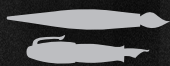


SCAREWAVES

TREVOR HENDERSON



SCHOLASTIC PRESS • NEW YORK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

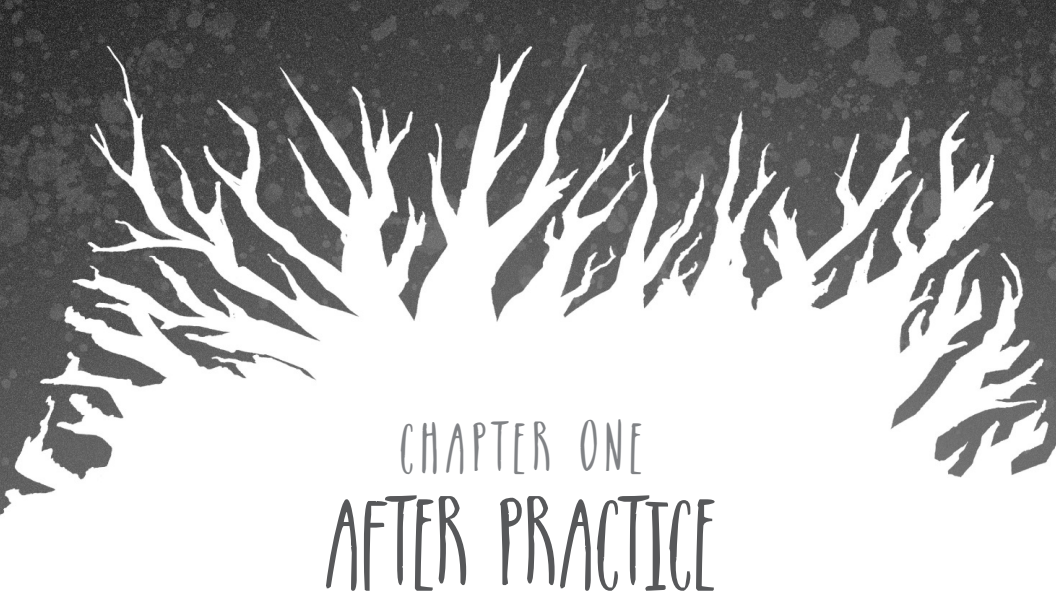
ISBN 978-1-338-82950-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 23 24 25 26 27

First edition, October 2023

Printed in the U.S.A. 37

Book design by Christopher Stengel



CHAPTER ONE
AFTER PRACTICE

Beverly Winslow picked at the mud that had dried between her soccer cleats. She was slumped on a cracked stone stoop with her coat pulled tight against her skinny frame, her bright orange knapsack beside her like a lump. Once a week, she put on her uniform, grabbed her sneakers, and started the long and gloomy walk to soccer practice at the Beacon Point Community Center.

The run-down building boasted a lush field out back, perfect for sports of all kinds. Bev loved sports, especially soccer, and despite the long walk, it was worth it to get to play with other kids, though it wasn't easy. Her parents both had busy jobs. They weren't around to give her rides, so it was up to her to make it to practice on time. Her friend Byron didn't care for sports, but he was usually there to watch. She always appreciated the support. This time,

though, he couldn't make it, so she would have to endure the long walk home alone. Bev peered at the gray sky overhead, sighed, and brushed her brown hair out of her face. Today would have been a great day for a ride from her parents. Just once or twice, she would appreciate seeing their faces in the stands. They never seemed to make the time to come see her play, and it was finally starting to get to her.

Bev looked out over the cracked pavement and rusty chain-link fences from her spot on the steps. The road stretched off to the left toward town, and right, into the woods. The community center was perplexingly far from town, more on the outskirts. It always gave Bev an eerie feeling being alone out here. She was so close to the thick woods that surrounded Beacon Point. It seemed like they could close in around her at any moment.

Suddenly, the clouds above her broke open and a torrent of rain poured down. One minute a chill wind was blowing; the next, a wall of steady rain soaked her to the bone. Bev grabbed her knapsack and held it over her head as a makeshift umbrella, already off the stoop and jogging toward the road. It would be a miserable walk home through the rain, but she couldn't put it off anymore. The last thing she wanted to do was miss soccer practice next week because of hypothermia.

