

The Woman in Flames by Emily Kingston

October thirtieth, six a.m. Paula MacDonald crawled out of bed miserably. School didn't start until eight o'clock but infrequent thoughts had kept her awake for five hours. Paula loathes Halloween, therefore she shows absolutely no affection towards October. All of her life she had let her hatred of October thirty first out during the entire month. According to her, November first was the most joyous day of the year. What if, just once, Halloween was postponed or cancelled! Even better, forbidden! She replayed in her head all night. Such thoughts! Everyone in Rocky Springs literally worships it.

Rocky Springs was located in a part of Canada where nobody ever visited. It was a peaceful place, where the sun shone so gloriously and gracefully, and the fragrance of the world's most savory fruits would hover just below your nose. The mere scenery would entrance anyone. However, this October, the beauty had been sucked away by barreling gray clouds and unpredictable downpours. Rocky Springs had seen better seasons.

"Breakfast!" hollered Paula's father.

"Stop shouting!" interrupted Paula. "Just eat your breakfast already."

"Not one of your days, is it sweetheart?" soothed her father'.

"When has the thirtieth of October been my day?" she replied.

"Brrrrring." The school bell rang rapidly as Paula dragged herself into homeroom. She slouched into her seat and glared out the window on her left. Rain pounded noisily against the glass, and wind thrashed the trees to one side forcefully. Everything was blurred and deformed through the window, due to the rain. Suddenly, a wispy figure appeared out of thin air, centered in the middle of the window frame. It was a woman in torn and ragged clothes, with a face covered in horror, pain and ashes. Her feet were bare, and flames glared angrily from her sparse hair. The most peculiar thing was that the woman seemed perfectly

dry, and not at all blurred from the rain. Taken over by fear, Paula let out an ear -piercing scream.

On October thirty first, Paula awoke in her own bed. She burst into tears, confused and terrified.

“Oh honey, it’s okay,” cooed Paula’s mother as she rushed into the room. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“I think I have!” sobbed Paula.

After a quick explanation of what she saw at school, Paula jumped out of bed, threw on clean clothes and ran out the door, her long braided hair swinging behind her.

Paula entered the Rocky Springs library. She settled down into a comfy chair and thought hard about recent events. Why did she see a ghost?

Paula had returned home to get some rest. As she lay in her bed, her brother Mike rapped on her door.

“Come in!” she hollered.

“Hi, Paula”, piped Mike. “Did you really see a ghost?! I know Mom and Dad think it’s a bunch of phony baloney, but I believe you. “

“Thanks Mike, let’s talk later. Right now I need some sleep.”

Hours later, Paula was awoken by and extremely loud beeping noise. It was the fire alarm! Horrified, Paula sat straight up in her bed. The thick smoke almost choked her to death. Carefully, she touched the door with the back of her hand.

“Ahhhh!” she hollered. The door was on fire! Suddenly, it burst into flames.

Paula needed an escape, and fast! She lived on the top floor of a three-storey building, and she could die if she leapt out of her window. She almost didn’t notice the ghostly woman appear once again. Paula was petrified and she couldn’t say a word.

“Jump”, said a panicked voice. It seemed to come from the ghost. “Jump. Hold my hand.”

Paula caught herself peering into her mirror. Her hair was on fire! She gave the ghost and the mirror a double take. Paula looked exactly like the ghost! Meanwhile, the flames were getting closer.

She had no choice. Paula took the woman’s dead cold hand, opened up the window wide and jumped.

Paula was in the hospital when she awoke. Scars and burns covered her arms, and her hair was about five inches long and very rough. Her mum, dad and brother were all sitting on the edge of her bed, anxious for her to awake.

“Paula! Oh, are you okay?” they all cried, out of sync.

“I’m fine”, Paula panted as the doctor came in.

After the doctor examined her, she asked for a moment alone. Soon after they left, the woman on fire appeared.

“Thank you”, whispered Paula. “You saved my life. How can I ever repay you?”

“Tell nobody of me. Keep this a secret”, replied the woman. Then out of thin air, she vanished. Paula sighed.

What beauty does November first bring? Well, in Paula’s opinion, all the beauty that the world can handle.