

JODI MAY'S



HSA vs IT

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## FOREWORD & DISCLAIMER

First and foremost, I do not own the characters of 'IT' nor the original concept. All rights remain with the original author, Stephen King. It's important to note that this is a homage to the original story, which happens to be my favourite book. I was inspired by every single page and read it once a year, every summer, to be whisked away to Derry all over again. It occurred to me, after the two recent films (I prefer the 1990's television series) that a lot of people love the story and adore 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' but they never get the chance to read the book. Put off by its length, they miss out on the magic of the tale as King wrote it. With this crossover homage fan fiction I wanted to bring a piece of that magic (and horror) to life and it's my hope, above all, that I'll be able to encourage just one person to pick up the original book.

Secondly, the '*Hillside Academy*' characters featured in this fan fiction are all my own. The only character I took from King's story was 'Pennywise'. The rest are mine and all belong to me by law. I will also add that much of the main characters' backstories have been changed to fit this specific 'alternative universe' and several of the minor characters of the story have also been altered. To conclude, there are no spoilers to the main '*Hillside Academy*' series. Rather, it is a way for me to highlight the main eight (Erika, Dominic, Sam, Anna, Emily, Will, Elivia and Tom) in this horror fan fiction that is dedicated to not only Stephen King for inspiring me to keep writing all these years, but also to the people of Lancaster, Lancashire.

Thus bringing me to the penultimate point of this disclaimer. Throughout the book, Lancaster is referred to not always kindly and sometimes in a negative light. This is fiction. I wanted to set this gruesome fan fiction homage in this city because for one, it's truly beautiful and has a rich, fantastic history, and secondly, because I love it. I moved here just over two years ago and fell quickly in love with the history and architecture. My babies were born here and in a way, so was I. By leaving the place I grew up and all its ghosts, I was liberated. This city has quickly become not the place I was raised but the place I was born. And the people? The people of Lancaster are wonderful. They're community-orientated, kind and generous, and during a rather arduous period, the community of Greaves specifically aided us greatly. My partner and I are eternally grateful for their generosity and kindness during this time and this is my strange way of saying thank you; of bringing Lancaster to the forefront again and displaying it in all its glory. So whatever you may read, remember it is fiction and that Lancaster, UK is my favourite place in the world. So to the people of Lancaster, thank you.

And last but not least, a disclaimer to say that the content of this chapter and all the following contain strong language, violence against children, sexual references, scenes of gore and peril and is quite frankly inappropriate for young readers or anyone easily offended. But if this is all to your taste, go ahead and read.

I hope you enjoy reading this 'alternative universe' fan fiction homage as much as I enjoyed writing it. All comments are welcome (though don't be mean), shares are encouraged and remember –

Once you begin this story...*you'll float too.*

# CHAPTER

# TWENTY - EIGHT

## The Ritual of the Witch

It was luck Emily was the one to collect the post that morning. Otherwise, she might not have ever seen the item addressed to her. Rupert may have tossed it away upon reading it. But fate destined it to be her who came downstairs around the same time the postman stuffed their daily round of letters through the letter box that Friday morning.

It was two weeks until the start of autumn term; something which Emily was dreading, especially since her arm was still securely wrapped up with bandages to support the one hundred and sixty stitches. She could barely move it, taking painkillers every four hours to subdue the agony and ache. It was a constant reminder of that night at Pathfinders House over a week ago.

Ten days since Emily had last laid eyes on her friends. On Will.

She missed them all; the ache for them even greater than the one in her arm. But Rupert wouldn't even let her leave the house. She was well and truly grounded; perhaps for eternity. She'd said a stray dog had attacked her; it was the only way to explain to the doctors at the Accident and Emergency department at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary how her arm had been torn apart. Even that they'd struggled to believe.

*Bear more like*, one doctor had mumbled when he'd thought she wasn't listening.

