

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 SEVEN

Gallows Hill

“Bollocks,” Sam guffawed once they’d finished explaining everything.

“It’s not bollocks!” Will objected. “It happened! I saw it! Twice!”

“Me too,” Emily added quietly.

“It nearly killed us, Sam,” Erika said much more calmly than Will who was pacing.

“Alright! Alright!” Sam said, hands up in a calming motion when they all began speaking at once. “Okay! Right,” he sighed, viewing each of them in turn. “Say, for one moment, this is legit and not all some weird trip you lot went on –.”

“I don’t do drugs,” Emily said quickly with a fierceness he couldn’t help but admire.

“Alright! Okay, but what does it mean?” Sam said, throwing up his hands in defeat. His eyes fell to Dominic and Tom who’d been silent the entire conversation. “Have you seen it?”

The two boys shared an awkward expression before shaking their heads. Sam resisted a roll of his eyes and turned back to the other three stood on the opposite side of their messy circle.

They’d been sat down by the stream as usual. He’d received a text from Dominic early that Monday morning to meet just before curfew at the Burrow Beck. They weren’t seeing each other much that week since Tom was up at the university on a summer photography course. For some reason, whenever there was one of them missing, they didn’t hang out as much. He couldn’t explain why but didn’t object. These people, so far from his life of money and his private estate behind high gates, had let him into their little club. At first, he’d begrudged them but after a year, they’d taken him in and treated him like one of them. Sam wouldn’t ever admit it but it felt good to be a part of something.

A family.

It wasn’t as if he’d ever known a real family.

With Emily Fox seemingly a permanent member, their little group was getting bigger and now this? Sam didn’t like change and from the looks on their expressions, neither did they. So what did any of this mean?

Slowly, once Will had begun to tell the story, they'd all ended up on their feet. Sam wasn't sure why but here they were; six fourteen year olds asking themselves the question they thought they'd long since grown out of:

What goes bump in the night?

What is it?

"So you three have seen it and you two haven't. Do you believe it?" Sam asked, eyes on Tom. Dominic wasn't reliable when it came to his best friend, Erika. Sam envied the bond those two had and not only because he fancied Erika. It was more.

But he didn't have the space in his mind to decipher that right now.

Tom hesitated. He glanced at Emily who gave him a beseeching look. He sighed. "I don't know."

"What the fuck, man?" Will exclaimed.

"No! Don't get me wrong! I believe *you believe* you saw something. Okay? But – I mean, come on!" he exhaled heavily, shifting from foot to foot as mumbles expelled across the group. "Just think about it logically."

"There is no logic to this, Tom!" Erika said, an expression on her face Sam had never seen before. "It's *illogical!*"

"Big words coming from a state school chick," Sam muttered.

"Fuck you!" she spat, rage spreading across her face. "I saw something. I was *this* close to it. Me and Emily both were! And last night, it attacked Emily. It chased Emily and Will! Isn't that evidence enough?! I mean – what more do you need?" She stared back at him searching his face with those burning emerald eyes.

Sam knew what he needed. He needed to see it with his own eyes. Because as she said, it was illogical. It didn't make any sense. It wasn't possible.

"What if –," Dominic spoke, causing all attention to fall to him, "– what if it's the same thing that killed my brother?"

A heavy silence fell upon them. The missing children. The murders. Toby. His arm torn from his torso. His small body stuffed in the entrance of a drain. Sam knew Dominic avoided the end of Bridge Road. In fact, they all did. No one liked to walk past the sight where a ten year old died an agonising death. But was he murdered? And by who?

Or was the better question – by what?

"Dom –," Tom started, a hand on his shoulder.

Dominic shrugged it off. "What if this thing that's attacked you is killing all the children?"

“Dom, come on,” Tom said gently, “The police already said last night that they reckon it’s the work of a lunatic – one of the ones released from –.”

“Didn’t you hear what they said about Katherine? About how she was covered in bites? Chunks taken out of her? That’s not the work of a lunatic! That’s the work of a – of a – .”

“Of a what?” Sam asked, a shiver running down his back.

“A thing. A monster.”

“It,” Erika said, sending them all into another painful silence.

“It.” Emily nodded.

“It,” Will said, his hand grazing the back of Emily’s.

Sam looked up to where Dominic was nodding his head.

“It.”

“This is insane,” Sam grumbled, “You think the thing that’s been taking and killing those kids is a monster? Like one that hides under the bed?”

