

# YOU CAN'T SPELL HORROR

WITHOUT



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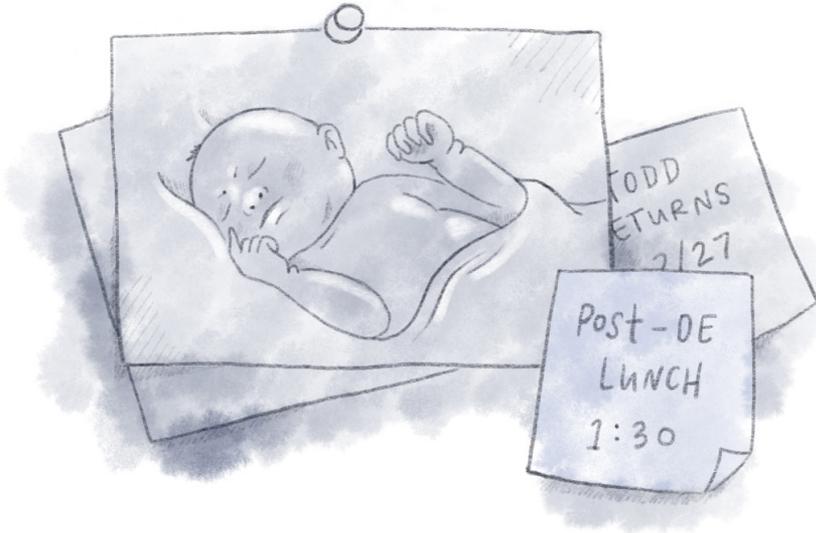
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**YOU CAN'T SPELL HORROR**



# He's Baaaaaaack



**I**t was a regular Monday morning in the HR Cave: phones rang, keyboards clicked, everyone got an email containing 36 pictures of Todd in Accounting's baby.

"Todd still has a month of paternity leave left," mused Will.

"How many more daily picture blasts are we going to get?"

"A month's worth," chuckled Eva.

The HR Crew was scrambling to finish all their work before they went out for a team lunch at 1:30. They'd just wrapped up Open Enrollment, and it was time to party.

"This is going to be the best post-OE feast ever!" Sam squealed as she reviewed Le Restaurant's six-course lunch menu.

Will nodded excitedly, but Eva looked a little uneasy.

“What if something comes up this morning?” she asked.

“Eva. Open Enrollment is DONE. Finished! Don’t even worry,” said Will.

“I know, I know,” Eva replied. “I guess I just feel kind of weird today. Like something bad is going to happen.”

Sam and Will exchanged looks. Whenever Eva thought “something bad” was going to happen (which was often), it never did.

Sam grinned reassuringly. “It’s going to be great, Eva. Don’t worry. Nothing will stop us from lunching!”

Eva tried to smile but could only muster a grimace.

“Totally,” she replied.

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The three of them barely looked away from their computers all morning. Then, at around ten o’clock, Eva’s head whipped around.

“What was that?” she asked.

“What was what?” replied Will.

“Footsteps! Heavy footsteps.”

“We always hear footsteps,” Sam said. “One hundred and fifty people work here. That’s 300 feet.”

“I know, but these footsteps were going towards Todd’s office.”

“No one goes to his office while he’s away,” said Will, reassuringly.

“I’m telling you, I heard it!” Eva said.

Sam looked down the hall. Empty. Todd’s office door was still closed, his “On Pat Leave ’Til December!” note taped to it.

“No one’s out there,” Sam said as she sat back down.

Will and Sam looked at each other. Oh, Eva.

\*\*\*

Eleven o'clock rolled around, and Will found himself alone at his desk, putting the finishing touches on his onboarding presentation. Eva and Sam were leading an office-wide HR meeting in the downstairs conference room. Will liked having the office to himself so he could unplug his headphones, play his music out loud, and sing along.

Will had just pressed “play” on his '90s mix when he heard something from the hallway. Was someone...humming? He paused “Kiss from a Rose” and listened.

Silence.