Since the long lecture Rupert had given her whilst sitting on a gurney in the emergency room, her guardian hadn't spoken a word to Emily. She preferred it this way. She couldn't handle any more cruel words against her friends. Especially not Will.

*Will...*

He occupied her every waking thought. She only just managed to concentrate on her summer school project, which she'd completed. Lindsay had helped, printing things out and sticking them onto the project board. Now it was done, it sat pride and place on her desk behind her computer waiting to be displayed in the first week of term. Yet no matter how proud of her work, Emily was still dreading school. It would signal an end to this extraordinary summer.

Then again, wasn't it already over?

She hadn't heard from any of her friends leading her to believe that it had all been a dream. One long blissful dream which had ended in a terrifying nightmare. Now she had woken and everything seemed colourless.

Almost.

That Friday morning as Emily carefully crouched to collect the post, colour returned somewhat as she found something addressed to her.

A postcard. The picture was that of the statue of Queen Victoria in Dalton Square; a statue Emily greatly admired. A monarch she adored. The photo had been taken in the height of summer; brilliant sunshine bounced off the bronze head of their once queen, the flowers in their beds a Technicolor of bloom and the grass greener than she had ever seen it. It didn't look real.

But this postcard was and as she turned it over, she read the scribbled lines.

*Sun soaked chestnut eyes*

*Radiant courage*

*You are the air that I breathe*

Emily spoke the lines again under her breath. Confusion filled her. Hope consumed her.

*Will?*

*Is that...is that you?*

Casting her gaze upwards through the stained-glass window of the front door to her house she pictured him. She yearned for him. But all too soon, doubt crept in. It turned her world once again to grey and this letter? This beautiful poem. It wasn't real. No more than a joke.

Yet still, Emily kept it. Leaving the rest of the post on the sideboard, she took it back to her bedroom and laid with it on her chest, hoping that maybe, just maybe, this was from Will.

That there was some good in this world after all.

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"Your hair...your hair..." Will groaned, screwing up another failed attempt. He didn't have much paper left; just what was left of his old English exercise book. The ink in his pen was almost gone and he still hadn't written the perfect poem.

The words that would sum up everything he felt. Everything he knew to be true about Emily.

*Emily Fox.*

“Bruce, get off!” Will said quietly under his breath, lifting the black and white cat off of his exercise book and placing him on his lap. “Now, if you’re gonna be awake, you’ve gotta help. We’ve gotta write this for Emily.” Stroking his hand down Bruce’s long sleek back, he stared into his companion’s eyes. Bright green. Not at all like Emily’s but kind nonetheless.

*Emily’s are brown...not like dirt or trees...but like chocolate...like warmth on a summer’s day...like chestnuts...Yes! Chestnuts...chestnuts in the autumn sun.*

Pen lid between his teeth, Will scribbled down his new first line.

*Your sun soaked chestnut eyes.*

He looked to Bruce who gave him a sceptical look – as much as a cat can give a sceptical look.

“Yeah, you’re right, sounds a bit amateur don’t it?” Will chuckled, remembering to keep his voice low. He didn’t want his dad to overhear. If he did, Ashley may very well wonder enough to peel himself out of his armchair and slump up the stairs to find Will eating the burger and chips Tom had brought him when they’d bumped into each other outside KFC a few hours ago, with a cat on his lap.

No, that couldn’t happen. Will couldn’t lose Bruce and all of his teeth in one night. He couldn’t lose Bruce at all. He was all he had left.

“How about just *sun soaked chestnut eyes*?” Will said, looking to Bruce once again who purred and pushed his head against Will’s knee, demanding another stroke. Will chuckled. “Sorted. What next? What do you like about Emily? Probably the cans of tuna she brings, eh?”

Bruce meowed and nudged his head into Will’s knuckles this time. Lifting him into his lap again, Will sat back against the wall as he stroked Bruce’s back and up around his large overgrown ears; ears far too large for his slim, handsome frame. Bruce purred like an engine, kneading Will’s chest. The loneliness no longer felt as oppressive, not with his feline friend around. His saviour. While he missed his friends, Will’s fear of returning to this house wasn’t as great. The fear of his father had dissipated that night at Pathfinders House. The only fear he felt now was losing Bruce. Losing his family. Losing Emily.

