

Chapter 2

1961

Billy Mumper and I used to play on and around the old hill that was situated about a half mile from the old farmhouse. The hill was out in a weed-covered field not far from the old woods, which always scared me because it seemed so dark inside with the thick cedar trees that dominated the area and seemed to suck all the light into their own black hole.

The top of the hill ended abruptly with a drop off. If you didn't know it was there you'd go straight off the hill and find yourself in some high weeds with scraps of wood and a few rocks that lay nestled among the ruins of a long ago

torn down building. You probably wouldn't bust yourself up too badly but then if you let that happen maybe you had no business on our hill.

Any kid that played here knew it dropped off. And since Billy and I were pretty much it in this new, yet sparsely populated housing development, we claimed the hill for ourselves - as long as we were the "big kids" as it were in those times.

To the left of the hill as one faced it, was a path that led down to a small cluster of trees. In that cluster of trees Billy and I built our fort. It was built out of scraps of wood we would find near where some of the new houses were being built. I suppose one day this would all be gone, replaced with houses and Lord know what else, but until then, Billy and I claimed it for ourselves.

I'm being rude. My name is Maxwell Endicott. Those that don't want to feel pain call me Max. Everyone else takes their chances. Billy and I are both ten years old and have been best buddies for as long as I can remember which even for a ten year old can still seem like a long time.

Our families are two of the five families that live in the Calendar Village Development where houses are going up faster than heck and the streets, so I heard, will be named

for months of the year. Calendar was named for the land developer and chief financier, Harold J. Calendar. Progress was slowly invading the area and taking away our stomping grounds.

Anyhow, Billy and I would hide in our fort looking at old Playboy magazines that he would lift from his father's collection. Until then the best we could do were the old National Geographic magazines with all those naked native women with their long, saggy boobs.

But Playboy had stuff in it that ten-year old boys shouldn't be seeing. Miss July from last month's issue was really luscious and we could be sure that she'd never show up in one of those old National Geographic magazines.

I didn't think someone that pretty could have a rack on her like that but she did. Oh the things that little boys had to look forward to as they got older. But could we handle it? Well, only time would tell the answer to that question.

When Billy and I weren't getting off on Miss July or whoever in our fort, we would roll our empty fifty-gallon drums up the hill, hold them steady as we quickly climbed inside then let it roll down the hill. What a wild ride. It was great. In fact summer vacation was great and we

still had another month before we had to face the drudgery of going back to school.

One day Billy and I decided to wander over to the old farmhouse to check it out. We'd been over there before but weren't too sure about going inside. We thought it was haunted. But as old farmhouses go, it was in pretty good shape. I imagine it wasn't too terribly long ago that someone actually lived in it.

We walked through the weeds that littered the open field and climbed over the old wood plank fence and walked through more dry, high weeds into the back yard. Assorted insects would scatter as we walked, disturbing their events of the day, whatever it is that insects do. They always managed to fly around our faces and we swung our hands back and forth trying to shoo them away.

As we approached the house, to our surprise, two girls came walking around the far side and stopped when they saw us. They must have been about fourteen or fifteen years old because I could see they were developing racks of their own. I looked at Billy and he looked at me.

"Hey you girls, whatcha doing here?" I asked looking them over from head to toe.

Both girls smiled and one replied with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, "Just hanging out. What about you?"

"Same thing" I replied.

I could see the two girls look at each other and kind of giggle and smile then look back at us.

"I'll bet you we can lose you two boys in that old house." One of the girls said stepping a tad closer to where we stood. She seemed to be, in her own teasing way, trying to seduce us knowing full well, we wouldn't get anything.

I looked at Billy then at the two girls and said, "Bet you can't."

Billy and I were sure hoping that we might get a little action from these two girls even if deep down inside we would have no clue how to handle that action. But little boys do like to fantasize, don't they.

The one that did the talking had shoulder length blonde hair, cut off jeans and a pale blue polo shirt with a small rose embroidered over the left breast that she filled out rather nicely. The other one wore her hair shorter, with long blue jeans and a button down, thin striped shirt, tied at the navel. They both looked real fine. Not quite like

Miss July, but fine nonetheless and they certainly looked like they could one day be a couple of Miss July's.

The two turned and started running towards the back porch of the house when I yelled for them to wait a minute. They stopped and turned around.

"What if you don't lose us in that house? You made a bet. What do we get?"

The one with the button down shirt smiled and, unbuttoning the top two buttons of her shirt replied with a little giggle, "Use your imagination."

Billy and I looked at each other, wide-eyed and smiled. Then Billy asked, "What happens if you do lose us?" The girl with the button down blouse put her lips together, cocked her head, and replied, "Your loss, little boy."

"Little boy" I exclaimed. "When we win this bet you'll see just how little we aren't." Now I wasn't sure what I really meant by that statement but I sure as heck wasn't going to take that from some girl, I didn't care how much older than me she was.

I had no idea what we would do if we won the bet, but the anticipation of venturing beyond the territory of what Miss July offered was overtaking our sense of reality; like

we'd get anywhere with them anyhow. But at that moment it was the best we had going.

The two girls looked at each other and took off through the back door. They led us through the large kitchen, into the dining room and up a long flight of stairs and ran into an upstairs room. We followed them into the room and looked around but couldn't see them.

There were some steps leading up to what looked like an attic. Billy and I ran towards the stairs. The girls rushed us from the stairs, knocking us down, and then fled out the door and down the hall. Billy and I got up and made a beeline for the door. Just as we got into the hall, we saw the girls dart into another room. We followed them into the room and found them both standing in front of the window.

"Gotcha", I said.

"I guess you do. But I suppose we could jump" said the polo shirt girl glancing briefly over her left shoulder at the window.