She was sure that by the time she got home, her mom would be there waiting to greet her. Bev left the parking lot behind her and started down the thin road that led to town. Rows of thick pine trees lined both sides, like two soccer teams squaring off. She shivered. Again, she wished that Byron had been able to meet her. The conversations they shared always made the trip go by so much

quicker. By the time Byron finally ran out of steam talking about some new monster or ghost, they were usually at her front door. When Bev had to make the trek alone, like today, she brought an old Walkman that was a hand-me-down from her brother. The music made her focus on the walk and kept her from getting too creeped out. She untangled the cord hanging from her headphones, then slipped them on.

For a while the walk was calm. Her knapsack worked well as a makeshift umbrella, and Bev was content to lose herself in the music brought forth by the Walkman jammed in her back pocket. But then the song she was listening to was cut off by a blast of white noise, like a radio tuned between stations. Bev dropped her bag to the wet pavement with a yelp. She tore the headphones off her ears, yelling in frustration. “Stupid hand-me-down junk! I just want to listen to music!”

She was bending over to grab her bag out of a puddle when she heard a sharp crack from the woods directly to her right. It was the distinctive sound of a thick tree branch breaking. One didn’t grow up in a wooded area like Beacon Point without knowing that sound by heart.

She paused, squinting to see between the trees, but the swaying pines formed a solid wall. Everyone knew that the Beacon Point woods were full of animals, especially out this far. It was always a good idea to avoid the forest at night. Bev shuddered. Suddenly, the feeling of eyes on her had real weight.

But the noise didn’t repeat. There was no point standing around. She was still uneasy, but the rain was lightening up. Bev trudged toward home yet again.

Eventually, she saw the bent bus stop sign that told her she was about a quarter of the way home. The bus route had closed years ago, otherwise she wouldn't be slogging through this rain, but the sign stood as an indicator that she was making progress. Soon she'd be safe and warm at home.

"Bev-er-lyyyy."

A voice whispered from the woods, startlingly close. Bev stopped dead in her tracks, the air snatched from her lungs. She stared into the trees.

"H-hello?" she called, forcing herself to breathe.

The only response she received was the patter of rain against the forest floor.

She'd just about convinced herself that she'd misheard some other noise—an animal, or the sound of the dwindling storm—when she heard it again.

"Beverly."

It was just loud enough to reach her over the rustling leaves. The voice was raspy and harsh, but with an almost playful tone to it. A friend from soccer playing a joke on her, maybe? Or a kid from a rival team?

Bev took a hesitant step toward the trees, then another, crossing the muddy ditch that bordered the road and walking into the long grass. She stopped and listened. If whoever had called her name was still out there, they were being just as quiet as she was.

"Hey, creep!" she hollered. "That's really not funny!" She envisioned another kid standing just past the tree line, watching her from between the branches and waiting for her to get close

enough to jump out and scare. Her skin crawled at the thought. Bev turned quickly back to the road—where a car blasted by in front of her!

Bev was sprayed with a huge splash of muddy water.

“Wonderful!” she yelled in frustration, the voice briefly forgotten.

Some parent must have been rushing back to town from Bev’s practice, kids in tow. “Get a grip,” she muttered to herself. “Pay attention, or you’re likely to get creamed by a truck.”

The rain had all but stopped. Only a light shower bounced off the rough asphalt. The sun was just starting to set—the orange glow behind the clouds meant night would fall quickly now. Bev tried to take a step back toward the road, but her left foot stuck fast. She groaned. Her foot must have gotten tangled in the long grass. If she ruined her soccer cleats by stepping off the road, that really would just be the perfect cap to this awful day.

Bev looked down, preparing for the worst.

Tragically, she found it.