Will got back to singing and typing, but just as Vanilla Ice demanded that everyone stop, collaborate, and listen, he heard it again. Someone was out there, singing along.

He got up and looked around; no one was back from the meeting yet. Will wandered from room to room, trying to find the source of the singing, but his search was fruitless.

As he was about to return to the HR Cave, he heard a crash from the kitchen and yelped. He tiptoed down the hall to check out the noise when, suddenly, the door to a conference room flung open.

“WILL BUDDY!” bellowed Greg from Sales. “I’ve got some questions about my FSA...can I pick your brain for a second?”

“Sure, I guess,” Will said, as he followed Greg down the hall. The kitchen sounds would have to remain a mystery.

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The clock struck noon, and the HR Crew was still hard at work. The rest of the office left to try the new ramen place next door, and soon it was deathly silent. At one o'clock, Will, Eva, and Sam started to put their jackets on to leave for their lunch celebration, when a loud



*creeeeeeak* sounded from down the hall. They froze and looked at each other. Sam crept towards the door, looked down the hall, and gasped.

“There’s someone in Todd’s office!”

“Who?!” whimpered Will.

“I don’t know!” Sam whispered. “But Todd’s still on leave!”

“I KNEW those footsteps were bad news!” wailed Eva.

The HR Crew looked at each other, worried.

“We need to check it out,” declared Sam.

“We need to leave now to be on time for lunch,” said Will, stomach grumbling.

“We’ve still got time,” replied Sam. “Plus, since when is the HR Crew afraid of anything?”

Sam crept forward slowly, with Will and Eva timidly following behind.

Before they could peek into Todd's office, the door swung open. Eva's heart pounded. It was all she could do not to scream. There stood Todd, beaming.

After a long silence, Sam finally managed a response.

"What are you doing here?" she squeaked.

"Oh hey, guys! Good to see you!" said Todd. His tie said "Super Dad" on it.

"Todd! You still have a month of leave left!" exclaimed Will.

"Ah, yeah...I decided to come back early."

The three of them stared at each other, horrified.

Eva frowned. "You didn't give notice, and now we have only two days to get all your 'returning to work' paperwork done."

"Paperwork, shmaperwork! I figured I'd just show up, you know? No need to be so formal!" Todd chuckled. "Okay, well, glad to be back, guys! I'm off to lunch!"

Todd walked out, leaving the HR Crew with their mouths hanging open. Sam was pale and trembling. "I must be dreaming. This can't be happening."

"It IS happening," intoned Eva, solemnly.

"But...he didn't give us notice!" Sam sobbed. "He can't just show up here like that! We have two days—LESS than two days, now—to do everything."

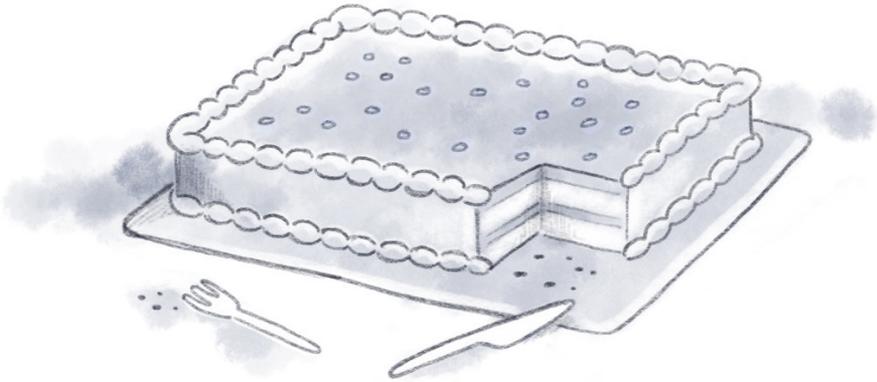
They gazed at each other, haunted looks in their eyes.

"He's back, Sam," Will whispered. "And there's nothing we can do about it."

He picked up his phone and dialed, his fingers trembling.

"Hello," he said gravely. "I have a reservation at 1:30 I need to cancel...."