But how could anything be mended now? After all was said and done, Erika was right.

It was over.

Bruce gave another impatient meow.

“Yes, alright, we’d better finish this. So Emily knows,” Will smiled feebly. “So she knows.”

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Elivia opened and closed the lid of the film canister, listening to each click and pop. It was a comforting sound; like rain on a window or the gentle waves rolling onto the shore. It was a hopeful sound. Hope that maybe there would come an end to this prison sentence.

However, it didn't look like a prison sentence. Far from it.

That Friday lunchtime, Elivia was sat in one of the finest restaurants of the North West; slap bang in the middle of Manchester, Michelin Star and crammed full of famous faces. None of which Elivia cared for as she sat at their reserved table, her parents either side of her, making several noises of delight as they ate their food. Elivia couldn't taste it. She couldn't seem to taste anything these days. Everything was bland. Everything felt pointless. The only thing that made sense to Elivia then was that film canister.

Tom's film canister.

She hadn't seen him since the night at Pathfinders House. She had only seen Anna. But even they hadn't spoken about the events of that night. No, it was as if Anna had forgotten the last month entirely. Or rather, she was trying to forget. She couldn't cope with remembering.

Elivia didn't want to forget. She wanted to remember it all. The good, the bad and the ugly.

*Tom.*

She missed them all. Hanging out at the garage or the Burrow Beck. Cycling around Lancaster off on a new mission. The eight of them together; all from different walks of life, all brought together to fight It.

To kill It.

A mission they had failed in. *She* had failed. Each night as she lay in bed waiting for sleep, she remembered that moment over and over again. Slipping over in the long grass, the dagger flying out of her grasp as the Clown slithered down that manhole with a grin of glee. Of triumph. For It knew.

They would never win. Not against It.

They had failed. It was over.

"Darling?"

Elivia blinked. She looked up from her plate as if in a daze. "Yes, Mum?"

"Aren't you going to eat your food?" her mother, Julia asked, pointing a knife at Elivia's plate of food; a tiny portion of what appeared to be a bit of meat, a bit of sauce and something that vaguely resembled mashed sweet potato. It made her stomach churn. But it had cost her parents forty-five pounds and Elivia hated disappointing them.

"Yes, sorry," Elivia murmured. Picking up her fork, she tucked in, chewing numbly as the events of the past month danced across her eyes once again.

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Annabella Clearwater was asleep. That didn't stop her middle daughter from reading. It was a Catherine Cookson novel; one of her mother's favourites.

*The Dwelling Place.*

A story of a young girl, just fifteen, left to take care of her nine brothers and sisters after losing their parents to cholera. With just a shilling to live on, the girl, Cissie Brody, took her siblings to live on the wild moors of Northumberland. Set in the 1840s, when life was harsh and cruel and poor, Cissie gave her life to stop her siblings from ending up in the workhouse. Anna didn't know how the story ended. They were only on chapter ten.

Since her mother's deterioration of health, Anna had read several Catherine Cookson novels to help Annabella sleep. Her father was too busy these days; he buried himself in his work and in researching treatments for his wife. Treatments that would never work. It was too late. Annabella was in the last stages. Her death was on the horizon and the sooner Christopher realised that, the easier it would be on them all. The easier for Anna who felt like the only one in this family *not* in denial. The only one who realised that soon her mother would be gone.

Lost forever.

Gently, Anna stroked her fingers across her mother's hairless head. Her skin was smooth and warm to touch. Even now, she radiated heat. Goodness. Motherly love. No matter what happened, she would always be her mother and Anna her devoted daughter.

With a sigh, she went to continue when her mother gave a groan.