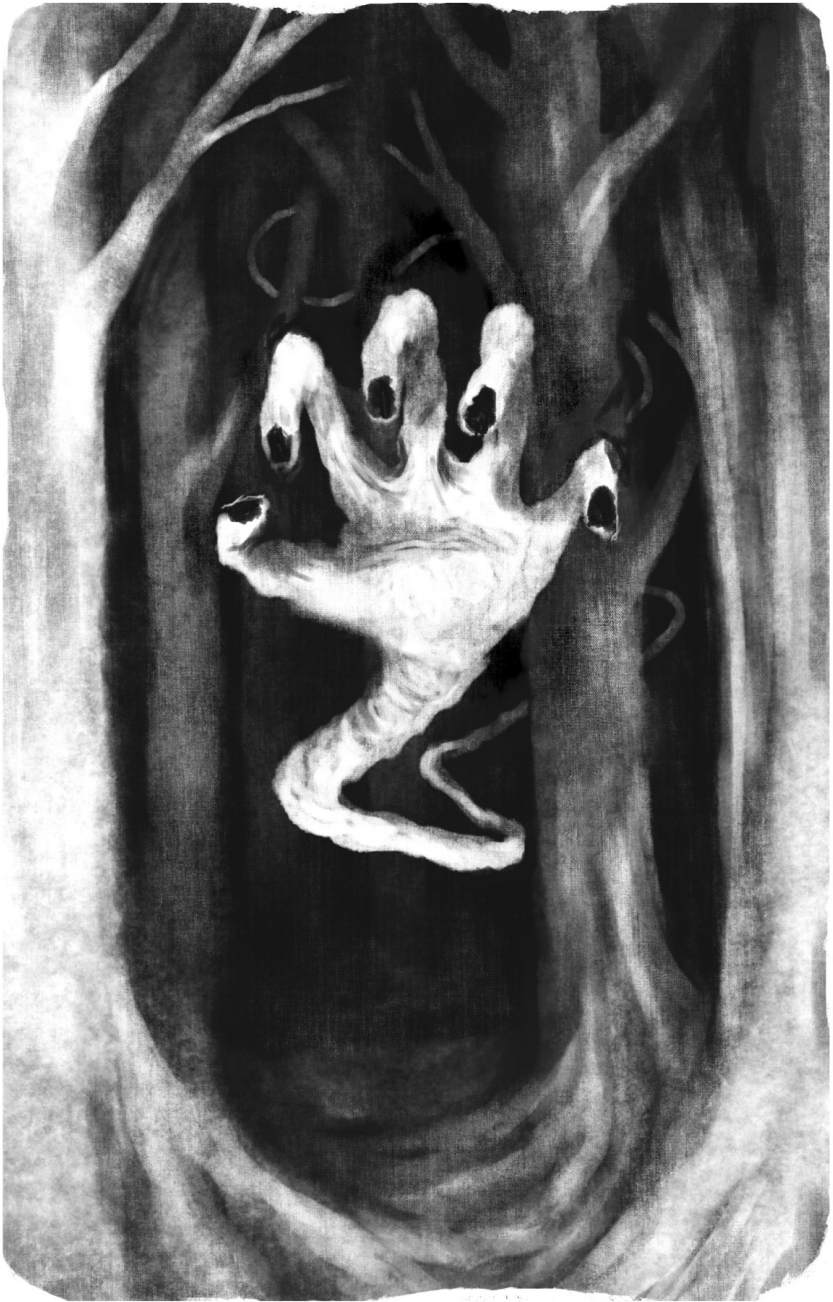
A pale hand grasped her ankle. It was long and sinewy, with slender fingers broken up by thick, swollen joints.

Bev screamed, trying to kick the hand from her ankle even as it pulled her foot out from under her. She landed on her stomach with a crunch. Glancing frantically over her shoulder, she saw that the hand was connected to a long and slender arm, with skin as pale as the belly of a fish. It stretched out behind her into the darkness of the woods—an unbelievable, nightmarish length.

Bev suddenly caught sight of something across the road. Two

deer stood watching her, their imposing silhouettes distinct against the brush. She screamed again as the hand tightened its grip. The animals observed her struggle impassively, as still as statues.

They were the last things Beverly Winslow saw before she was yanked backward into the chilly shade of trees. With her final, desperate shriek, the road disappeared from view.



Ep. 03

"Beacon Point History"
Partial transcript of the
BCON RADIO MYSTERY SHOW,
hosted by Alan Graves

Broadcast on Jan 3, 1992

[Atmospheric spooky music plays]

[BG SFX: Lightning crashes, wolves howl]

ALAN GRAVES: Welcome back, constant listener, to a weekly dose of intrigue and truth, from me, your alluring and mysterious host, Alan Graves.

Tonight, I want to bring out the trusty grave-digging shovel and uncover some history. Some real history! Some Beacon Point history, which tends to be a lot

more terrifying than the dusty, boring stories you'd find in most of your standard small towns. If we were to begin way back at the start of everything, we'd be here all night! But I'd be wrong not to acknowledge those strange lights, first and foremost. Most old-timers around here will agree, the lights have always been a part of Beacon Point. But what's unclear is whether they came along with the settlers, or if they've always been here. Some even say that they're the reason for the name, or that the founders chose this spot because the lights told them to. Since the beginning, Beacon Point has been an odd place. But honestly, the lights are the least of its problems!

