

Hidden

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My name is Andrew Owens, and I go to John Woods Boys Academy, a school that would intimidate any castle in its presence. It's tan bricked, nine floors and screams twelfth century. This, my first year at the school, may be my last. I've never been popular in school; in fact, I'm the one other students pick on. I have this problem (I guess you could call it a curse). Whenever someone dares me to do something, I have to do it. A force pushes me toward the objective of the darer's desire. Like when passing a candy shop and all the treats are there on display—truffles, snowballs, taffy, lollipops, licorice, gumdrops, you just have to go in and get a closer look. All those treats are dancing around in your thoughts, calling to you. The force is like that, but ten times stronger. And I love every minute of it. To have someone single *me* out is my dream come true.

"Hey! You Andrew Owens?" A deep voice grumbled from the ninth grade side of the cafeteria. In mid chew I turned to see a tall, tan-skinned boy, brown hair with hints of gold. *Kyle Duncan* was *talking to me*, a lowly seventh grader. He was intimidating to any guy in the same room who would dare think he could look better.

"You Andrew Owens?" He growled again as he approached where I sat, my two best friends at my side.

Joe Jones is on my right. He and I have known each other since we were in diapers. He always treats everyone the same.

"Yeah, he's Andrew Owens. Why ya asking?" Kyle Duncan was no exception.

"Was I talking to you?" Kyle spit at Joe. He turned back to me. "Is it true you licked the third floor toilet?" He said, as if *I* was *his* hero. This gave me enough courage to speak.

"Yeah, that was me."

"So you'll do *anything* someone dares you to do?"

"Yeah." I said sheepishly, sounds like he has a new dare for me. Bring it on.

"I double-dog-dare you to go to the extremity room tonight, after midnight." My stomach dropped. To be honest I was excited by this, but something about the room made me queasy. I'd always hoped I could find it for myself, but I never had a reason to.

I smiled, "I accept." I couldn't believe that I am going to the room of no return, TONIGHT. But, what if the rumors are true?

Before I get ahead of myself, I should probably clue you in on the extremity room. Seventy-two years ago, a seventh grader stumbled into the basement of the school. It was the first day of school and some upperclassmen stole his map. He got lost in this maze of a school. Rumor has it that when he finally made it out he kept talking about a door in the very bowels of the school. A golden light shone from the edges. But the light was something more. Like a voice; warm as milk and sweet as honey, drawing him in (at least that is what I've heard). The boy said that he was going to go back down there after dark to find out what was behind the door.

The next morning the boy was gone. Some say the room swallowed him; others say Headmistress found him snooping around (we all know that means expulsion). The truth is no one knows what happened to him, nor do they want to know.

"Andrew! I can't believe you agreed to that," said Harry Conway, my other best friend, the first to ever dare me, running into the bathroom where my lunch was making its second appearance. Fear and school lunch don't make a good combination.

"Come on Harry, you know Andrew could never turn down a dare as juicy as that." Joe marveled.

"I know, but I just thought this was one dare Andrew wouldn't do. This could be life threatening, Andrew. You know what happened to the last kid." I flushed the toilet and made my way to the sink to wash off the sludge coating my lips.

"I know, but I've always wanted to find it, and now I have an excuse."

"How could you want to go down there?"

"Well, think about it, Harry. The room is a legend. If *you* could find out what really happened, wouldn't you jump at the chance?" Joe said to Harry urging him to see the light.

"Sure, I'd want to know what really happened, but not if I was going to get expelled or disappear," Harry's face

showed the terror we heard in his words.

"I'd take either one, 'cause if I do find out the truth, who would really want to know? The truth isn't nearly as exciting as the legend," I said hoping that this new thought would calm my nerves on the subject.

We made our way out of the bathroom and toward class. The rest of the day was a blur. I wasn't able to think of anything but that room.

That night, I sat up in bed writing down everything that happened during the day. If I don't come back, I'd like people to know where I went. I could be the next legend in the extremity room story. The old grandfather clock chimed midnight, filling the common room with sounds weaving its way up to the bedroom. The ominous sound made my whole body shiver. It was time.

I glanced to the beds on my right, Harry and Joe were asleep. They tried to get me to let them come with me, but I knew if something bad happened I didn't want them to get hurt. As I stood, I let my mind prepare for the journey ahead. I made my way down to the commons, turning to look at the room. I tore my eyes away and made my way down to the basement.

I walked slowly down the old hallway. The wallpaper looked like it had torn at itself until it crumbled. A mouse scurried passed my foot. With every step, a squeak came from the floor boards, hollering a warning. Getting closer to the door, my heart started to kick the inside of my chest with my hands shaking in tune. The door was in front of me and all I could do was stare. I grabbed the crusted gold knob and began to turn, taking a deep breath. Would it be something amazing or something devastating? A pause. The door opened. My jaw dropped.

The light wasn't just gold but every color imaginable and more. Sky high bookshelves filled each of the walls. Writing on the spine of the books created the colors taking over the room. The room was filled with desires. People I've always wanted to meet. Foods that made my tongue ache for more. Everything was within reach; it could all be mine. Think of what I could become with all these hopes. A smile crept to my face. I carefully stepped in, making sure it wasn't a dream that was going to cause a pit of fire to open and swallow me whole. Nothing happened. Slowly making my way to the nearest book, I saw something move out of the corner of my eye. I wasn't alone. A boy about my age sat on the wooden floor reading one of the shimmering books. He didn't look up the whole time I watched him. He didn't seem to know I was here. Without another thought, I turned back to the door. A lady with hot-wax skin smiled at me; I know her as Headmistress. Semi-sweetness poured into my veins as I watch her close the door. The lock on the door started to turn and ended my journey.