# The Case of the 401(k)nightmares



**E**very Friday afternoon, the HR Crew picked up a grocery store sheet cake to eat in the office kitchen. As their forks hovered over the remains of this week’s confetti cake, Cora from IT walked in, glancing nervously over her shoulder.

“Cora! Happy Friday!” called Will, wiping the frosting off his fingers.

She walked past them to the fridge, opened it, and stared inside, never turning to look at Will.

“Cora?” started Eva.

Cora stared blankly into the fridge, not moving.

Sam walked over and tapped Cora’s shoulder.

“AHHHHHH!” Cora screamed, slamming the fridge door shut.

“Oh my gosh, sorry!” stammered Sam, “I just wanted to make sure you were okay...you seem...”

“Not okay,” offered Eva.

Cora turned to face Sam, and even from their table, Will and Eva could see the deep purple circles under her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Sam. I just...I haven’t slept well in weeks.”

“Oh no! What’s wrong? Are you all right?” asked Sam. Cora shook her head “no,” her eyes darting around the room, looking for something (or someone).

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” sighed Cora.

“Try us!” they chimed in unison.

Cora scanned the room, and once she decided it was safe to talk, she took a deep breath and began.

“For the last month, every night at midnight, I’ve woken up to see a figure standing over my bed.”

“A figure?” inquired Will.

“A ghost,” declared Cora.

Will whimpered. Ever since he solved the case of the poltergeist in the hallway printer, he’d been doing whatever he could to avoid ghosts.

“What kind of ghost?” asked Eva.

“That’s the crazy part,” mused Cora, as though in a trance. “She’s me. But like, a 65-year-old version of me.”

The HR Crew gaped.

“What does she...I mean you...I mean...what does the ghost want?” asked Sam.

“I don’t know. She just wags her finger at me angrily, and then walks away mumbling.”

“Mumbling what?!” exclaimed Sam and Eva.

“‘Meeeeeet the maaaaatch. MEEEEEEET THE MAAAAATCH!’ That’s all she says, over and over.” Cora looked at

the HR Crew members, one by one. “Last night, I finally got up the courage to ask her what she meant.”

“What did she say?!” asked Sam and Eva. Will looked like he was about to faint.

“Just two letters...” Cora trailed off. The kitchen was deathly silent.

“H...R....”

Eva, Will, and Sam looked at each other, stunned. Cora’s face was as white as the buttercream icing they had just eaten.

“I just want it to stop,” she sobbed.

Suddenly, Eva had a thought.

“I think I know how to fix this,” she said.



One week later, the HR Crew was digging into a beautifully iced carrot cake when Cora skipped into the kitchen, her smile wide, her eyes shining.

“I just wanted to thank you for your help,” she grinned. “I haven’t slept this well in ages!”

“So...the ghost?” asked Will tentatively.

“Eva was right! As soon as I got home last Friday, I logged into my 401(k) account and increased my contribution amount to make sure I’m meeting our company match!”

The HR Crew couldn’t hide their excitement.

“And?” they asked.

“I haven’t seen future me since!”

Sam, Will, and Eva cheered. Cora high-fived them all, and then practically floated out of the kitchen.

“How’d you know it would work, Eva?” Will asked.

Eva looked at him, knowingly.

“I’ve been in this business long enough to know that when an older version of yourself haunts you, there are only two reasons: to scare you into saving more for retirement OR to stop you from getting an unflattering haircut.”

Sam and Will looked at Eva quizzically.

“...and since Cora’s ghost was talking about meeting the match, I figured it was 401(k)-related. Plus, Cora’s hair always looks amazing.”

“Well,” chuckled Sam, “looks like another victory for HR! You know what this calls for?”

They looked at each other gleefully. Then, at the same time, they all shouted: “Cake!”

# Red Tape



**I**t was a Tuesday halfway through Open Enrollment, and Sam was working alone: Will was at his sister's wedding in Phoenix, and Eva called in sick with the flu. Sam's stomach dropped as she walked into the HR Cave. There, sitting on Will's desk, was a pile of paperwork almost as tall as Sam with a Post-it on it that read: *Thanks for scanning and faxing these for me, Sam. They're due Tuesday. -Will.* Sam slumped down the hall to the scanner and got down to work.

