

## Spooky Story Competition

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It was a chilling, moonless night in the eerie heart of October, a young girl named Hayami found herself walking home after a failed sleepover at midnight. She remembered the extremely harsh words of her friend's mother just before Hayami was forced out of the house. The wind howled. Then it was deadly silent. Hayami grunts occasionally under the weight of her belongings. She stared up at the dark starry sky.

The streets lay in darkness, shrouded by a thick fog that seemed to claw at her, as if it had a life of its own. The grass danced around under the influence of the wind, Hayami eventually got tired of walking and reached into her pocket to grab her phone.

She called her father; he answered the phone. "Hello?", she said but there was no response before the line went dead. She then called her mother. This time it didn't even ring. Her mother's phone must be off, she sighed and continued walking along the residential street which appeared devoid of life.

A taxi suddenly drove past her causing her to have an epiphany. She would summon an Uber to whisk her away from the desolation. She opened the Uber App and booked a car. Within minutes, a car arrived, its headlights piercing through the inky blackness like twin beams of hope.

She climbed into the car and gladly sat in the front beside the driver for company. Upon her eyes adjusted to the dimly lit interior, Hayami noticed the car looked strange. The rear and side windows were blacked out to such a degree, no one could see in or out. The interior of the car was anything but ordinary. It was as if the very essence of her nightmares had taken form within those leather seats. The air inside was thick and musty, like the stale breath of an ancient tomb.

As the car was still stationary, Hayami contemplated on getting out when... Click. All the doors abruptly locked. She glared intensely at the figure in the driver's seat. However, the driver, did not even glance back and instead, looked straight ahead into the abyss.

The driver, a woman whose features were obscured by a mask and dark glasses, sent Hayami's heart into a frenzied drumbeat. Her eyes, or whatever lay behind those shades, seemed to gleam with a sinister malevolence. She had the aura of a phantom, a wraith of the night.

The woman started to manoeuvre the car despite the fact that Hayami hadn't said a word. Hayami was suddenly flung against her seat, panic welled up inside her heart like a raging storm but she couldn't escape. She was trapped in a surreal nightmare, the world outside her window a blur of dark shapes and distorted streetlights. Hayami was too shocked to do anything. She was a rabbit caught in headlights.

Her heart sank further as she received a notification on her phone. It read "Your Uber has just arrived". A gnawing dread settled deep within her as she realized the horrific truth: she

was trapped in this nightmarish contraption with a driver whose humanity was in question. Before she could do anything, a shadowy figure emerged from the darkness in the back seat. A sharp, icy pain seared through Hayami's neck and her eyes felt heavy and teary. She had been injected by something.

Just as her eyes started to close, Hayami got a glimpse of the driver's face as she removed her mask. The woman's face was a grotesque mask of horror—a Glasgow smile that seemed to stretch from ear to ear etched in blood-red. Her eyes, once concealed by those dark glasses, were now hollow and empty, black beads devoid of humanity. Just then, Hayami blacked out...