“I don’t think it hides under your bed. But I do think it has a lair,” Erika said, capturing all their attention.

“Stop!” Tom said before they could go any further. “Look, I’m sorry, Dom.” He turned to his boyfriend then, viewing the pained expression on his face. “I just... I can’t do this.”

“You said you believed!”

“I do – I just, I can’t. It’s too much,” Tom said, deflating where he stood and collecting his bike from his feet. “I’ve gotta go.”

“Me too, guys,” Sam said.

“You don’t believe us either?” Will said, eyes wide and full of hurt.

Sam paused, handle bars of his bike in his grip. “It’s fucking insane!”

“Of course it is!” Erika shouted, “None of us are saying it isn’t! But we didn’t imagine it and those kids are still dead! And now, another’s missing. And when that kid turns up dead? Mutilated and eviscerated? What then?”

“Nothing,” Sam said, causing her to close her mouth, her eyes narrow. “It’s not our problem.”

“Not our problem? So when it comes for one of us again, me or Will or Ems? Or *you!*” She pointed, the action piercing his chest. “Does it only become *our* business when one of *us* dies?”

Sam didn't reply and no one else spoke. He gave them each a grim smile before climbing on his bike and pedalling away.

He wouldn't let it get to him. He couldn't. He wasn't sure what Emily or Will or Erika saw or whether they'd all imagined it. Hadn't Erika even said herself that this was all hysteria? They were being swept up into the fear of their community. In all the *Scooby Doo* cartoons, the ghost or monster always seems scary before it's demasked at the end. Then the gang would chuckle and roll their eyes, calm and safe because *nothing* was ever paranormal.

There was no such thing as monsters. There was no such thing as ghosts or ghouls or things that go bump in the night. And soon enough, the police would catch whoever had been murdering these kids and the killer would be demasked. It would be nothing more than a mentally unstable person; one who'd been released from the asylum a decade ago, left untreated and allowed to roam the streets of Lancaster. This killing spree was this person's crescendo into madness. But they weren't a monster.

Just a person with a diseased mind and nothing more. Or so Sam told himself as he pedalled up Coulston Road, past the University of Cumbria on the left and turned into Williamson Park's on the right, through the gates just as dusk fell.

He knew it was past curfew but figured if he didn't run into any police, he would be fine. Besides, they would only scold him and take him home. It wasn't as if his dad was waiting, worrying for him. Benjamin wouldn't even realise he was late; if he was home at all.

With that, Sam slowed his pace. He was in no rush to get home. What was the point? Another night of watching porn, playing on his Xbox and hoping one of the pretty girls on his MSN would talk to him. It was a lonely existence, giving him another reason to enjoy hanging out with the group down at the Burrow Beck. But at the thought of them, Sam felt cold all over again.

They were being ridiculous. They were seeing things. Imagining it. He repeated these phrases over and over again in his head like a mantra as he pedalled along the pathway which ran straight through the large shadowy park.

While it was only just becoming dusk, it was darker in the park with the thick luscious trees overhanging the footpath; the shadows longer and darker somehow. Every so often, he caught something out the corner of his eye. But Sam didn't stop. He wasn't that idiot in a horror film who would go investigate the suspicious noise outside the house or run upstairs instead of out the front door when the intruder appears. He was a smart kid and had years of watching horror films as experience. There was no need to be afraid.

There was nothing there.

Thoughts easing and his paranoia receding to the edges of his mind, Sam lit up a cigarette and cycled along with one hand to the cigarette at his lips and the other arm slung down by his hip. He had perfect balance on a bike and felt smug even as he pedalled along. Unfortunately for him, there was no one around to see this impressive skill, which both irked him and made him suddenly wonder.

Where was everyone?

Williamson Park, on a beautiful warm summer evening like this, always seemed to be brimming with people; couples taking evening strolls, people walking their dogs, even families walking off their dinner. It was only when it became night did the park take on a different persona. One that even Sam was uncertain of.

But as he cycled now, he began to realise.

He was the only person here. Or at least, if there was anyone else here, he couldn't see them. With a gulp, he shrugged it off and put it down to the curfew – though it was only for children under sixteen – and pedalled on.

As he cycled out from underneath the trees and into the great open space where the memorial sat, his eyes drifted upwards to the monument. This lone solitary structure seemed to tower over him tonight, as if it were standing up straighter, broadening its chest as if with a challenge. Sam told himself he was being ridiculous – that he was letting his friends' paranoia get the better of him – and puffed on his cigarette as he pedalled.

