

SUDDEN BLACKOUT

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A STORY OF FLASH FICTION FOR THE
HALLOWEEN SEASON

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*To Palm Bay Writer's Club
Thanks for the inspiration*

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“I dare you to row out to Hook Island in that boat,”

Geraldine said, pointing to a small weathered craft floating nearby.

She dared the others to do stupid and crazy things on a regular basis. Most of the time, everyone ignored her, especially if it had anything to do with an area cordoned off by local authorities. The unexplainable noises and thick canopy of foliage that created natural darkness on the isle kept even the bravest souls at bay.

But that night, on Halloween, Frankie chose differently.

There was only so much trick-or-treating high schoolers could do before growing bored. “All right. I’ll go,” he said, more confidence in his tone than in his body. A smile grew on Frankie’s face, making his skull costume appear that much more sinister. “But when I get back, it’ll be your turn, and you’ll have to do whatever I say, got it?”

Geraldine's reluctance to agree to an open-ended dare shone clearly in her wide blue eyes before she conceded. "Fine. But if you don't make it all the way there and back, I don't have to do it." She glanced at Emily, who mouthed "proof" before she added, "And you have to bring me some sand to prove you did it." Those two always conspired, so together they could form a complete thought.

"Deal." Frankie shook her hand. He snatched his trick-or-treat bag and his flashlight, the one his nervous mother made him take before he left the house, and headed toward the waiting rowboat.

The heavy rope came away from the dock tie easily. Frankie dropped it in the center, settled on the plank bench, and grabbed the oars. "See you soon, fools," he called as he set off.

Row by row, he traveled swiftly across the plate glass surface. His group of friends grew smaller and then disappeared as he made his way into the open water. The new moon that night gave him reason to be grateful for his over-protective momzilla, for

once. With the clear beam of his electric torch, his path to the sandy beach lay visible every time he peered over his shoulder.

Until it wasn't.

Shortly before reaching the shore, without warning, his flashlight died. “Oh, that's just great.” Frankie's frustration grew after giving the unit a few sharp whacks with his hand, producing no favorable results.

I'll just turn around. There's no chance Geraldine will know I didn't make it all the way to the island.

At that very moment, the boat, which had somehow continued its trek toward Hook Island, touched ground. Frankie's eyes adjusted to the lack of light. The boat's bow butted up to a stretch of beach wide enough to land on before the thick wall of tropical bush took over. All around him, frogs and various creatures screeched songs of the night.

He didn't want to think about those creatures at the moment. Doing his best to avoid having to exit the boat, Frankie reached over the side to grab a fist full of grit to present Geraldine

with upon his arrival back on the mainland. What should have been a simple task found no success.

He stood carefully. Wandering around in soaking wet sneakers all night was not appealing. His right foot hovered over the tip of the boat and landed on solid ground. He bent down towards the sand and sensed something move on his left. A chill breeze whistled through the trees and directly at him.

“Who's there?” No response. “Hello?” Nothing.

Probably just a bird. His rational mind struggled with the creepy gloom that surrounded him. Before his imagination got the better of him, Frankie grabbed his proof and shoved it in his pocket. He turned to climb back into the boat, only to be met by someone — something — else already in there.

The figure stood at least two feet taller than Frankie's five-foot-seven inches, covered in a dark cape similar to his own.

“Where'd you come from?” Frankie's voice wavered, not expecting an honest answer. Whenever things like this happened in

the horror movies he and his friends watched, the scary people rarely answered questions.

The figure seemed to float closer. As he backed away from his visitor and further onto the beach, Frankie asked, “What do you want?”

The entire island was supernaturally silent. Quickly assessing his options to protect himself, Frankie turned his head from side to side, but nothing helpful was in his direct line of sight. The flashlight was still in the boat and he’d never make it past whoever stood between him and the craft.

Slowly, an eerie green glow highlighted the most bizarre form Frankie had ever seen. If asked to describe it, the correct words would never materialize. None of that mattered, though. It was the last thing he saw. No one, no one human anyway, close enough to hear his bloodcurdling scream.



“How long should we wait?” Emily asked.

Geraldine's carefully decorated features, that earlier portrayed a fanciful pixie, now lined with concern.

Jake responded first. “Could he have landed back somewhere else?”

“We would have seen his approach on the water,” Ryan said.

“Maybe we should tell someone,” Geraldine said, finally finding her voice.

“Like who, the police? ‘Um, excuse me, officer. Our friend stole a boat and rode to an island marked no trespassing. We knew it was wrong before we dared him to go out there, but he did it anyway. Can you help us find him?’ Yeah, that'll fly no problem.” Jake's sarcasm a typical response anytime one of their schemes went awry.

“Well, what should we do then?” Emily's Harley Quinn ponytails bounced merrily in opposition to her anxiety.

“Nothing. I say if he's not back by morning, then we tell the cops.” Ryan's opinion sounded logical enough, though Geraldine still wavered.

“Anything could happen to him before then.”

“He'll be fine. He's got candy to eat, at least one juice bag from that weird old lady, and his flashlight. One night on the island won't kill him. I mean, what could be out there?” Ryan's rational explanation would make him a talented lawyer someday, if he made it that long.

Geraldine relented, and the gang headed to their respective homes. After saying goodnight to her oblivious parents, who sat staring at the television, she trudged up the two flights of stairs.

In her bedroom, Geraldine stood in front of an open window, a light breeze blowing through her sheer curtains. She began to undress when a scratching noise, like metal on metal, sounded from outside. She turned toward the window, peered over the edge, and surveyed her surroundings. In the beams of the nearby streetlamp, she could see the empty grassy area below.

She pulled back inside, shaking off the chill running up her spine. She took a deep breath, attempting to settle her nerves, before she spun around and screamed.

There, dripping green ooze like water on her faded pink carpet, stood Frankie. Or what was left of him. From a bloody hand, he dropped a fistful of sand on the floor.

“Your turn,” he growled.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jo was born and raised in the northeast United States. As the daughter of first generation Americans, she realized the power words held. Though she trained in photographic arts and education, the written word has consistently been one of her passions.

Her first published work was a poem for New Teacher Advocate. Since then, she's journaled with her students in the classroom and with her children in their homeschool. Based on that experience, she published a manual on homeschooling entitled "The Empowered Homeschool." Her fictional debut, "Redemption Beach," is the first novel in the "Redemption Chronicles" series.

Writing short fiction is new to her this year. (2023)

Jo lives and works in Central Florida, but the world is her playground.