An hour and a half later, as she sat back down at her desk, a loud *Riiiiing!* ripped through the silence. She ran to Eva's desk and

answered it. Before she could say “Sam speaking,” the phone from Will’s desk started ringing too. She put the first call on hold and ran to Will’s phone, when suddenly Eva’s phone and her own phone rang in unison. Fighting back tears of frustration, Sam hustled back and forth between the three desks, answering an endless string of benefits questions. Meanwhile, her computer chimed with a non-stop stream of ghoulish email notifications.

By the time lunch rolled around, Sam’s voice was hoarse and her nerves frayed. She was absolutely starving, so she ducked out to grab a sandwich. She felt better as she returned to work, BLT in hand. The door to the HR Cave was closed, which was strange: the HR Crew’s open-door policy was usually quite literal. She swung the door open and screamed: every object in the Cave was wrapped tightly in thick red tape.

Heart racing, Sam slammed the door shut, grabbed a pair of scissors, and scurried around trying to cut through the crimson cocoons. As she was slicing through the tape on the filing cabinet, she felt something coil around her feet. A roll of red tape was wrapping itself quickly up her legs like a boa constrictor!

“Help!” she cried. But no one answered. The tape was up to her knees. Sam tried to make her way to the door to flag someone down, but the tape quickly spun around her torso, fastening her arms to her sides. It was up to her neck, and she tried screaming for help one more time, but the tape slithered across her mouth. Just then, a loud noise sounded.

*BEEP BEEP BEEP*

Sam’s eyes popped open. She was in her bedroom, safe! It had just been a bad dream!

Relieved, Sam skipped out of bed and into the kitchen. She reached into the cabinet to grab a coffee mug, and just then...her

cellphone rang. As she picked it up, a string of email notifications chimed. But as she was reading her messages, she saw something strange below the phone. There, on her wrist, was a thick, shiny strip of red tape. She slowly peeled it off her skin, a knot in her stomach.

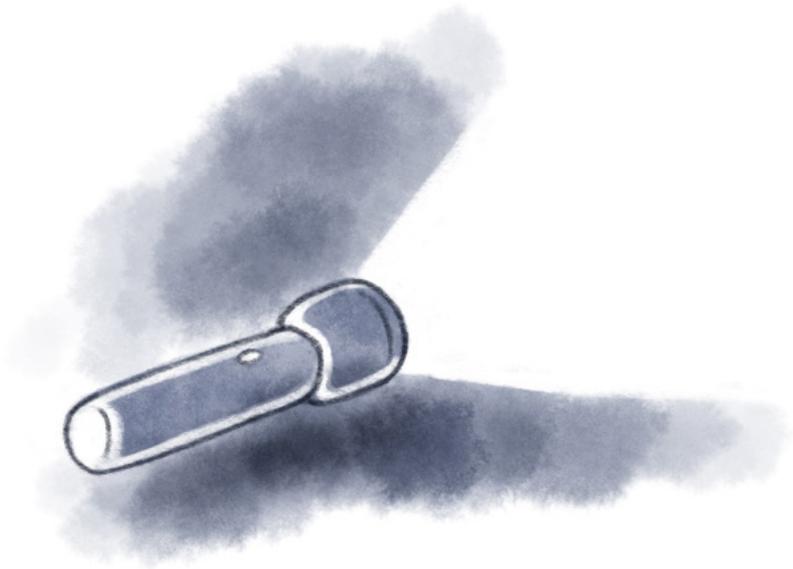
It had been just a dream...right?





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# You Can't Spell Horror Without HR

Join the HR Crew—Sam, Will, and Eva—as they investigate all of the mysterious events, spooky sounds, and scary scenarios that pop up in the office. It's all in a day's work for our fearless trio...after all, HR isn't for the faint of heart!

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