

Don't Look Back

By "Dickens"

"Heather? Heather!"

My eyes dart open, I hear someone shouting my name.

"Heather, are you alright?"

I turn over to see my little cousin Rose pulling on the hem of my skirt, wearing her blue striped pyjamas and her long auburn hair plaited into neat, uniform braids. "Yes, I am... Is something wrong?" I say to her bewildered. My voice is croaky and sore almost like a frog when they see a fly.

"You, you were screaming. I came in to see if you were okay." Rose replies shakily.

"Screaming? I think you were just imagining things silly" I reply. After all young children do tend to have a wild imagination. "What's the time?" I ask her, my eyes suddenly aware of the daylight streaming through the patterned curtains. (That my ma gave me as a gift when I was young).

"It's twenty-five to nine".

"Twenty-five to nine? Were Late!"

I rush out of bed scrambling to find some decent clothes. "Quick Rose go get ready!" Rose rushes out of the room, her feet making small thumps on the decaying vinyl floor.

Within five minutes, we are out of the door and, rushing through the bustling streets to get to the ancient school that Rose attends.

"Oomph" I hear someone say.

I turn around to see that an old man with a shimmering, silver beard that reaches all the way down to his ankles, lying on the floor. "I'm so sorry!" I exclaim. I must've run into him. I reach out my hand in an attempt to help the man up.

"You will be sorry... You will be... and remember, Don't Look Back".

He gets up without my help and walks away, leaving me standing there pondering over what he said. "Don't look back? Whatever could he mean?". I've been standing there for a few moments before i realize that Rose isn't anywhere to be seen. I scan the area calling out her name, when i spot her outside the school playground, talking to some other girls. I breathe a sigh of relief; Rose is the only family I have left and i would hate to lose her. Suddenly, a wave of dizziness washes over me, and i struggle to keep upright. Before i have time to think, I'm pushed backwards into the crumbling, stone wall that

sits beside the pavement. An ear-splitting “Crack!” rings through my ears and i see the old man standing over me. After what feels like years, everything goes, black.

When i awake, I no longer feel the coolness of the concrete pavement, but rather a green carpet as soft as a rabbit's fur. I push myself of the forestry like carpet and look around. I seem to be in a corridor of some sorts. To my left and right are dilapidated walls made of ivy-ridden bricks. Red scribbles embellish the walls, as if someone had been here and, handwritten them. Above me a very faint yellow light hangs from the cracked concrete ceiling, illuminated the corridor. The walls seem to stretch on forever in both directions, becoming enveloped in back the further away you go. “Hello?” I call out. To no reply. “Hello!”. No answer. I fiddle with the ring on my pinkie. The sapphire gem sparkles in the light from the ceiling. I stand still trying to figure out what to do. I sit myself back on the carpet, when i notice something unusual. The scribbles on the walls aren't scribbles at all. Words. I get up and look closer at them, revealing that they say. “Don’t look back”.

Immediately, as if on command. I hear a faint tapping noise come from behind me. The sound echoes through the corridor making it seem like its coming from all directions. I'm about to turn around but, I remember what the old man in the street told me. “Don't look back”. I whisper to myself. The tapping grows louder, as if getting closer. I begin to run, my footsteps making thumps that reverberate in my ears. The writing on the walls starts to shift and warp as if they have a mid of their own. The tapping grows so loud that it's almost like someone is playing the drums right into my ears. I run for what seems like hours, when i hear a soft voice.

“Heather”.

The voice is unmistakably familiar, one that i hear almost every day. Rose.

I stop dead in my tracks, and the tapping seems to stop with me. I turn around despite knowing the warnings I’ve had. The writing transforms into pictures of people and places. I examine the corridor for any signs of Rose. But she's not here. I find nothing but endless black. “Rose!” I call out, hoping for an answer. “Rose?”. My voice softens and tears begin to stream down my face. Instantly, I hear a booming voice coming from every direction.

“I TOLD YOU TO NOT LOOK BACK!”

It echoes through the corridor and bounces around in my ears. The voice repeats itself, louder this time. The sound rattles my head and gives me an immense headache. “Stop!” I scream. “Stop!”. I clutch my hand over my ears to try to block out the sound. I fall to my knees and a sharp nail digs into my thigh and blood spill everywhere. I kneel on the floor for quite some time until the corridor itself begins to shake. I hold my

breath, bracing myself for the worst. Suddenly, a hand pulls on the hem of my skirt and i wake up.

I sit up in my bed. “Phew, it was a dream, a very realistic one.” I think to myself. I stand up onto the floor. My legs shaking like trees in the wind. I push myself into the living room, where i find Rose standing in the corner. Her hair in the same plaits as earlier. She begins to laugh. The chuckles escape her mouth slowly at first but, they grow faster and faster, until they become an inaudible blast of noise. “Rose? What’s so funny?” She turns around, her skirt lifting up around her. I realise. She's not laughing, she's crying. Thick tears as black as ink roll down her cheeks, dripping onto the carpet, staining it a funny shade of deep purple. She starts walking toward me, her little hands clenched by her side.

“I told you... don't...look...back...”.