[BG SFX: Lightning crashes, spooky laughter]

In 1878, the land that would eventually become Beacon Point was the site of many strange historical phenomena. On June seventeenth of that year, storm clouds rolled over the area, leaving a small rain of odd-looking bones in their wake, the

smallest of which was only a quarter of an inch long. The biggest was almost a foot! No bones about it, that's odd. That's some skeleton humor for you, dear listeners.

By 1882, the first of many disappearances to come was recorded. An entire group of children on a school picnic disappeared into the woods and were never seen again. For months afterward, people who passed through the area claimed to hear children among the trees, their small voices crying for help.

In the early 1900s, rumors of odd wildlife and strange-looking plants started to circulate with the locals. In 1904, a group of hunters were attacked while pursuing a herd of deer. The sole survivor, an eccentric named Nathaniel Raymere, was found delirious and exhausted only a quarter mile from his home, ranting about animals with the faces of men.

Despite all the outlandish claims and missing people, some felt that the land was good for hunting and farming. And so, Beacon Point came to be. Whether this was a good idea or not is . . . still up

for debate. If more people settled here, most felt, then that would be an end to the strangeness. But sadly, things only intensified. In 1910, there was an incident where the gathered townsfolk of Beacon Point witnessed a light that hung in the clouds over the town square for over three hours. Hundreds saw the light before it suddenly disappeared from the sky, as if it had never been there. Three of the witnesses were struck blind at that moment, and it was weeks before their vision returned. If you believe the stories.

In 1932, a hunting party recorded finding an abandoned campsite in the forests outside town. The tent was still set up, a fire still smoldering, but with no one in the area. Coffee brewed over the flames, and plates were laid out for a meal that never happened. Aside from the tidy eating area, the clearing was strewn with the belongings of whoever had been camping. The entire place was in disarray. The hunting party found the clothes of the missing men nearby, laid out on the ground as if the men wearing them had just disappeared into thin air, all lined up in a perfect circle.

In the early 40s, there were tales of a ragged figure, like that of a woman draped in layers of moldy garments, with the head of a monstrous crow. She was said to peer through the windows of family homes while they sat by the fire at night, kept at bay only by the light. Seeing the Crow Mother, as she was called, was a sure sign that misfortune would befall the children of those who lived there.

There have always been tales of bodies going missing from the local cemetery. Reports of folks seeing their recently deceased friends and family walking around their yards at night, asking to be let in. Doppelgängers, face-stealers, impostors of all kinds pretending to be those closest to you. But surely these are just fanciful stories, right? Right.

In 1973, one Abigail Ratchin was in her yard hanging up her laundry when a man walked out of the nearby woods. He was tall, dressed in a long coat and wide-brimmed hat that hid his face. He didn't come any closer, but Abigail said that

even from that distance she could tell there was something wrong with his proportions. And his smile. The way he looked at her horrified Abigail, but he stayed put where he was. So she calmly went inside and waited for the man to depart, turning and walking back the way he'd come, right into the thick brush. But for many nights after, Abigail claimed that the Stranger somehow left threatening messages inside her home, scrawled in the hidden places on her property, in places no one but she had access to. Eventually, it was too much. Poor Abigail packed her bags and fled Beacon Point in the middle of the night, never to be seen again. Or so they say.

Things in Beacon Point continued like this, with a new strangeness every few years. Monstrous animals in the woods. Ghosts. Odd lights in the sky. People disappeared more often than in neighboring towns, but it was easy to look the other way, because there were always more people moving in. Most just wanted to go about their lives unbothered. They figured if they kept their

heads down and stayed out of the woods, odds were they'd be just fine. That's how it is here. That's the BP status quo.

But I know I can count on you, dear listeners, to seek the truth. And the truth is that Beacon Point isn't just a place where people go missing, a place that has no shortage of strange tales, or where we stay out of the woods as a rule. It's also a place where people need to be careful what they say, and who they say it to. That's if they know what's good for them. Because in Beacon Point, someone—or something—is always watching, always listening, right along with you.

[Spooky outro music plays, lightning and thunder SFX]

We here at BCON Radio—and by “we” I mean “I”—appreciate you for being one of the rare few who doesn't know what's good for themselves. Or maybe you do, but you'd rather know the truth anyways.

Either way, thanks for listening. And as always, remember to stay safe, stay aware, and most of all, stay out of the woods. Good night.

[End of broadcast]