands.

There is no reality anymore, no school, no food, no expectation of tomorrow. When I dream, I dream of former days, despite the fact I hated my Dad for not putting me first back ago in fourth grade. When I dream, I dream of the days that—that had taken place. Some of my most precious memories was at those hard times.

I suppose I never utterly hated my Dad for betraying me, my mind, now, seems to tell me I somehow enjoyed it. I could almost think he was being kind for preferring the young boy, that possibly he was being both nice to him and me, in any case it was not like I ever truly was stepped on.

I wish I could see my Dad again; I wish there were never a pandemic.

Tom, Steph, and I lacking our normal ups and downs—have nothing to talk about, and because of that our days are filled with nothingness.

Tom, from time-to-time brings to our attention that we could be rebellious and break into some of the neighbor's houses, in a bad way. He said, "if we break in, that that will support our nothingness," but we are not bad people, so we never did it.

My mind slowly forgot about a lot of my childhood, same with Steph and Tom.

Once we knew we needed to hold onto reality or a reality, we chose the last thing that made us happy, and that was some of the moments we had in the closet; those moments gave a sense of rest, kind of like a vacation from reality. We thought letting go of the former reality would be a lot more fun, but once we did, it was not as exciting without its adversity.

Because it was not fun anymore, we decided to re-include our former reality, but this time we would have control over it and make believe only the things we would want to be in the former reality.

The first thing we decided to reinsert was the suburb house that we moved out from, the house we lived in before we lived in the mansion.

Spring had just recently welcomed itself into the neighborhood, I thought it would be nice to walk over there and recall the wonderful times I had in our former house.

Small pebbles and sand make a sound as I step out into the spring sunlight. The outdoor sunlight speaks as if I could live in that one moment continuously.

A five-minute walk felt like seconds in the excitement of the spring environment.

“The doors are locked,” Tom says on the steps—in front of the door to our former house.

“Knock it in,” I declare.

“Okay,” Tom says.

He turns around, his back facing the door. He picks up his leg and with his boot back kicks the door.

One solid knock, the door pops open.

“No one has moved in here yet,” I exclaim.

“You were just over here the other day, and it looks the same as we left,” Frog adds.

“I am going to my room, I am going to pretend we still live here,” I mention while walking to my former room.

My bedroom almost looks the same as it did when we moved here but much smaller. I enter the room, I look at the half-replaced window in the back of the room, the window I through my computer-monitor through.

I begin to walk out of my room, I say, “Dad you can come out now, you are re-welcomed into your house, you do not have to hide, you just have to be better than a sickness.”

Suddenly the front door slams shut.

“Is that what you call that, a sickness,” a deep sounding voice utters.

## Clutter in my Closet

Walking down the stairs, I hear Steph ask, “did you hear that?”

“Maybe we should leave,” Tom says.

“I think that voice was my Dad,” I state.

“Sorry Mr. Flippy,” Tom shouts into the environment.

“He is not all that sorry Dad; remember you just have to be better than a sickness! We will be at the mansion when you want to come home,” I say.

Leaving the front door open as we leave, leaving in a rush, I look behind me and watch an unseen being slam the door shut, shut so hard that one of the hinges on the door broke.

Once we were in the mansion and the doors were locked, doors began to move on their own, especially the closet doors.

Things quickly began to get tossed out of the closets.

We rush upstairs to my bedroom.

We rush over to my bed.

The closet doors begin to violently swing open and closed.

“Is that your Dad Jill,” Steph asks.

“Maybe,” I say.

I walk over to the closet door, I yell, “I am not scared of you!”

I begin to pick up some of the stuff being tossed out of the closet. I noticed things being tossed out that I had not recently put into the closet.

I pick up one of the photos that was tossed close to my feet.

I begin to recall the many lives I lived here.

I remember growing up, my family, children, friends and mostly Paper Corp.

“*This is my house Jill, this is our house,*” I hear my Dad say from within the closet.

“Then it is,” I yell back.

The room quickly grows silent and calm.

\*Times later\*

I say to my Dad, it is a good thing being home. We must have been away for ten years.

Brendon Holden

“Yes, Jill it is good to be home,” Dad says.

“Jill Rug it is good that you are home,” Mom says,  
pouring me a fresh glass of orange juice.

“Credit to Dad, he can, and is—sometimes a sickness,” I  
say while cackling.

The End



## Epilogue

“That Clutter in the front of the door Jill was not there,” Tom says.

“Exactly, it was not, but now it is, let’s forget about it, I never thought we would have seen something strange coming over to the old mansion, I simply wanted to impress Steph,” I say looking at Tom.

“That was amazing Jill,” Steph says wrapping her arms around me saying, Lets go home!”

Brendon Holden

## Clutter in my Closet



Brendon Holden, always having hidden his ability to create and specially to create for the public, worked over the past year on this new and exciting book *Clutter in my Closet*, adding in some new ideas while writing about some personal experiences that he has had—but never finding an outlet to communicate them!

Brendon Holden has written other books such as: *Smoking by The*

*River* and children's books titled *Toby learns patience*, and *Max the Juggler*. He has expressed works of Art in such books as: *Drawings by Brendon* and *Art*. He is also Author of *The Game* and *7<sup>th</sup> Grade Streets*; most likely Brendon is recognized for his work in creating *Behind the Night Sky*.

It would be a delight to his heart that not only is his work enjoyed, but that society benefits from it as much as the creative ideas have benefited him. As Vermont has been, and as the entire United States has been stable in past generations, Brendon hopes that through these books, *Clutter in my Closet*, *Behind the Night Sky*, and other books, such as *The game* and *7<sup>th</sup> Grade streets*, consciously aware of the many great Men and Women making it possible for others to raise their children in an educated world, to remain in high hopes for their future as well as the future of their children...to have an education, the option to prosper, and to live the American-dream: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! Now knowing that these stories are going beyond America, my hopes for the rest of the world and Universe are the same, to remain in high hopes for yourself as well as the future of your children.

Brendon Holden

Clutter in my Closet