It was one of anguish. One of pain and terror, her eyes opening wide, her mouth an O shape as she reached out for Anna's hand. Anna grasped it in return, holding the frail fingers of her mother close to her chest as she tossed the book onto the bed and shuffled closer.

"Mum? Mum? What's wrong? What's happened -?"

"I see him. Even now. I see *It*."

"What?" Anna stuttered. She searched Annabella's face. Her eyes, the exact same colour of Anna's own, were fixated upon the ceiling; on that beautiful vintage chandelier that had taken four men to install. All the way from France, taken from an old chateau. Nothing was too much for Christopher's love. His life. Annabella looked to it now, not her daughter, her eyes glazing over as a nightmare, a vision, lingered inside of her.

"It's hood...it's yellow eyes. I see it...it's coming for me...it's death."

"What is it, Mum? What do you see?" she beseeched, the terror seeping out of her mother's pores and into her; igniting the fear. The fear she had desperately tried to forget since that night at Pathfinder's House.

The Clown.

It.



She had tried so hard to pretend it had never happened. No more children had been taken. No more abductions. No more killings. It was over. They'd done it. There was no use dwelling on the events of that night. On the people she had once called her friends. It was over.

But as she stared down into her mother's stricken face, Anna was crippled by Annabella's words. By the realisation...

*It's not over.*

*It's still here.*

*It will come.*

*It will come for us all.*

"A hangman. A noose. Yellow eyes," Annabella shrieked, clutching her daughter's hand with such strength the pain bit through Anna's fingers. Yet still, she didn't let go. She clung to her mother. To her very life. Her core.

*Don't leave me.*

"It's coming," Annabella squeaked. She turned her head, her gaze finding Anna; a single tear sliding down over her pale cheek. "It's coming, Anna. I taste it. I can feel it. It's waiting. It will come. And there's nothing I can do to protect you."

"Mum," Anna whimpered, pulling their hands to her chest where her heart thundered. As she watched, Annabella's body relaxed; her eyes and mouth closing and peace returning to her face. "Mum?" With a tight swallow, she feared the worst.

With a gentle action, one Anna nearly missed in her frenzied state, her mother stroked her thumb across the back of Anna's hand.

"Never give up, darling," Annabella hummed. "Never give up."

At that, her mother returned to her slumber and Anna was left more lost than ever before.

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It was the same everytime Tom visited.

Dominic never wanted to leave the house now. He sat in his bedroom like a prisoner of his grief, listening to his father's records, staring out the window, thumbing Toby's toy rocket in his palm. It never left his side. He hardly spoke. Muted by his anguish, his frustration and haunted by the events of that night at Pathfinder's House, Dominic was slowly disappearing. Tom could almost see him fading at the edges; dissipating into mist.

Each time he visited, Tom hoped things would be different. Hoped his boyfriend would snap out of it, find life again. Look at Tom and really see him, just as he had before. Before it all. Before the events of the last month, before Toby. But this hope was wishful thinking and as Tom got up for

the last time, slotting on his shoes and collecting his jacket from the back of Dominic's desk chair, his hope was finally diminished.

Taking one last look at his boyfriend sat on his bed, knees to his chest, eyes on that toy rocket – his token, the thing he had held most faith in – Tom gave a tight, heavy sigh. There was no coming back from this. Too much had happened.

"I'm going now," Tom said, his voice wavering as his emotions sat heavy in his chest.

"Okay," Dominic murmured. He didn't even look up as Tom gave him one last pained expression before leaving.

Curfew had been lifted. The police believed that, since a week had passed without any more abductions, the killing spree of their suspected maniac was over. While their supposed suspect was still loose, they had lifted the curfew and encouraged parents to allow their children out to play once again. All the while, Tom knew different. It wasn't a crazy perverse male running around Lancaster nicking children off the streets, mutilating and killing them. It wasn't something the adults could even see. It was a being. As impossible to catch as the wind between your fingers. Older than time. More powerful than anything portrayed in literature and media. It had shown Its true strength that night to them all. No matter what they did, they couldn't hurt It. They had failed and their friendship group, their band of losers, were scattered. It was over.

