

## On Edge

By Karen Earnshaw

Intended for reading by the Majuro Lagoon Writers

It's a dark and stormy night and everyone in the house is trying to ignore the racket of windows wobbling and branches slapping the east wall.

I took a bath, partly to feel good, partly to avoid the parents' relentless arguments. Emerging feeling crisply roasted, I step down to the first landing and hear the front door swing open and smash the wall, letting in the storm and, from the sound of the screeching rising from below, some unknown wild woman.

Pausing mid-step, I wonder who it is that's intruding into our universe. I move forward an inch or two and peek over the wooden balustrade and down to the wide hallway. Her hair is mad-crazy and wet and she's yelling – screaming really – and sort of prancing in an odd way over the black and white tiles and headed to the kitchen. She's wrapped in a purple raincoat, has a large leather bag over one shoulder and is holding a... What? In the hand closest to me she has a knife!

Backing away I try to find a reality in this picture.

Where is everyone? Mum and Dad are in the kitchen, I know that. Yes, now I can hear them trying to talk to the woman. The voices are getting louder; Dad is angry. A cry from Mum. I'm frozen; why aren't I moving?

And what about David and Selina? Last I'd seen the two of them, they were headed to the library to watch TV. Granny? I think she went upstairs to bed an hour ago.

Looking down again from the corner of the landing, trying to stay in the shadows, I listen hard to see if I can work out what's going on in the kitchen; but the voices are now either hushed or silent. Oh! There she is again, moving across the hallway, opening doors. She's quiet now, but still acting and walking in a weird way. I can't see the knife, but suddenly feel overly visible and push back into the corner and slide down to rest my bottom on my heels.

I keep an eye on her, best I can, and now she opens the library door. I should go down and see what she wants with the kids, I really should. No, I think I'll stay here and see what happens. Is that best? I'm sure it's not.

Television noises leak from the library, then there's an alarming shout from David.

I back away. I'm terrified, scratching my hands together. What to do? A big roar of wind hits the house and while trying with all my might to hear through the howl, I look for an escape route. Can I make it down the stairs and out the door without her seeing me? No, so I turn one hundred and eighty degrees. All of a sudden I'm in a rush and scramble up the stairs to the

second floor's hallway. I turn left and stop at Granny's door, quickly open it and take a look inside. Her night light is glowing and I can see her ancient bulk making a hillock in the old bed. The sight isn't all that comforting: Not sure why. I should wake her, but I don't.

I back up and shut the door, no need to be quiet, glance behind me and then quickly move down the hall to the back stairs. And up I go to the attic: My space that I share with Mum and Dad's unused but not unwanted stuff.

Inside I use the dim rays from the streetlamp to step around boxes and edge my way along the steeply sloping ceiling to the wardrobe at the other end of the room. This is my hiding spot, my comfort zone, and has been ever since I first clambered up here as a toddler.

Inside the wardrobe are doors within doors. My secret spaces. I keep all my dress-up clothes in one section of the cupboard and, hardly thinking now, I climb in, shutting each piece of wood behind me.

Minutes pass. I try and make choices from the possibilities of what's going. I tell myself to relax: Mum will be up in a moment and tell me to come down to brush my teeth. Was I over-thinking it? Sure, the woman was a bit crazy, but maybe Mum and Dad calmed her down. But why did David shout out? Has half an hour gone by yet? No, can't be that long.

A footfall! A creak on the stair! Oh, God! I pull the pile of clothes tighter around me, making sure my feet aren't on show if she opens the door.

Another crunching step. She's inside the attic now. The purple lady doesn't speak, but she's making sounds ... there's a mumbling I can hear over the wind. She's closer now.

The first door of the wardrobe opens, then the second, smaller one. I feel the clothes shift; the weight of a hand.

I can't help but open my eyes as she tugs the clothes away and I look up and spot a twinkle of reflection on the bloody blade. Behind it are her mad eyes. Savage. Evil.

The knife slashes towards me...

## **Salsbury Times Exclusive**

Police find bloody scene in historic home

**By ROGER SMYTHE**  
**for the Times' afternoon edition**

*Monday, June 20, 1987:* Six members of the Reeves family were stabbed in their Brigstone home late Sunday night, according to local police. Neighbors told the Times the alleged murderer, who is being held in custody in Salsbury Police Station, has been seen at the house on a number of occasions in recent months.

Mrs. Alison Johnson, who lives next door to the Reeves in Grafton Street, phoned the police at 9pm to report a disturbance in the house. On arrival, the officers discovered the bodies in various rooms of the 95-year-old house, which is listed on the town's Historic Ledger. "It was a very bloody scene," said Sergeant Wilson Partridge. "Worst I've come across in my whole career." Partridge refused to give more details, but said the Police Commissioner is planning to hold a press conference this afternoon.

A distraught Mrs. Johnson said: "I was shocked to hear that dreadful woman had come and killed them. I knew something was up when I put the rubbish outside and heard voices in the kitchen even louder than usual." Her husband, Alan Johnson, hinted that the woman was well known "to at least one member of the family."

The victims were Mr. George Reeves (forty-five), owner of the Ace Real Estate Agency, his wife Sally (forty-two), their children David (nine), and Selina (eight), and George's mother, Charity (sixty-seven).

The sixth family member was found alive, but with multiple stab wounds, in the home's attic. Paramedics transported the girl to Princess Diana Hospital where doctors conducted a complicated three-hour surgery. In a verbal statement on the steps of the hospital at 7:30am, the hospital's press officer said that thirteen-year-old Katerina Reeves had not survived the operation.

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