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## CUZ'S CORNER

### Barlow's Waterloo

"Barlow" Whittington hadn't always lived in our town and community. He had moved to Andalusia from the biggest town in Alabama-Birmingham. He was a couple of years older than the rest of us and a right smart bigger than we were, and he didn't have the name of "Barlow" when he first got to out town. We hung that on him because of the big Barlow pocketknife he always had in his pocket and which he kept razor sharp.

Barlow was the very bravest boy that any of us had ever heard of. He just wasn't scared of man nor beast. No alley was too dark for him to walk right down the middle of, no bully was too tough for him to tackle, well, according to him, there wasn't any such word as fear in his vocabulary. He had to be just about the biggest wheel in Birmingham and since he had been that, naturally, it was unthinkable that he should assume any lesser role in our town, and, especially in our group of boys.

Yeah, he believed in ghosties, but there wasn't one alive that could scare him. That's what Barlow said. And we believed him. Nearly. We had been with him in all kinds of situations, and, like he had been saying, he never once showed the least inkling of being afraid of nothing.

But one day me and Potlicker Capps got to talking about Barlow and we both wondered out loud if ANYBODY could really and truly be as brave as Barlow claimed to be. We decided that he'd not have a bit of trouble with his bravery when all of us were along with him. So, it seemed to us that we needed to test him some way. We wanted to see how he would perform when he was all by himself, maybe, on a dark night.

Potlicker promised to do some hard thinking on how we could test him out. I began working on the problem, too.

Next day on our way to school we discussed several ideas. I had one and Potlicker had another. We decided that we would use both of them. The rest of our bunch had to be consulted on account of we would need their help in getting all this rigged up. When we got 'em all together and expressed our slight doubts about Barlow we were surprised to learn that, to a man, they, too, had been doing some wondering.

Barlow lived down a road with a small church and cemetery on it. And we had to have a graveyard for our plan so where he lived was made to order.

I borrowed an old bed sheet from Mama and we fashioned a weird looking ghost-like varmit out of it. Then we got a long piece of small rope which we were gonna need to string across the road to Barlow's house. Hubert thought it would be a fine idea to have our ghostie carrying a lantern. Potlicker got an old tin cracker barrel, punched a hole in the bottom, and tied a long bees-waxed piece of string on a nail and stuck that through the hole in the bottom of the barrel. When a wet rag was pulled over this waxed cord it just about made the awfullest, terriblest racket that any human ear ever listened to.

Polly Hall could screech louder and keener than anybody on earth and he readily readily agreed to donate all the blood-chilling screeching and screaming that we would have any use for. And he volunteered his notebook rings to hook to the head of our ghostie so we could pull him back and forth across the road on our rope.

We felt that we just had to have a dress rehearsal for such a performance as this was gonna be. We had it, all except the cracker barrel racket and Polly Hall's deathly screeching, screaming and moaning. It seemed most logical that we have our "thing" come from out of the graveyard so that's where we set up shop. Right in the middle of the most peaceful cemetery I reckon there was anywhere in Covington County.

Everything went smooth as silk and looked so terrible that we were all glad when the practicing was over and we headed for home.

Our next and only real problem was getting Barlow out on a dark night so he would have to go home alone. And, of course, we all worried some about our own getting out on the appointed night and at the right time.

After almost three weeks we managed to work out a plan.

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