Walking along Heaton Road, hands in the pockets of his jeans, the light of Dominic's bedroom behind him, Tom looked up to see his grandfather waiting for him. Angie and Mal didn't trust the police –

*They want us to put our kids in danger just because of their incompetence? I think not!*

Tom smiled feebly at the sight of Mal wearing his slippers and holding his torch; waving it as though he were a lighthouse and Tom a boat sailing through the rocks into a harbour. His home, his grandparents, they were a safe haven. But it didn't make the ache for Dominic and all the rest of his friends any easier to bear.

He saw Erika. Every day, he took food and water to the garage. She was grateful but they didn't speak much. Like Dominic, Erika didn't seem to have anything to say. Tom was concerned for her; each morning she looked paler, wearier and like death itself. He had tried asking but she didn't want to talk. No one wanted to talk.

That night at Pathfinder's House hadn't just proved to them how strong It was. It had proved to them how weak *they* were. And that weakness, it was like a cancer. It had spread through them all and now, it was as though they were all too ashamed to face one another.

It had defeated them. It had torn them apart and now, they were broken pieces of a Chess board. No longer united. Only divided. It had won.

He knew Elivia blamed herself. She shouldn't. If anyone was to blame, it was them as a collective. For believing they could ever win against something as powerful as It. For tricking themselves into this delusion. Too many times they'd put themselves in danger. They'd almost lost Will. They'd almost lost Emily. In doing so, they'd lost each other.

It was a dark time in a summer that had held so much hope. But at the end of it all, Tom was void of hope; even for his own relationship.

“You alright, lad?” Mal asked, resting a strong, reassuring hand on Tom’s shoulder.

“Yeah, yeah, just, you know.”

“No, lad. What?”

“Miss my friends,” Tom said.

Mal gave a sympathetic sigh and a smile. “You’re young. You’ll make new friends.”

Tom nodded though he didn’t agree.

He didn’t want *new* friends. He wanted his old group. The gang. The Losers of Greaves. They’d felt invincible for a time. Unstoppable. Together, they could have beaten the devil.

Now what was left?

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The moment Tom left, Dominic opened his bedside drawer. Reaching inside, he removed a book. *The* book.

Upon returning to the library in a desperate attempt to see if there was any other literature that could help him fight It – kill It once and for all – he had discovered the very book he and Emily had taken out a few weeks ago. Rupert must have found it and returned it for Dominic knew Emily was in no fit state to leave the house. He’d heard from Tom, who still attended church even after Rupert had told him to stay away, that Emily had needed over one hundred and fifty stitches. She was lucky to be alive at all, in Dominic’s opinion. If Emily hadn’t stabbed It with her own golden cross when she had, It would have taken her. And there wouldn’t have been anything any of them could have done to stop It.

For they were just kids.

Dominic had checked the book out in the hopes that Emily may have missed something. He doubted it. She was meticulous. But still, it comforted him to know he was doing something. He hadn’t given up like the rest. It wasn’t their little brother who had been murdered. It didn’t matter to them. They could all forget. He saw, everytime Tom visited, in his boyfriend’s eyes that Tom wanted nothing more than for things to return to normal. Not the normal they had created this summer, but the normal before.

Hanging out by the Burrow Beck smoking Sam’s weed. Chilling in their den in the woods at the end of Dorrington Road; collecting wood and old bits of tarpaulin from the allotment to add extensions to their cosy den. But Tom was in denial. It would never be like that again. Too much had happened.

Sometimes, Dominic felt as if he was the only one who cared. The only one living in reality. A strange reality, granted; one with a murderous ancient being that killed children and couldn't be seen by adults. One that could change into your worst nightmares and eat you whole. But it was reality nonetheless.

Dominic vowed never to live in denial. Denial would mean forgetting his brother and he wouldn't let that happen. He wouldn't stop.

