

THE SAD GIRL

Wade Rigney

Flash
Fiction online

Donny Ray and Jim-Jim straddled their bikes on the bank of the stream and stared at the old Patterson Mill. Mr. Kent, the school janitor, had told them it had been haunted by a little girl named Sarah Tibbett since long about the 1920s. He looked old enough to have known her, his gaunt face as crinkled as worn leather. Standing in the old mill's shadows, Donny Ray could believe this was a place spirits dwelled. The shattered windows and tortured frame made the face of the mill look alive. The gap where the doors had been and the glass shards in the large lower windows made a wicked grin.

As Donny Ray saw a girl in the window—a window that could've been the right eye of the mill-monster—he nearly filled his britches. Frantically, he thumped Jim-Jim's arm.

"What the hell's your problem?" Jim-Jim asked.

Donny Ray wanted to say: *There she is. It's the ghost of Sarah Tibbett*, but the words refused to be uttered. He could only point, which he did emphatically.

Jim-Jim turned. His eyes focused on the figure that looked down on them, and he started so violently he almost fell. He hopped on one foot until he could dismount his bike.

Iron-gray clouds crept across the sun. When he turned back, the girl was gone. Both heeled out their kickstands.

"Thought you said Mr. Kent was full of bull crap?" Donny Ray said, when his voice returned. That wasn't exactly what Jim-Jim said, but Paw had put the razor strop to Donny Ray enough to ingrain the use of what Paw called "soft expletives".

"Mr. Kent's just a crotchety old bastard that gets his rocks off scaring kids. That ain't a ghost," Jim-Jim said. He tightened his lips, crinkled his nose, and rolled his eyes. "It's probably some dumb girl playing Barbies in the mill."

"Okay, hotshot," Donny Ray said. "I dare you to go in and scare her out."

"You think I'm too scared to?" Jim-Jim said.

That was exactly what Donny Ray thought, but instead of saying it he smiled. Jim-Jim, he bet, already had a racing streak in his drawers. That thought only made Donny Ray grin wider. "I'll show you who's frigging scared!" Jim-Jim's said. His face blossomed red for a moment, and then his brows pinched down and lips scrunched up. He spun about and marched toward the mill's toothy grin.

Donny Ray waited for Jim-Jim to spout some clever excuse to avoid going in. It wasn't until Jim-Jim paused before the gap that



once held double-doors and sucked in a deep breath that Donny Ray realized Jim-Jim was actually going in. He hadn't really intended for that to happen. After all, it was a haunted mill. Maybe Jim-Jim was trying to get Donny Ray to stop him... *payback for making the dare.*

Donny Ray crossed his arms and set his jaw. If Jim-Jim was dumb enough to walk into the old mill on a dare, whatever happened was his own fault.

Jim-Jim stepped through the gap. Donny Ray watched stone-faced as his friend's form faded into the shadows. Jim-Jim was sure to come slinking back out in a minute.

More dark clouds congregated, and Donny Ray felt the temperature drop. It had been a chilly ride along the stream to get here, but now Donny Ray could see his breath and his ears had gone numb. He fought a sudden case of the shivers.

Come on Jim-Jim, hurry up. I'm freezing my nuts off.

The first sprinkle of snow arrived on one of Donny Ray's eyelashes. He sniffed back a streamer that tickled the inside of his nostril and turned his gaze to the gap in the mill's glass teeth. Jim-Jim should have come out by now. He should have at least made some noise.

He's trying to scare me, thought Donny Ray. Well, it wouldn't work. If he saw a ghost Jim-Jim would've—

A scream ripped out of the shadows. Donny Ray jumped, his heart pattering like a machinegun. He wasn't big enough to save Jim-Jim; and what could he do against a ghost? He could go find someone to help, but who'd believe him? And he'd never make it back in time.

Another scream rent the silence.

His gaze shifted from his bike—waiting to take him to safety like a faithful stallion—to the mill.

"Help!" It was Jim-Jim, his voice a screech.

That was it. He had to try. Donny Ray ran for the mill. He charged through the gap and nearly went down on a pile of debris. He righted himself and glanced around. There was nothing in sight but rusted saws, rubble, and scraps of wood. A rickety staircase along the right wall had scuff marks in the dust on its steps. Jim-Jim went that way.

Donny Ray ran up the stairs. What he saw at the top made him stop and pee himself. He saw Jim-Jim backed against the wall. He shook. His eyes were wide, and he babbled nonsense. All of his hair had gone white. A girl hovered in front of him, her hair rippling in a wind that only she could feel. Her hands covered her

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face and she sobbed. As if she heard his approach, she dropped her hands and turned to face Donny Ray. Her wet-rimmed eyes were solid white.

“No,” she said. “Run. Run before he comes.” Though she appeared to yell, her words were mere whispers. Then her eyes opened wide, as if in fear.

What could make a ghost afraid?

Donny Ray turned and bolted—

—and ran directly into Mr. Kent. When he looked up, Mr. Kent’s eyes glowed like the embers of a fire, and he wore a maniacal smile. ☹

WADE RIGNEY



“Wade Rigney” is a pseudonym. But if it weren’t, his bio would

read like this:

Wade Rigney was born in a small, coastal New Jersey town, and has spent much of his life since moving about the East Coast and Midwest. As a result, he can flip somebody off in sixteen different dialects, knows nothing nice in Spanish, and once peed on a skunk (and they don’t like to be sprayed either). He now lives with his wife, three children, dog (and whatever that is growing in his oldest son’s sock pile) in a remote part of the North-eastern United States. This is his first professional sale.

However, since “Wade Rigney” is a pseudonym, there wouldn’t be much point in all of that...

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