As he did, the smoke swept up into his eyes causing them to water and burn. He tried to continue cycling but soon lost his balance. Grasping his brakes, he tossed the cigarette away and put one foot on the ground. Grinding the heel of his palm into his right eye, he blinked quickly and wiped the fluid away from his cheeks. He was glad then that no one was around. What would they think if they saw him crying?

But I'm not crying.

Aren't you?

It had been a long time since Sam had shed a tear. He had once cried himself to sleep. When his parents had argued downstairs in their old family home in Newcastle, he had wept into his pillow and the mane of his favourite lion teddy. The noise of their yelling, glasses and cutlery smashing; the hitting, the punching and the bruise around his mother's eye the next day – it terrified Sam. For he knew, it was all his fault.

They hadn't wanted him. He was the accident. The mistake. The one his mother should have got rid of. They didn't need a fifth child. Another son.

That boy!

That boy, indeed. He was the product of a broken condom. A missed contraceptive pill. A forgotten abortion. He should be dead by all rights. He shouldn't even exist. From the moment he'd spurted out the end of his father's cock, he'd been unwanted. And nothing had changed.

Dropping his hand from his eye, Sam gave a long sigh, his eyes once again drifting up to the monument.

Made for love.

“What a load of bollocks,” he scoffed.

He'd been about to ride on, praying his father had already left for the night, when he heard a noise.

It was a peculiar sound. Like two great hunks of stone scraping together. For a second, Sam thought it was his hearing and with one foot on the pedal, he went to push off when he caught sight of something.

The west facing statue was that of Jessy, Lord Ashton's second wife. The wife this was all built for. Sam wondered why not his first wife? Had he not loved her as much as he'd loved this other woman? The second one. If Lord Ashton had been anything like Sam's own father, it would make sense. Neither mind the woman who'd put up with Benjamin for over twenty years and given birth to five of his children. No, the grass was always greener.

So as Sam glowered up at the statue of Jessy, he gave it a sneer. Why did she deserve it any more than the first wife? What was so special about her? And as he glowered, eyes full of hatred, he noticed it move.

Gripping his handlebars, Sam rubbed his eyes to clear the last of the blurriness and looked back up at the statue. It was no longer looking out across the city and Morecambe bay. Its stone head had turned downwards, its blank eyes upon him.

“Fuck this,” Sam grunted, blinking again and again.

This isn't real.

It's hysteria.

This isn't real.

Yet even as he told himself this over and over again, he couldn't draw his eyes away from the statue as it peered down at him from high above. He couldn't be sure, not from this far away. It could all be his imagination –

Of course it's my fucking imagination!

But even then as he yelled at himself to leave it, forget it and go, he couldn't move. He was frozen to the spot; as frozen as that statue *should* be. But it was not. No, this statue,

which had been still for over a century was still no more as it rose to its feet, put down the rose it was holding and pointed a long white finger down at him. Sam staggered back, a shriek like a siren emitting from the statue's gaping empty mouth as the stone wings on its back curled open and flapped.

It was coming.

And it was coming for him.

One foot on his pedal, Sam kicked off from the ground just as the statue rose up into the air, the awful sound of those stone wings cracking together like thunder; those impossible wings which lifted the statue up. Then it fell into a steep free-fall, swooping toward him like a bird of prey.

Never mind the fact Sam could hardly breathe, sweat pouring down his back and face as he pedalled, his knees and calves burning from the exertion, his heart thundering in his chest like a bass drum, but all the while there was only one thought in his mind.

This can't be happening. This isn't real.

But it was real. All too real.

The statue crashed down on the footpath just metres in front of him. Sam gave a yelp of terror and swerved around it, its cold stone fingers just grazing his forearm. Another ear-splitting shriek radiated from its hollow throat. But Sam couldn't cover his ears. He daredn't let go of the handlebars as he cycled, his muscles on fire and his eyes watering.

For these weren't tears. He was Sam Robinson. He didn't cry. Not for anyone or anything. Not even for his utter fear as the statue lifted back up into the air, flapping its terrible unbelievably heavy wings, each one like a crash of thunder.

Finally, he could see the gates to the northern entrance of the park. They'd never looked so good. The streetlight beyond like a beacon to him, beckoning him to pedal faster, to move! But he could only go as fast as his damn fat legs could push. He couldn't catch his breath; sweat stung his eyes and lips, caressing down his back like a fingernail. He daredn't look behind him at the statue. He didn't need to see it to know it was close.

