



“This is creepy, Erin.” My friend Marty grabbed my sleeve.

“Let go!” I whispered. “You’re hurting me!”

Marty didn’t seem to hear. He stared straight ahead into the darkness, gripping my arm.

“Marty, please,” I whispered. I shook my arm free. I was scared, too. But I didn’t want to admit it.

It was darker than the darkest night. I squinted hard, trying to see. And then a gray light glowed dimly in front of us.

Marty ducked low. Even in the foggy light, I could see the fear in his eyes.

He grabbed my arm again. His mouth dropped open. I could hear him breathing hard and fast.

Even though I was frightened, a smile crossed my face. I *liked* seeing Marty scared.

I really enjoyed it.

I know, I know. That’s terrible. I admit it.

Erin Wright is a bad person. What kind of a friend am I?

But Marty always brags that he is braver than me. And he is usually right. He usually *is* the brave one, and I'm the wimp.

But not today.

That's why seeing Marty gasp in fright and grab my arm made me smile.

The gray light ahead of us slowly grew brighter. I heard crunching sounds on both sides of us. Close behind me, someone coughed. But Marty and I didn't turn around. We kept our eyes straight ahead.

Waiting. Watching. . . .

As I squinted into the gray light, a fence came into view. A long wooden fence, its paint faded and peeling. A hand-lettered sign appeared on the fence: DANGER. KEEP OUT. THIS MEANS YOU.

Marty and I both gasped when we heard the scraping sounds. Soft at first. Then louder. Like giant claws scraping against the other side of the fence.

I tried to swallow, but my mouth suddenly felt dry. I had the urge to run. Just turn and run as fast as I could.

But I couldn't leave Marty there all alone. And besides, if I ran away now, he would never let me forget it. He'd tease me about it forever.

So I stayed beside him, listening as the scraping, clawing sounds turned into banging. Loud crashes.

Was someone trying to break through the fence?

We moved quickly along the fence. Faster, faster — until the tall, peeling fence pickets became a gray blur.

But the sound followed us. Heavy footsteps on the other side of the fence.

We stared straight ahead. We were on an empty street. A familiar street.

Yes, we had been here before.

The pavement was puddled with rainwater. The puddles glowed in the pale light from the streetlamps.

I took a deep breath. Marty gripped my arm harder. Our mouths gaped open.

To our horror, the fence began to shake. The whole street shook. The rain puddles splashed against the curb.

The footsteps thundered closer.

“Marty!” I gasped in a choked whisper.

Before I could say another word, the fence crumbled to the ground, and the monster came bursting out.

It had a head like a wolf — snapping jaws of gleaming white teeth — and a body like a giant crab. It swung four huge claws in front of it,

clicking them at us as its snout pulled open in a throaty growl.

“NOOOOOOO!” Marty and I both let out howls of terror.

We jumped to our feet.

But there was nowhere to run.