The floorboards grown under the weight. My flashlight swivels towards the sounds; it’s beam piercing the dusty air. In its path, it hits a patch of rusty red and black fur lay in the way of the floor.

“Augh. Turn that darn thing off, Ralph,” the young vulpine cries, “You’re messing up my night-vision.”

“Sorry Frank,” my ears flatten back and I overt my light, “you know I have a hard time seeing at night.”

“Turn that thing off, or just try to keep that thing away from me,” Frank demands.

I comply turning off the lamp and adjusting my glasses at his request, “I, just heard a noise.”

“Yeah, that’s just me and my paw,” Frank sneered, “I swear you’re the blindest husky I know.”

“How could I know? I thought it was the monster,” I say towards the white little league shirt that I could make out on Frank, “I mean the smell of mold and decay is completely plugging up my noise.”

“No duh, this place has been closed for decades,” the fox says sliding over a fallen over chinet cabinet blocking the entrance to the north wing of the building.

I stood still, my fur on end as I hear Frank open the door and skink into the hallway. Turning the flashlight back on, I can see the dingy white and sickly seafoam green paint of the long halls. Sections of the walls cracked plaster revealing the lattice work underneath. Old chains line a portion of the rooms. Mud and rocks from the broken windows lay on the edge of the broken white title floor. The smell of rat droppings and mildew grip even harder into my sinuses. Listening I hear Frank at the other end of the hallway already climbing the stairs at the other end. His shoes making a slopping squeak as he continued on the damp floor.

“Frank, wait up.” I cried through the building as I jogged to catch up with him.

“Come on Ralph, I thought you were a sled dog, a natural born runner,” he yells back, “now come on, we barely gotten through the first section. Unless you’re a scaredy dog.”

“I’m not afraid,” I yell back and running to catch up to the doorway of the stairs, “just cautious.”

Over the next hour or two we continued through the north wing of the building. Each time going from the bottom of a section of the hospital and working our way up to the top, before moving back down though the adjoining section.

Slowly we worked through all of the sections to the last one, each one blurring into that of the other until we reached the final section. Unlike the other sections this far, this section was a bit different having been shut with a metal door. I shone my light upon the metal placard next to the door “Rabies Ward” it read though the patinaed copper plate.

Frank pushes the door open with a nervous laugh, “You know they would lock animals up in here to die. If you came into here, you were never coming out.”

“There’s no such thing as ghost,” I say back, more to assure myself, “nor monsters, demons or ghouls.”

I turn my flashlight into the hallway, the beam only disappearing some 6 meters down. On each side of the halls are heavy, rusty, metal doors on each of the room, where as in the other sections, they were simple wood. Wired safety glass with metal bars on top giving a small look into the rooms within. The broken glass shimmered off the floor, producing an otherworldly sparkle. Further down the hall I can barely make out the white tip of Franks tail as he rushes to explore.

“This place gives me the creeps,” I say crossing the threshold.

“It’s a rabies ward,” frank says pulling on the furthest metal door, “Its where they locked up the craziest of the crazies. Abandoned to die,”

As he finishes the door gives with a load groan. Dust pours out of into the hallway’s air as if this room has not been forgotten about years before the asylum shut down. I hustle down to Frank, his gaze transfixed into the room, as if he was frozen in time. I peered into the room, to see the inside torn to shambles, tables up-turned and beading torn to shreds. My flashlight moving slowly around making its way from corner to corner, my paw trembling the further I continue until I get to the corner where Frank’s eyes are transfixed.

“Ralph, we need to get out of here. Now.” He says finally finding a voice much more scared than I was expecting.

As he says that, my light finally illuminating the source of anguish. There in the corner were two arms bound together in a thick cotton cloth and pulled behind their back. Their knees bowed out letting their foot-paws pushing onto bound arms as if an attempt to escape. The skeletal tail bones splayed out as if it was lashing about at the time of their demise. The skull looked to be that of a raccoon or a skunk, though with almost pronghorn like horns coming from the sides. Its jaw thrown ajar as if in a maniacal laugh in their final breath, no doubt a victim of some horrible experimental procedures the asylum was known for.

“It’s, it’s just a skeleton,” I said back voice trembling an octave or two higher than normal, “It won’t harm us. L, l, l, look, we just need to go back to the main hall and we’ll be fine. Greg and the others wouldn’t be none the wiser, and we didn’t chicken out.”

As I finish Frank nods, and a loud crashing sound came from behind us, near the main door we entered the ward through. I veer my light down the hall only to see a coffee can roll down the hall. I slowly turn my head and light back to the skeleton as the can slows down its roll.

“Okay,” Frank finally agrees, his voice just as shaken as my own.

As we turn to leave the room with the skeleton, we hear a cackling seam to emirate from the ward’s walls as a whole. I could almost feel any color drain from my fur. Any fur on our bodies, if was not standing on end before, were now.

“Room, he-he, room free. Free, free, prison room gone. Safe, would save,” the deranged disembodied voice began to crackle, “Yes, safe. Safe. Kill. Safe to kill. Kill. Kill. Die. Kill. Die. Free. Young puppy. Young kit free me. Free me. I free them. Yes, yes. They die. Yes, first to die. Yes, yes, die. Death. Only death can be free.”

I grab Frank’s hand and pull him away from the doorframe and towards the back staircase across the hall. My heart racing as I look around to find where the intense insane voice was coming from.

“Run? Why run? Why run, from sweet, death? Yes, sweet death.” the voice starts up again, “Why run? Sweet release? He-he, you see, you die. Die. Die!”

I push frank towards the stairs as I look over my shoulder. That’s when I finally seen the beast. It was covered in dark dense black fur, almost like it was devoid of any light. It’s head flat on top like a pronghorn. A thick otter like tail dragging behind it. The fingers unnaturally long and leathery. It moved in a slow, lanky for a terrifying spirit, wobbly at its center.

“Death. Death good. Yes, good is death. Come, Come. Please come. Come die.” It says laughing yet it’s mouth never moves.

“Hurry! Outside door is at the bottom,” Frank says, finally rampaging down the stairs, myself barely able to keep up with the short-stop.

Getting to the bottom of the stairs, I glance down the lower hallways to a very similar hallway above, from the metal doors, decaying walls, to the ghoul standing in just about the same position. Its eyes now glowing red, and almost with a fire. It tilts its head as if it was caught in complete surprise. Its long feet begin to arch, as Frank’s paw touches the door. Its jaw unhinges, releasing a horrifying screeching moan, as it begins to sprint unnaturally. Its movement now not wobbly and awkward but solid and intent. I could only look as Frank pulled me out the door. I grasped the door handle, slamming the door shut behind us, only seconds before the unearthly being slammed against the heavy metal door. The madness gone from it and reduced to primal screams and raged banging against the door.

We booked it though the woods and eventually made it to Frank’s parent’s den on the edge of town that night. We never did go back to the old Kirkbride Asylum. About 10 years to the day of our fateful adventure, the state tore the place down. While they did find an old skunk teaching skeleton that had gone missing from the local high school decades before, with some old pronghorn horns glued on top. We never did hear anything found though about the monster of the rabies ward.