And so when it grabbed him by the back of his t-shirt and yanked him backwards off of his bike, he wasn't even shocked. But he was scared.

The fear seeped from his pores like sweat. He must reek of it. And this thing – whatever it was – it could smell it too. It seemed to take pleasure in it as its stone claws lifted him up from the pavement and far away from the ground. The evening air blew through his hair, pushed down from those great smacking wings, where cracks edged along the stone. At any moment, they would crumble to nothing. For this wasn't a nightmare. This wasn't a hallucination.

This was real.

And with that thought, pulse in his ears and the stench of fear and death enveloping him, Sam let out one last exhale of life.

At that same moment, the wings gave way. Its grip around Sam's heavy frame slipped and he went tumbling to the ground.

He fell with a painful smack to his shoulder and chest. Winded and still unable to catch his breath, Sam listened as the statue met the ground behind him with a crash. He couldn't wait around to find out whether it had been completely destroyed. He had to get out of there.

Crawling to his hands and knees and eventually to his feet, Sam managed to gain his balance as he pelted away from it. Another shriek echoed across the silent, shadowy park. This shriek was that of fury; it was angry.

It was fucking pissed.

Forgetting all about his bike which had been discarded just metres from the north gates, Sam ran right up the slope to the forestry. He knew this park well and knew there was a way through the fence and out onto his estate. With that thing still following him, he needed to make it as hard as possible, for with every stamp of its feet, the ground shook and the bushes quivered.

It was big. Much too big for the little gap in the fence which Sam chucked himself through, tumbling down the bank the other side and landing in the middle of the empty road, brand new houses sitting uninhabited and waiting for owners.

Sam hadn't planned for what happened next.

The hole in the fence was too small. But the fence itself turned to kindling as the stature burst through. Clambering to his feet, Sam took off, leaping up each time it made another giant step toward him, the ground rumbling from the shock. Rounding the corner of the street, he could see the gates of his house. The intercom. The lights. He would be safe if he could just get within those gates. He just knew it.

Glancing back, the statue was closing the gap between them and any minute now, it would take him.

Devour me.

Eat me whole.

Sam let out another wail of agony, exertion and terror as he reached the gates and smacked on the intercom again and again, praying his dad was home to let him in. Because if he wasn't – if he wasn't –

Then I'm dead.

“Dad!” Sam wailed, grasping the iron bars of the gate and looking up to the top. He would never be able to scale it. Not even if he had time. And he didn’t have time. He was out of time. It was over. He was –

A strong hand clamped down on his sweaty shoulder. Sam let out a yelp of shock and fear. Spinning around, expecting to come face to face with that blanked eyed statue, he saw instead his dad.

“Oh, Dad,” Sam sighed, throwing himself into his father’s arms only to feel Benjamin shoving him furiously away into the gates. Sam was once again winded. Hand over his chest, his heart pounded violently.

His father took in the sight of him. He must look a state.

“What the fuck happened to you?” Benjamin said, his black Range Rover parked up behind them, the driver’s door still hanging open.

Sam ignored his dad and peered down the empty street. The statue was nowhere to be seen.

“I – I – I,” Sam panted, unable to find the words. And would Benjamin believe him? When he’d told his dad he was being bullied at school, he’d dismissed him; been angry even.

No son of mine will be bullied. You need to stick up for yourself. Fight back.

And what had Sam done in the face of a monster? He’d run.

Like a coward.

He collapsed back against the gate and found his dad’s furious dark eyes bearing down on him.

“Where’s yer bike?”

His bike. That expensive bike he’d got for his birthday last year. The one his father had told him that if he lost or broke, that Sam wouldn’t only *not* get a new one but would receive a hiding. Sam knew what that meant. Benjamin Robinson’s hiding’s meant a broken nose. Sam touched his nose then, the broad bridge and thick stubby tip that caused the boys at his school to call him ‘pig’. He didn’t want another broken nose but he didn’t have a good enough lie. Not when his mind was still reeling with fear.

“Erm – it’s, I left it, I –.”

“You *left* it?” Benjamin bellowed, “You left it where?”

“In the park.”

“Don’t like it? Not good enough for you? Eh? Look at me!” Benjamin said, grabbing Sam by his chubby chin. “Go get it.”

“No, Dad, please!” Sam beseeched, his eyes watering again. But not with tears. Never tears.

