

Henry was never afraid of the dark. To him, the darkness provided a level of comfort, security and as long as it stayed relatively dark, a form of defense.

His mother sometimes thought that Henry was part bat or cat. His eyesight and awareness of things around him in such deep darkness has helped a lot in the past.

The electricity was out in the entire block due to someone running into one of those ground transformers with their automobile. People noticed sparking, an explosion and then the lights went out. No lights to illuminate the sidewalks. No lights to help people stay on the roadway. The only light came from the full moon that evening -- enough light for Henry to make his way around the family's RV, open the hatch, flip the switch and start the large Honda generator. It normally took Henry two pulls on the flywheel to get it started. This evening, it took an extra tug before the generator started up and the lights returned brightly in the recreational vehicle - his home.

Henry closed and secured the generator door and then walked back to another door, opening it and looking at the level, squinting to double-check the level. It was high. He then nodded as he closed and secured that door and walked back around to the side door of the large travel-trailer -- his home since, well, since birth.

"Lights are on", he yelled as he re-entered his home. Then thinking to himself "yeah, duh. As if she couldn't figure that out." He then walked back and knocked on the bathroom door.

"Mom, in there??"

"No...I'm not. I'm in the bedroom putting out the last of the candles, Gus..." Gussett Henry turned around and moved forward back to the rear of the trailer and his mother's bedroom.

"This is gonna make our home stand out, you know kiddo. Being the only home on the block with electricity and all..."

Gussett walked into the bedroom, to see his mother gather up the last of the candles used in the darkness and place them back into a box.

"Mom, what can you do when the power's out?"

"Are you looking for a child's answer or an adult's answer?" His mother sat down on a corner of her bed.

"Well, back in the late 90s, they said that several thousand babies were conceived the night of a regional brownout on the east coast. Before that, the same thing happened during a coast-to-coast power outage in 1964 or 65."

"Is that all adults really think about -- having babies and doing sex?" Gussett asked,

jumping on the bed beside his mother. He always liked jumping on the bed, although the mattress and box springs no longer respond in kind to his bouncing. He has gotten larger and the bed has gotten accustomed to the weight and bounce.

"No. That's not all what adults really think about and do. A lot of people do what you would do, go to sleep. Some people sat outdoors and talked with their neighbors or friends or just among themselves until the lights came back on. Other people brought battery powered transistor radios and danced or sang to music." Gussett's mother looked at her son.

"Didn't they teach you about this in school?"

"No."

"Well, I guess they don't teach it as not to give you ideas."

"Dancing's bad?" Gus asked looking around the room. He's been in his mother's bedroom many times. Mostly to retrieve something or another for the laundry basket. Or to find the other "mate" to a pair of shoes or slippers. Every once in a while he would just stand up and fall back onto the bed. He used to enjoy that.

He was too big and old to do it now.

"No." Shelia stood and moved toward the living room.

"Dancing is not bad in itself," she said as she paused in blowing out the candle sitting on a table, then changing her mind as she looked around the room to find other lit candles to extinguish.

"Dancing is a good way to relieve tension, to socialize, and to exercise. Your daddy and I danced quite a few times before you were born."

"And afterwards?" Gussett Henry walked down the hallway to join his mother in the living room.

"Well, after you were born, we barely had time to do anything we used to enjoy. We spent most of our time taking care of you and answering all of those stupid questions about your birth".

Shelia found the edge of the couch and plopped herself onto the cushioned furniture.

"Are you taking Penny to the Fireman's Dance?" she looked at her son. "Or does Penny have competition?"

Gus smiled at his mother.

"No, she doesn't have any competition but no, I'm going..." The smile left his face.

"Okay. Dance. Girl. Absence of parents. Music. What am I missing?" Shelia asked, using her fingers to count all of the elements of the summer Fireman's Dance.

Gus held his hand up to show his mother and crooked his fingers at each objection.

"Don't have a dancing suit. Don't want to be beaten up. Don't want people to know how "special" I can be. Can't dance. I'm like one of those White boys who try to do that break dancing stuff..."

Shelia sat completely up.

"Well, let's attack this like your Daddy would. Don't want people to know what you can do -- make a mental note to yourself that you would not use those gifts unless it's a true emergency. Don't want to be beaten up - steer clear of Lloyd and his friends and if you come around them, declare a truce for the night. Need help -- find an adult. And I'm sure that we can find a suit and tie in which you would look nice -- not John Travolta nice, but nice enough for Penny. And maybe someone else too."

"Don't worry -- I'm not gonna teach you to dance. That is better left to your "dancing partner" -- Pen..."

The door to the trailer banged fiercely. "Hey!!! Can you please help me??" the voice from the outside spoke. Gus handed his mother the large phone and said "Call the police! Have them come here!" in a quiet, almost whisper. He waited for his parent to start talking with the police, and then he went to the door and opened it.

"Look, I'm sorry to bother you, kid. Is your mom or dad home?"

"What's wrong. I don't want to disturb them..." Gus answered.

"Look. I need some help." Then almost immediately, the person revealed a knife and told the kid, "Let's go inside. I have some business with your hot momma..."

"And I have some hot business with you!" Gussett stated, as he reached for the lit candle and threw it at the man. He dropped the knife as he defended himself from being burned by the candle's flame and the hot wax. He was not too successful with it, however. The flame set a cuff on fire and the hot wax burned through the thin shirt and onto his chest.

Gussett found the knife, held it in his small hand and threatened the man.

"Go home."

