Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick tock. The clock chimed, vibrating the walls. I sat up in bed, staring at the analog clock, *the clock struck twelve, the mouse ran down, hickory, dickory, dock.* The lyrics of the old nursery rhyme rang in my head, clouding my thoughts until it finished. I changed out of my night clothes, into a black shirt and leggings, with a soft fleece jacket as well. I set my decoy, a brown haired, life sized head from when I was little and used to practice braiding on it, and I put a pillow or two under the sheets. Grabbing my bag from my nightstand and a flashlight I closed the door slowly and crept through the halls, careful not to step on any stairs that creaked and moaned.

It was midnight on Halloween, and all trick or treaters had receded to their homes, the streets were vacant, and I half expected a tumble-weed to roll across the deserted roads. Lights flickered on and off, while decorations loomed over yards, casting shadows across the pavement. I ran through the streets desperate to make my way to the woods before anyone saw me sneaking away to the forest of mysteries and secrets. I came to the edge of the twisted trees, hesitating. *This is exactly what we're not supposed to do, this is how bad things happen,* a voice whispered in my ear, only no one was there, only my thoughts were audible.

But as I stepped into the woods, the trees whispered and the wind howled along, singing together. "*Hickory, dickory, dock, the mouse ran up the clock, the clock struck one!, the mouse ran from, hickory dickory, dock.*" They sang softly, like hands encircled around you ready to snatch you up in three....two....one....

SNAP! Something else was here, scrambling around me, shadows danced through the trees and the forest kept singing, "*The clock struck three, a ghost you'll be, hickory, dickory, dock.*" They chanted now, lyrics that no one ever used. My lungs burned as I sprinted away, branches snatching at my clothes, tearing me back to the creature that followed me in my shadow. "*The clock struck four, you run no more! Hickory, dickory dock!*" The forest screamed, and I covered my ears, trying to not give in to the deceptive noise. "*...struck six, nothing will fix, hickory, dickory, dock!!*"

More snaps and cracks followed me through the trees, and my legs burned like fire, but I kept going. "*The clock struck ten, away you've been....*"

"No! The clock is broken! It's gone!" I screamed, trying to make the song quit, but only louder they sang.

"THE CLOCK STRUCK TWELVE! ALL BY YOURSELVES, HICKORY, DICKORY, DOCK!"

"Stop!" I screeched, stopping in my tracks, not intentionally making my words match with the chanting, and surprisingly, when I uncovered my ears no sound came through. The moon merely shined through the clouds on an old shack with boards falling off. "It's here, I'm here."

I unpacked my bag, pulling out a lighter and a small dry twig. I clicked my lighter, again and again, waiting for the flame to light. A flicker of fire illuminated, but soon faded, as if blown out like a candle. Nothing. "It's ok, whoever you are, it needs to go." I looked at the shack, "Wait I almost forgot!" I snatched a bundle of sage from my backpack and put it on the doorstep of the cabin, "I promise I won't set a forest fire, you'll help contain it. This cabin has been here too long, and we can't have evil spirits invading the town, again."

A few whispers responded, and I once again lit the lighter, touching the twig with the flame before tossing it to the sage, and another in the cabin. "There will be no tormenting anymore," I whispered, turning my back to the shack.

"Little girl, what is your name, we must know who has brought us to our fate...." A choir of demons sang.

"My name? Nobody."

"Nobody, Nobody, has harmed us, Nobody, Nobody, has burned us to mere dust."

I smirked, "That's right," I said but this time more voices joined me. I whipped around, glowing figures surrounding me, all smiling proudly. I had done it, I had rid the town of harm from the other side, and had a little help. 'Thank you' I mouthed to them all, and we watched the shack burn to the ground. "My work is done here, send me a sign if you need help." I told the spirits, and as I got home a note read on my door, 'a sign' and I returned to the forest. But this time no

voices sang to me, and no glowing figures stood by my side. I remembered the last verse the trees had sung, '*The clock struck twelve, all by yourselves*' and I had a tugging urge to finish it. And so I sang in the twisted woods, "The clock struck twelve! All by yourselves! And never see thereafter!" I finished, but the trees remained silent. "The end?" and the world went dark.

The True End.....for now.