Then she looked back at us then at her friend before they started walking slowly toward us. Billy and I were getting real excited. They stood about eighteen inches in front of us and smiled then before we knew what hit us, they

both landed a leg between our legs causing Billy and I to double over in pain. The two girls flew out the door and ran for the stairs laughing all the way.

Billy and I sucked it up and went after them as fast as we could, trying to ignore the sudden discomfort south of our waists. The girls reached the bottom of the stairs, flew through the kitchen and out the back door. Billy and I stayed on their tails but by the time we got off the porch, the two girls had disappeared. Billy and I stopped and both grabbed our crotches. Fortunately they weren't direct hits but direct enough to still hurt.

So that day we got some action all right. It just wasn't what we were counting on.

"Do you know who those two girls were?" Billy asked still rubbing the ache between his legs.

"No I don't but if I ever see them again..." I trailed off still bent over with my hands on my knees trying to grimace the pain below my waist away.

"Yeah, then maybe they'd kick your nuts up to your head." Billy laughed.

After our discomfort subsided we turned toward the house to leave but stopped almost forgetting what we had come here to do in the first place - explore.

We both walked up the steps and onto the back porch. Centered on the porch was the back door that led into the big open kitchen. There were two windows to either side of the door. The glass on two of them was broken. I looked at Billy and asked, "How long do figure it's been since anyone lived here?"

"A long time, I guess." He replied, his eyes taking everything in.

We walked through the already opened kitchen door and stood just inside and took in the room. There was an old, dirty kitchen table to our left with three chairs around it. A fourth chair lay on its side with two broken legs. What really grabbed our attention was the big hearth oven that was built into the wall. Who ever toiled in this kitchen must have done a lot of heavy duty cooking.

The oven was encased in stone from the floor to the ceiling tapering in towards the chimney. To the right of the oven was a door in the floor that must have led to the basement which neither of us, despite our curiosity, had any intentions of descending into.

We walked to the door, took hold of the long handle and lifted it up. It wasn't as heavy as one might think and we were able to lift it and prop it against the wall. We

looked down into the darkness. There were stairs leading into the deep, dark recesses below. We couldn't see the bottom.

"Looks like a dungeon or something." Billy said.

"Yeah. I wonder what's down there." I replied.

"Well you just go on down there and find out and if you don't come back, then I'll know it isn't anything I want to know."

I scanned the sidewalls for a light switch and found none. I looked around and found a rock under the right side broken kitchen window. It was probably used to break the window in the first place.

I walked over, picked it up and came back to the opening in the floor. I looked at Billy and after dropping the rock started counting one one thousand, two one thousand until it hit bottom. The only problem was we never heard it hit, at least I don't think we heard it hit. I quit counting at ten one thousand. We looked at each other and raised our eyes.

"Did you hear it hit bottom?" I said to Billy.

Billy shook his head, eyes wide, and replied, "No, but maybe it did and we just didn't hear it."

I decided to try it again. I looked around and found another rock. I picked it up, then we lay on our stomachs with our heads over the hole so maybe we could hear better. I dropped the rock again. We listened. I was counting to myself. We heard a faint thud as the rock hit bottom after what seemed like a descent that lasted forever.

"Deep" Billy said looking over at me as we began to crawl away from the hole and stand up. We got to either side of the door as it leaned against the wall and pushed it shut on the opening. We decided it was best to never open that door again.

We walked towards the kitchen table and through another doorway that led into what we believed was a dining area or living room of some kind. We didn't know how old this house was but we could see scattered wall outlets so at least at some time there was electricity.

The big room was pretty well empty of furniture. Some torn and tattered curtains hung from the large front windows that looked to the front of the house. Between the windows was a large oak door. The hardwood floors creaked mournfully as we walked.

"We should come back to this place when it's dark"
Suggested Billy.

I stopped and gave him a raised eyebrow look.

"You go right ahead. This place is creepy enough in the daylight let alone at night." I said.

"I was just kidding." Billy said.

Although it was funny how un-creepy the place was while we were chasing those girls all through it. I suppose we had other things on our minds and didn't really notice our surroundings.

The stairway we chased the two girls on spiraled up to the second floor. At the top of the steps and to the left at the end of the hall were two bedrooms whose windows looked out the side of the house. Along the front were two more bedrooms that overlooked the front of the house through dormers. To the right at the end of the hall were a closet and the bathroom. To the right of the bathroom was a door leading up some stairs to the attic. There was no pull down ceiling door to the attic in this house.

The house was starting to give me the creeps mostly because of that hole in the floor back in the kitchen. I had visions of Godzilla or some other horrible monster crashing up through the floor, grabbing Billy and I and taking us into the void that lie deep within the boughs of

the house. I didn't like it. I suggested to Billy that we leave and he agreed.

We walked outside to the back porch and noticed an old barn about two hundred feet off to our left. It was painted white over top long wood planks with double doors on the front. It wasn't a normal sized barn and we figured it had a different purpose over the years other than housing horses in stalls or hogs in hog pens or whatever else people used barns for. Not having any experience with farm life, I could only imagine based on what I would see on Bonanza and other western television shows of the day.

Off to our right we could see a large pond. We decided to go over and have a look. The thing was huge probably about one hundred by two hundred feet.

"How deep do you figure that thing is?" Billy asked.

I thought for a moment and replied, "Maybe about as deep as that hole in the floor." I replied as I glanced over my shoulder towards the house with the kitchen harboring the hole in the floor that could very well have been the gateway to Hell.

I picked up a flat rock and skipped it across the surface thinking that there might be some really good fishing here. But then, maybe Godzilla or whatever I

imagined living in the hole in the floor might grab my line and pull me in. This time Billy suggested we go back to our hill where things made sense. So we turned and headed back to the hill, the fort and Miss July.

Copyright © 2011 by Stephen Crider