Not until It was dead.

*Once and for all.*

Opening the book tonight and unturning the corner of the page he'd dog-eared to keep his place, Dominic sat back against the pile of cushions on his bed. Just the night before, he'd come across something interesting. Something Emily had mentioned in passing.

A spell. A Ward. Similar to what they'd seen in the vision. But the book didn't contain the spell and Dominic had been at a loss. That was until his eyes fell on the author's name on the front of the book; the book which he'd tossed across the room in his frustration. Returning it to his lap, he'd gone to his computer at his desk to look up the author; Luna Mills. He'd rolled his eyes at the ridiculous 'fantasy' name but kept his reservations to himself. He'd quickly found her Facebook account and while he didn't have an account for this 'social media craze' he'd found her email address in her bio and quickly sent her an email.

Tonight, he was reminded of that email again and took the book across to his desk to check his Hotmail with the small hope that Luna Mills had replied. If only to tell him to mind his own business.

He was in luck. Sitting in his Hotmail account along with a few promotional spam emails was a reply from Luna. Clicking on it, he closed the book once again and held his breath.

*Please...please help me.*

Dear Dominic,

It was a wonderful surprise to hear from a fan! I'm so pleased you enjoyed the book. It was an accumulation of my life's work and so it's rewarding to receive praise for all my hard work.

Dominic gave another roll of his eyes and scrolled on through the two paragraphs which consisted of her vain babbles until his eyes caught sight of something interesting.

The spell you're referring to is a Ward. A very powerful one I might add and secret to our Coven. However, as you've showed such an interest and such knowledge in our Coven and show such respect for Witchcraft, I believe it would only be fair to let you in on this secret...

Dominic felt as though his eyes were about to roll out of their sockets. Luna Mills, whoever she was and no matter how much she knew about the Pendle Witches, evidently didn't care much for

the sanctitude of her Coven. Perhaps everything she was saying was false. But it was something and Dominic couldn't brush it aside too soon. Besides, the Ward was so old maybe none of the 'Witches' of the Coven understood its power any more. Perhaps, unwittingly, Luna was about to give Dominic exactly what he needed.

It's written in an old language, a Germanic one that surely derives from Latin but here is the translated text - translated the best it could be by a fellow Witch linguistic specialist:

Circle, circle, the line with no end  
Ring around twice to protect us and friend.  
Feline and water, soil and stone  
Bind this place holy and save us your own.  
Eater of worlds, demon of time  
Answer for your crime  
Bury it deep, bury it true,  
End it now or live in your rue.

This Ward was said to have been used during an ancient ritual which involved the cutting of the right palm and a circle of at least eight of the Coven. I press this, it must be eight. But our Coven no longer uses such drastic or inhumane practices. I would also add that these spells shouldn't be used if you're not a member of the Coven -

The email went on to warn Dominic of meddling with witchcraft without the proper education, to which he ignored. He didn't need a certificate from the Online School of Witchcraft, to which Luna provided link to at the bottom of her email. He had faced It. They had the Pendle Witches' very dagger. If anything, he knew far more about the original Coven of Pendle than Luna did. He had seen them. Felt them. They had tried to help.

This was the final piece. The spell. The Ritual of the Witch. This was why they'd failed.

Sitting back in his desk chair, Dominic was filled with both hope and defeat. If they'd known this ten days ago, they could have done something. They could have ended It. But now, but now...

*It's split us apart. Torn us in two.*

How would he ever convince them all to fight again? To put aside this almighty setback and fight. They had the dagger, they had the spell, now all they needed was each other.

*Eight of us. One Coven. One unit fighting against It.*

Putting the book aside, he scribbled down the spell filled once again with hope and only hope. They had come together before and fought, they could do it again. Not just for Dominic, not just for Toby and all the other children. But because they stood for everything It wasn't.

They were the balance. The Yin to Its Yang. It was their duty.

Dominic just needed to remind them.

*If only it was that simple.*