"Or what...Damn kid, you didn't have to burn me!!!"

"Go home." Gus looked the man in the eyes. There was a pause for a few seconds.

"I believe the kid said 'go home'," the voice outside the trailer spoke. It was then accompanied by the clicking sound of some sort of weapon. "And he was being nice. I'm not gonna be nice at all about it."

Off in the distance, the sounds of police sirens could be heard. The man looked at Henry and then to someone or something outside the door, outside the trailer, and said "This isn't over kid. I'm gonna have your momma; then I'm gonna cut you up into bite-sized pieces and feed you to the animals." He then bolted for the door but not before a gunshot hit the man squarely in the chest.

The man fell back into the doorway, and that is when Gussett saw Brule Davis, armed with a smoking shotgun, as he pointed the weapon down and away from the doorway.

The man, gasping for air, looked at the two of them. The boy standing at the entrance to his home; the man standing in the yard. Between them the man laying back, gasping for his last breaths.

Gussett reached down and started to touch the man.

"DON'T, Son!" Brule yelled.

"I know you want to help him. He's beyond help. Let him go."
"He's not beyond help...let me help him..."

"He wanted to do harm to your mom -- and you. If I didn't stop by to see if you two were okay, he would have carried his threat further. This is not one you can save, Gus! Let him go..."

Gussett Henry was conflicted. A touch would heal that gaping chest wound. Bring him back to reality. Surely there was someone that man could go to. At the same time, he wanted to rape or do who know what to Shelia. His mother. Then to find and cut him up.

Gus retreated as Brule placed the weapon on the ground and waited for the police to pull up, looking at the man as he continued to sputter, his chest continue to leak red liquid on the concrete platform beside the RV.

"I....I'm sorry...but she is...so...hot."

"And I am sorry that my friend shot you. But I think he's right. You threatened to do harm to my mother. She's all I've got," Gus bent over and told the man, then looking at Brule and then back to the man.

"I'm not gonna let you die here. But if you do ever come back here, I will find you and remove your sick heart from your body. I will feed it to the animals around here. Don't tempt me, for I don't do temptation well."

Gussett looked at the man, still gasping for what he believed would be his last breaths.

Then, looking at Brule, he leaned over and touched the man's chest with his fingers. "Despite it all, I want this man to live please."

He removed his hands just in time for the police officers to come around the far end of the bushes separating their home from the curb and street.

"Ah. The young man who got beat up. Hello again. What's going on this time?" The other officer looked at Brule, and then asked for his identification. Brule pulled out an old weathered wallet and displayed his drivers' license. "Pull it out, please," the officer requested. Brule complied.

"This man attempted to harm my mother. I kept him from doing so, by burning him with a candle. This man came around the corner and saw that I was in danger, and fired his weapon in the air." A likely story, but not exactly the truth.

"He killed me. This one here did some voodoo and healed me right here. I swear!" The man stood weakly, looking at the roly-poly boy.

"This boy. This boy burned you. Where? Show me." The police officer pulled out his extra long flashlight, and aimed it at the face and then the body of the man.

"Right here...well, he did burn me here... and that other man -- him -- he shot me in the chest! See, there's my blood on the sidewalk!!"

The officer pointed the flashlight to the concrete pad where the trash can normally sits. There was a small pool of blood there.

"So if he shot you, why aren't you dead? And where's the blast from his shotgun?" The officer turned around and shined the powerful beam onto Brule Davis' face and head.

"You did shoot that shotgun at him, right?"

Brule attempted to hide the beam (and his delight) from his face, explaining "Well, I did fire the shotgun. But it was to make him run away; but he's warned never to come around here again."

Shelia came to the door, and started to say "The police is...." before she stopped and looked at her son, the man still trying to stand still, and Brule Davis alongside the two police officers.

"...already here. Gussett, are you okay?" She started down the stairs but Henry Gussett waved her back.

"Stay there, Mom. I think that this is just about over and done with and I'll explain everything. I'll have to go to the station, I'm sure..."

"You always do, son..." Shelia stated, retreating back to the living room area of the RV and closing the door behind her.

"This is the second time I've had to deal with you," the officer spoke, looking at Gus. "How do you think we should report this?"

"Well, I can come down along with the two other men and make out a report if you like. He did try to come into our trailer and try to do harm to my mother and me. I'm sorry that he's in not much good shape to tell you more than what he did. I think the blood came from the beef packaging I brought out to the trash can. Sure didn't come from me or either man..."

"I SWEAR!! That one burned me and the other one shot me in the chest with that shotgun..." the man appealed while one of the officers shackled him with the cuffs from a pocket of his uniform. Then, stating his Miranda rights, the officer moved the man to the waiting police car, lights still attracting people to the area like bees to honey.

"Come on down, you two. You can drive in your own car. Meet us at the police station. And bring that shotgun with you, Mr. Davis." The young man and the older man looked at each other as the police officer voiced in his radio that the situation has been resolved and they are bringing in a man to the station.

"Brule. What do you know about dancing?"

"Isn't that what we were doing here, son? Dancing around the truth?"

"I mean real dancing. I need lessons."

"You mean two people keeping together, moving together in rhythm while listening to the beat of a song?"

Gus gave the old man a look.

"Okay. We're going to go someplace where we will have to dance. Pay attention and remember what dancing really is all about -- two people keeping together, moving together in rhythm as a song is being played."

Brule opened the door to his beat-up car to let the young man in.

"Afterward, we can talk about SOCIAL dancing." Brule checked and then closed the passenger door.