

## **2020 Horror Story Contest**

Honorable Mention: "The Bleeding Portrait"

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I was visiting my grandparent's house for my grandmother's 85th birthday. The house was nice and big, and it has housed many of my family members. But I would come to discover it had also killed one of them.

You may be familiar with the idea of decorating the wall next to a staircase. It's a nice idea so that you can look at pictures as you walk up the stairs. All the pictures on the wall next to the staircase in my grandparent's house were portraits of our family members. There's one for everyone, including me. Mine was just recently done as I had turned 18 and my parents thought it was a good time for it. In fact, everyone who was on the wall must have been at least 18. Except for one portrait. One of a little girl.

This little girl was apparently a beautiful, bubbly little girl. The stories my grandparents told of her made her out to be an angel. Maybe she was an angel, but the girl in white in the portrait was not an angel to me. She was a ghost.

When I first got to my grandparent's house, I said my hellos, gave my hugs and asked where to put my bags. My grandmother directed me up the stairs and to the left. I headed up the staircase and couldn't help but notice the portraits. The odd one out was that of the little girl. But it wasn't the odd one out just because of her age, the frame was the only frame which was red. Quite the contrast from the other golden frames. But now I know why it was red.

I made my way up to my room, dropped my bags on the floor and headed back down the staircase. As I passed the little girl's portrait going back down the stairs, I noticed it seemed stained. Like the red from the frame had gotten onto the picture. I attempted to wipe it off with my fingers, but just got the color on my hands. I wonder now why I thought that was a good idea.

I continued to descend the stairs with my now red stained hands and made it to the bottom. Later I'd thank God that I was the lucky one. I

found the bathroom and decided to wash the red color off of my hands. As I lathered the soap in my hands the colors of the white ivory bar mixed with the red from my hands and I suddenly felt very unclean. Like I had dirtied something pure. So I dried my hands and left the bathroom only to be told to go back up the stairs to wait for dinner.

As I passed it again, the portrait of the little girl now looked like my smears had covered her face and I didn't dare to tell my grandmother. But then I saw something on the ground under the portrait. A puddle of red. Blood maybe? Is that what the red stain I had touched was? Is that what I had had on my hands? Surely not. But oh how I was wrong.

The little girl's portrait was finally explained to me a few years later after my grandparents had died. The girl had fallen down the stairs and broken her neck. She died in that house and that's where her ghost remained. Her ghost had said hello to me and I didn't even know. That little girl had remained bubbly even in death and just wanted someone to play with.