

The Classroom

When at first he stumbled across the old wooden building in the clearing, it appeared as though no one had been near it in years. He remembered his father telling him that it had once been a school, a long time ago. Mark couldn't imagine walking in there every day for his lessons, and he wondered what it might have once looked like, newly built.



On this day though, many years later, moss hugged the rusted iron roof, while overhanging branches from a nearby pine tree formed a protective barrier between the shed and the rest of the forest. Latticed window frames made the building look more like a jail than a classroom. The few remaining shards of glass still attached to the frames were layered in grime and covered in cobwebs. The wooden walls, stripped back to the bare boards after years of exposure to the elements, still stood solidly as though defying Mother Nature to do her worst.

The grass in front of the building, still wet with morning dew, swished around Mark's ankles as he walked towards the door. A nearby blackbird was a warning system, squawking at him to go no further. The door, which had been blown partially inwards at some point, moaned when the light breeze caught it in its grasp. As he approached the door, the dark shadow of a towering tree loomed over Mark.

Unlike the rest of the building, the door had managed to cling to its paint, a faded blue that must have been bold and striking when it had been freshly applied many decades ago. The bolt to secure the door shut was long gone, likely to be rusted and concealed somewhere underfoot.

Despite the warmth of the day, Mark felt a cool tingle on the back of his neck. A sense of fear ran through his nerves like the chill of an icy wind. He reached forward and grasped the door handle, paint chips peeling into his palm as he gently pulled it open.

