

The boys stood upright in tandem.

“What’s that? Samuel, did you hear that?” Tyler looked around the chapel certain he heard someone or something. He stared bug-eye at Samuel. Tyler noticed Samuel’s eyes also bulged. The whooshes came closer and closer, but no one seemed to be attached to the sound.

Leaving the doll behind, they dashed from the wood alcove back to the last pew where they crouched down behind the bench. Faint at first, the steps became louder as they progressed down the aisle. It was more of a whooshing sound than feet stepping with full weight onto the wooden floor, but like footsteps, there was one sound, a break, and another sound. Tyler leaned out from behind the pew. Samuel grabbed his arm to pull him back in. The footsteps brushed past them, at which point the boys looked one another in the eye and stopped moving. Tyler reached for Samuel’s arm. Samuel teetered, fell backwards, and together they created a bang much louder than the footsteps which had stopped just before the alcove. In quirky movements, the boys pulled themselves from the floor. Still on their knees, they looked over the back of the pew towards the wood bin in the alcove. A slight rustling began, as if a gust of wind made the sheer white curtain flutter. But it hung limp against the side of the window.

What they saw was the doll in the corner next to the wood bin roll from its side to its back. The doll moved, it seemed, by itself, and the cobwebs and bugs were being pulled or flicked off the dress. Making noise moved off the list of worries as Samuel and Tyler pulled themselves up, out of the pew, ran past the alcove, pushed on the back door, and jumped two to three steps at a time. They stopped when they reached the side garden gate of Pemberton Hall.

Both stooped over and rested their hands on their knees.

“What was that?” said Samuel in between gasps.

Tyler kept his head down, lifted one hand to his right side, pressing into the sharp pain from the energetic scramble down the street. He let out an explosive laugh along with a spray of spit.

“Gross,” said Samuel.

Tyler stood up. “Sorry,” he said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

Samuel stood up and placed his hands on his hips. Bursts of giggles erupted, and they shook their heads. When they caught their breath, Tyler turned towards the gate and released the latch.

“Holy moly cow!” exclaimed Tyler. They walked in tandem up the path to the back porch. “What was that?” he got out as the gasps turned to light pants and #nally subsided and his breathing pace returned to normal.

“Probably nothing. Maybe something. Not sure,” stuttered Samuel. “Wow. Oh my, we cannot tell anyone; understand Tyler? No. One.” They crossed their hearts and shook pinkies.