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## **Grover Fair**

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The last thing a kid my age, which is fourteen, by the way, wants to do is go trick or treating with their mom lingering behind them yelling “BE CAREFUL” at every doorstep. Luckily, the yearly flu beat her to it this year, and she entrusts me to walk around the neighborhood with a few friends.

The lit houses are owned by young couples who would rather go to parties than pass out candy to children, so we move a bit further from our homes to avoid disappointment.

After walking for around ten minutes, and complaining about the lack of candy in our sacks, we stumble upon a small Halloween attraction park. We figure if the treats are gonna be a bust, we might as well be spooked by cheesy jump scares.

Rummaging through our pockets, we gather enough money to get tickets to the cheapest attraction; a staggered old-looking corn maze adorned with a lengthy scarecrow at the entrance. It starts out slow, with a few twists and turns, until finally, a tall man dressed in a cheap scarecrow costume jumps out at us from around the corner. As he lunges toward us, we scream and begin running in the opposite direction.

Even though we subconsciously know whoever was behind that Party City fabric is a paid worker, we have an instinct to find safety--and fast. Somehow through the thrill of running through the corn, we all must've dove into different directions, because I am suddenly left alone. Luckily I lose the scarecrow man when walking back to the path in between the crops, but I gain the unshakable dread of being watched.

Looking around me, to make sense of this emotion, I take notice of how towering the stalks are above my head. They seem to possess mobility as it looks like they are moving swiftly, swaying in the most eerie motion. Calling out for my friends does no good--I hear only echoes of my voice down the rows, which open out in endless directions.

I stumble through wrong turn after wrong turn. Is that the same scarecrow I saw a few minutes ago? Paranoia takes over my logic and I swear the weeds are whispering. My instincts bump heads with my stamina. I almost feel like if I stop running, something will grab me by my ankle and drag me into the depths of the wicked crops.

To back my intuitions, a black crow sits perched atop the tassel of the stalks, black pupils searching my insides aggressively. In an uproar, the crow begins to soar above my head down another endless path laced with thick weeds and dead grass. As I follow, my legs and eyes race intensely to see which will shut down first. But in the most extreme case of exultation, the trail of crops seems to decrease in height and the clearing makes space for my paranoia to settle.

Adrenaline replaces my exhaustion, and I run for the clearing, almost tripping over my feet in the process. My heart plunges into the depths of my stomach as the exit shoves itself shut, mimicking the gates of hell. The hairs across my body stand up, as whatever my intuition was warning me about stands behind me, making its presence known.

As a small hand touches my shoulder, my body loses all feeling and I fall still. As I subconsciously prepare myself for my final seconds alive, a familiar voice rings in my ears. “There you are! We’ve been looking all over for you!” my

friend yells, as he slams his hands on his knees, visibly catching his breath. Looking past him, I see the rest of my friends running toward us, regaining their stamina.

Overflowing with relief, the only thing I could think to do is laugh.