

## Solitude

Where skyscraping sequoia trees grow, where seclusion is kind and fruitful, where streams of filtered water trickle down mountainous terrain; this is where Phaedra Finn lives. Her house, a small crumbling cottage with blue chipped shutters, is nestled between two symmetric sequoias. Phaedra Finn, who just turned ten, is home alone. Her pale complexion becomes transparent as she ponders the explanation left by her parents on the fridge door.

Gone into town. Be back by sundown.

-Love Mom and Dad

The empty abode now had a strange new appeal to it. Typically, three people would be active and engaging around this time of day. Surely her mom would have breakfast laid out on the table on three distinctive place mats and her dad, without a doubt, would be working on repairing one of the many leaks or creaks the old one-story cottage had. Phaedra looks in each room of the house. She double checks the bathrooms and closets, and after about thirty minutes of scouring, she notices the attic door in the hallway ajar. A small string dangling in front of her. She had never been allowed in the attic before. Checking the house would have been pointless if there was an unexplored area. Phaedra takes a deep breath, grabs a pocket flashlight from her dad's toolbox by the front door, and scurries back to the mysterious door. Her dainty hands tug at the string until a stack of stairs unfolds itself. Old rusty stairs that she figured her dad had not fixed in ages. She takes her first step almost second guessing her decision. After a momentary pause, she holds her breath and decides to climb up the steep stairs. Each step creaked and squeaked. The creaks sounded like hollow old souls warning her not to progress. With no respect for the dead, Phaedra continued. The darkness in front of her felt like the threshold of a portal

and she quickly pulled out the pocket flashlight to penetrate the unknown. Objects flooded the room, with little space to walk or to think. Her hairs stood at attention walking through the maze. Dust that had been collecting for years held her nose hostage, but she does not dare sneeze and wake the spirits. She had already angered them by ignoring their pleas.

Suddenly, a face emerges from the shadows. An unknown face with piercing blue daggers for eyes and a slight grin. Phaedra, unable to contain her emotions, holds onto her chest letting out a sigh as her body becomes weak. She slumps onto a nearby object feeling lightheaded and faint. She shields her eyes and hugs the corner beside her. She makes sure not to look at the face. She instead thinks of the furry stuffed animal her dad handmade for her. It too had piercing eyes, but it also had a much better grin than the monster she had just seen. The spirits warn her, yet again of a disturbance. After her near death experience with the grinning pair of eyes, she decides the attic is all clear, and wished her parents were there to comfort her. The spirits hear her and grants her wish. Climbing back down the run downstairs from the attic, she is greeted at the bottom by her mom's warm smile. The sun was still peaking in the sky and Phaedra questioned the early return. Her mom told her that the spirits gave her the tip. Phaedra relaxed in her mother's arms, thanking the spirits as she drifts off into a deep slumber from her afternoon of exploring.

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A few ways that I thought to incorporate the female gothic was by one having a heroine. My heroine for this story is Phaedra Finn, a ten-year-old girl who is left to be by herself for a few hours. I tried to make her have at least a couple qualities that the heroines we have read about also have. For one, I sort of gave her the "missing mother" trope. I gave her a situation like Catherine Morland by making her home alone with no guidance. Another small thing I tried to incorporate was a fainting spell when she saw the face in the dark. I tried to create my own

sublime type environment for the setting. The forest where the cottage is located is surrounded by tall trees and mountain terrain and streams and lakes. The supernatural was also a feature. This role was given to the dark unknown attic area. Along with the attic were the spirits. With this being a short-short piece, I wasn't exactly sure how to convey that the spirits are supposed to be Phaedra's intuition. Each time the spirits warned her, it was really her intuition telling her not to do something or her mother's intuition telling her to come home early to check on Phaedra. I also don't think it is noticeable from this short piece, but the face is supposed to be the supernatural as well. Like a spooky story, the face was supposed to be unexplainable, but it was Phaedra's lost stuffed animal. Lastly, I enjoyed the whimsical fairy tale side of the gothic we talked briefly about in class, so I tried to give the story a sort of rhyming aspect that one would find in a nursery rhyme for children; this fitting for Phaedra's character being ten years old.