

Honorable Mention, Grades 5-6

“The Handy Surprise”
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“Cat!” cried Alyssa Malchek.

“Play again?” asked her best friend Isabella Solman.

“Once more, but if I win then we play a different game. I’m getting tired of Tic-Tac-Toe.”

“Me too,” agreed Isabella.

“Why don’t we,” Alyssa looked around the tent they were going to be sleeping in, “watch a DVD?”

“Sure,” answered Isabella. “Let’s watch a scary one.”

“Okay, how about this one?” asked Alyssa. Alyssa pointed to a movie she had brought. It had a huge house on the cover and all around the house were bats and ghosts. Alyssa quickly inserted the movie in Isabella’s mom’s portable DVD player.

After skipping through all of the previews, Isabella and Alyssa snuggled into their fleece sleeping bags. Before they knew it the movie was over.

“Maybe we should get to bed. It’s almost midnight,” said Alyssa as she yawned.

“All right.”

The girls suddenly heard a gust of flapping noises and then many splashing sounds.

“Did you hear that?” asked Isabella.

“Yeah! Let’s go look!”

The girls put on their shoes and grabbed their flashlights. They unzipped the tent door and there in front of them were almost twenty ducks in their pond! The girls shined their flashlights on the pond and the ducks quickly swam into the cattails.

“Let’s go back to bed,” said Alyssa, tiredly.

“Yeah, I’m exhausted,” agreed Isabella. Alyssa was sound asleep in no time, but Isabella wasn’t sure about falling asleep in a tent next to the pond, even though her house was just

a few yards away. Isabella knew she would not be able to fall asleep just lying there, so she grabbed her lantern and her favorite mystery book and read.

Soon, Isabella was sleeping lightly. Suddenly...zzzhhh...Isabella woke up instantly. She had heard a noise, a strange, peculiar noise. "If I hear it again I will wake Alyssa up," she thought. Zzzhhh... There it was again! Isabella shook Alyssa and told her how she couldn't sleep. Alyssa gave a tired yawn and got up. She and Isabella, once again, got their flashlights and put on their shoes and ventured out of the tent.

They shined their flashlights around. "I don't see anything," said Alyssa.

"Sorry. It was probably just my imagination," admitted Isabella, red-faced. "Let's go."

Alyssa shined her flashlight once more and was about to go when she saw something strange. Alyssa grabbed Isabella's silk pajamas and pointed to what she saw.

Both girls' eyes widened with horror. They opened their mouths to scream but nothing came out. They were speechless. In the water was something pointy and claw-like. It looked like a beat up, bloody hand!

Once Alyssa had gotten her voice back after the shock she said shakily, "Let's not scream. But did you see it move?"

"You saw it too? I thought it was just me," Isabella replied.

"Should we get it out?" asked Alyssa. "What if there is a whole body in there?"

"And who knows what crawls in that water at night," protested Isabella.

"I'm with you," agreed Alyssa. "Let's come back when it's light out."

After a rather sleepless night on the floor in Alyssa's living room, the girls woke up, got dressed and enjoyed mounds of pancakes, eggs, bacon and sausage. Alyssa's parents had also been invited to the brunch.

Alyssa nudged Isabella, "Don't tell them about the ducks and especially the hand."

"Trust me," Isabella nodded.

"Hi everyone!" said Isabella and Alyssa. They were both trying hard not to think about the hand.

"Oh, hi girls!" said Mrs. Malchek, cheerfully.

"This is some breakfast!" exclaimed Mr. Solman as he looked at the delicious food. "So how was your camping experience?"

“Oh, it was quite interesting,” Alyssa said.

“Very,” added Isabella.

Soon brunch was over and the two went out to pack up their camping things.

“Let's go watch it again tonight,” said Isabella

“I thought you didn't want to go camping again,” said Alyssa.

“Who said anything about camping?” Isabella smiled. “Let's go to my house and I'll show you what I mean.”

Isabella and Alyssa sat down at the kitchen table. “Ok,” started Isabella, “I figured that we could sleep at my house and then around one o'clock in the morning we can go out there and look for it. If we see it, I figure we can try to lasso the pointy part.”

“I like it,” said Alyssa, smiling. “I like it.”

Later that day Alyssa called Isabella.

“Hello?” asked Alyssa.

“Hi, Alyssa,” said Isabella.

“I was wondering if you wanted to go outside, and see if we can see it in the daylight,” said Alyssa.

“Sure, I'll be out in a second. Oh, and did you forget that Halloween is in two days?” asked Isabella.

“Completely!” exclaimed Alyssa. “Maybe we can be something together,” suggested Alyssa.

When the two met at the pond between their houses, they looked for the hand. “I don't see it,” said Isabella, “Do you?”

“No,” said Alyssa. “Let's just go to my house, it's almost the time you were supposed to come over.”

“Okay, I'll meet you there,” said Isabella. “I need to tell my mom and get my sleeping bag and stuff.”

Alyssa met Isabella at the door and they went in the living room to set up. “You can put your things in the den if you want. I thought we could watch movies until one in the morning and then go outside.”

“Sounds great,” concluded Isabella.

When it was about midnight, the girls got all the things they needed: rope, tape, flashlights, a shovel and a garbage bag. At exactly one o’clock, the girls went to the pond, snapped on their flashlights, and looked around. No sight of the hand until...the water seemed to be going down. “Is the water going down or is the hand moving up?” pondered Alyssa nervously.

“Let’s go down on the side of the pond,” whispered Isabella.

Isabella tied the rope into a noose. “I’m going to throw it out, get the shovel ready,” directed Isabella. Isabella had a perfect throw. She tightened the rope and tried to lift the hand up. “It’s heavy, you try,” Isabella said. Alyssa pulled up as hard as she could.

“Isabella! It’s coming up!” Alyssa yelled. The hand flew in the air onto Alyssa’s yard. Quickly, Isabella detected the hand, grabbed it with the shove, and threw it in the garbage bag. The girls grabbed all their things and went to Isabella’s house and into the kitchen. Isabella dropped everything on the floor and sat at the kitchen table.

“I know this is going to be gross, but let’s look at it,” Alyssa said.

She opened the garbage bag, and revealed the hand. “It’s...” started Isabella.

The two girls burst into laughter. “We thought,” Alyssa said, gulping air, “It was real!”

In the bag was a Halloween ‘candy-grabbing hand’! The girls told their parents and their parents seemed to think it was the funniest thing in the world!

“Happy Halloween!” they said.