“Get in the fucking car!” Benjamin chucked him toward the great hulking piece of metal, sending Sam against the bonnet.

He stumbled ever so slightly, twisting around to see his dad already climbing into the driver’s seat. “Please! I don’t wanna go back there!” Sam said through the open door to the passenger seat. “Please!”

“Get in the fucking car!” Benjamin roared one last time as he switched on the ignition and put it into reverse. The car launched backwards, not even waiting for Sam who chucked himself into the seat, the force of the car closing the door behind him.

They sped off down the street, turned left onto Quernmore Road and came to a screeching halt outside the northern gates of the park.

“Dad, please! Something chased me!”

“Bollocks! Look, there it is! Go get it!” Benjamin said, leaning across Sam and pushing open the door. Then he gave his son another shove.

Sam fell out onto the pavement.

“Please!” Sam wailed, nails to the inside of his wrist as he tried to stifle those burning tears, for these were tears. Tears of pure terror.

He didn’t want to ever go back in that park. For it would find him and it would finish the job. And this time, he wouldn’t be able to get away.

“Please, Dad!”

“Get the fucking bike or I’ll beat the living shit out of yer, do yer hear, boy!?” Benjamin thundered, his eyes violent and his threat genuine. Sam knew better than to call his bluff. Benjamin didn’t lie about a beating.

“Please?” he quivered one last time, so quietly his dad didn’t even hear it as he tapped his fingers angrily on the steering wheel, eyes ahead and his jaw tight.

There was no pleading with his dad. It was about what Sam would prefer. To be taken by that thing...or face his father’s fist. In those moments, somehow, Sam feared this thing less than his own father.

Turning away from the car, he started toward the gates. The large ones were closed, but the little footpath gate was still open. Body trembling, Sam staggered inside, clinging to the iron of the gate. His eyes searched frantically but it was pitch black beyond the streetlight; the beam of which illuminated just his handlebars. With a tight swallow, his stomach churning with anxiety and fear, Sam reluctantly let go of the gate and stepped into the beam of the streetlight.

It felt safe here, as if whatever had chased him couldn't reach him. But beyond the light and into the impenetrable darkness, there it lingered. It waited. It would pounce the moment the darkness touched him.

Crouching down, Sam reached a hand towards his handlebars. He missed the first couple of times, not daring to go any closer to that edge of light. On the fourth go, he grabbed it and yanked. It was heavy; heavier than he remembered. He pulled again and again until he was rolling onto his backside. With one final tug, he yanked the first tire and seat into the light. As he did, he spotted the final tire still lingering in the darkness. And upon the spooks was a hand.

White. Stone. Claws.

All at once, the statue reappeared in full, reaching into the light, its grotesque face in full view; a wide gaping mouth full of teeth and its eyes, where they had once been blank, now great yellow orbs glowering back at him as its claws scratched towards his face. Sam let out a whimper of terror, unable to manage anymore as he pulled his bike from its grip and dragged it away to the gates as it crawled towards him.

When his back met the iron gate his panic intensified. Struggling to the side, his bike hung awkwardly and heavily in his grasp. Through blurred vision Sam watched as the statue began to morph.

It knelt on its hands and knees, its hulking frame bigger than any man, mutating from the statue to that of a hairy beast, then back to the statue, only its face crooked and boiled like a witch from a fairy tale. Another shriek bellowed out of its mouth as it became scaled and slithered like a fish towards him, just wet slopping hands smacking against the concrete of the footpath as Sam fell through the open gate and out of the park.

Falling onto his back, bike in his grasp, pinning his legs to the ground, Sam peered down his body to where it hung to the gate; its crooked claws around the iron bars, its form that of a decomposing homeless man.

Just like Will had said.

Just like Erika and Emily had tried to explain.

It was real.

It was fucking real.

And so was the urine which warmed his leg as he finally let the fear consume him.

His dad made him walk back. Wheel the bike back and walk in his piss stained jeans. His father was disgusted but Sam didn't care. Nor did he care about the scalding he received upon returning to the house, having practically jogged the entire way back, glancing over his

shoulder every couple of paces, constantly aware that he was being watched. The broken nose he subsequently received didn't matter to Sam as he sat on his swivel chair, a towel around him from his shower, his wet hair hanging into his eyes as he typed on his keyboard, sniffing thickly through the toilet roll stuffed in his nostrils to stem the blood.

MSN was open and Dominic's chat sat before him as Sam typed three words.

I believe you.

It was real. And it was coming for them all.