

The Janitor's Closet

"I dare ya. I dare ya to smoke this whole blunt."

"Give it to me. I'll smoke it after school behind the dumpster by the bus garage."

"No way man, you got to smoke it at school, before the day's out."

Jason glanced at his friend Sid. "I'll smoke it alright. I'll smoke it...."

"Back of the library."

"Men's room off the teacher's lounge."

"Principle's second waiting room."

"No....the janitor's closet"

"No way. Not there. Anywhere but there."

"That's it. The janitor's closet."

Jason kept staring at his friend. "I don't know of anyone who has gone there and come back. They all just vanish, disappear."

"The janitor uses it. He hasn't vanished."

"That guy isn't human. He never blinks. He's a monster. He's not normal."

"He still uses that closet. He goes in. He comes out. He's still around."

Jason thought about this logic for a minute. "I'll do it. Give me that number. I'll burn it in the janitor's closet."

"Here ya go."

"I'll see ya next period in the cafeteria."

"You'll be so baked, man, so baked."

Jason put the joint in his pocket and strolled out of the classroom. He sauntered gleefully around the hallway. He came to the door of the janitor's closet and tried to turn the doorknob. The door was locked. Jason quickly hid around the corner in a large unused locker. He hid there for several minutes waiting for the janitor to access his closet. Finally janitor Byron came walking down the hall escorting his wheeled mop bucket using his mop. His face was fixed in a strange expression with an exaggerated smile and bulging eyes. At the door to his closet he first looked down one side of the hall and then the other. Seeing no-one was within line of sight, he unlocked the door, reached in, and pulled out a spray bottle which he affixed to his belt. He then closed the door and continued to push his mop and bucket down the hall.

Jason slowly crept out from the abandoned locker. He moved swiftly but silently to the door. He opened it a crack, noting that it was awfully dark in there. It didn't matter, he was going to light up the room with his lighter anyway. He pulled the door open and slid into the room in one quick action. The door closed. The room became silent.

Sid waited all period for Jason to show up in the cafeteria. As he went to the rest of his classes that day, Sid kept waiting for Jason to show up. Jason missed every class. After school, Sid waited for Jason at their usual meeting spot, a small paved area behind a dumpster. Sid waited for a full hour. Jason never showed. Sid then went to Jason's house to see Jason's mother. He wanted to see if Jason had showed up at home.

"Mrs. Smator, do you know where Jason is?"

"If you don't know, how am I supposed to know. That piece of shit son of mine never tells me where he's going. I just assume he's always with you!"

"He disappeared from school today. Can you call me if he comes home?"

"Call you? Call you for what? More drugs? More stealing? As far as I'm concerned you two pieces of shit can fall off the face of the earth."

Sid left Jason's house and went straight home. His mother was not home, she was either working late at the diner or pulling some extra hours bar tending. His father had passed out in front of

the television set with a whiskey bottle between his legs. Sid knew better than to waken him. Unless his father woke up naturally, he would break out in a violent outburst. Sid had had way too many broken bones and bruises to risk disturbing him. Sid went to his room terrified about Jason's fate. He stayed up for hours unable to sleep. When he did sleep, it was an uneasy, nightmare filled sleep.

The next day, Sid walked somberly to school. His head hurt and his body ached from a lack of sleep. He kept seeing Jason's face in front of him. He had to have gone somewhere, anywhere. Hopefully he just showed up at school.

Sid sat through homeroom and first period without any sign of Jason. Walking to his next class, Sid saw Principle Schief in the hallway talking to a teacher. Sid approached him slowly to let the two of them finish their conversation. As the teacher walked away, Sid asked, "Mr. Schief? I'm worried about Jason. Has anyone seen him?"

Mr. Schief grew a stern and demeaning look on his face. "The police are looking for Jason. They will charge him with truancy when they find him, along with any other crime he's committing." Mr. Schief started walking past Sid and away from him. "I don't have time to talk to you about that lost cause," stated Mr. Schief as he walked further away.

Sid was now totally terrified. Jason had just vanished. The last time he saw him, was when he gave him that joint to smoke. Could he have really disappeared in the janitor's closet? That's not possible, is it?

Sid went to his next two classes, but was there in body only. His still kept thinking of Jason. A feeling of guilt germinated within Sid's subconsciousness. He simply vegetated through both classes. None of his teachers bothered him, they had all given up on getting him engaged in his schoolwork.

Sid was walking down the school hallway with his head facing down when his friend Joey called him.

"Hey, Sid. What's up with Jason? Nobody's seen him."

"Last time I saw him, we were in biology class. I gave him a blunt and he was going out to smoke it."

"Where did he go to do that?"

"The janitor's closet."

"Dude, he's gone. Nobody comes out of the janitor's closet."

"The janitor does."

"That guy's not real. He's some sort of monster. Dude, remember Terry burns?"

"Yeah... what happened to him?"

"He took Becky Stickler to the janitor's closet to bang her. Nobody's seen either of them since."

"How come more people aren't alarmed by that? People don't just disappear without causing some sort of public reaction."

"Dude, nobody cares about them. Not Terry, not Becky, not Jason, not you, not me. The school doesn't care, the cops don't care, our parents don't care. Man, just stay away from that room."

Sid walked away more disturbed than ever. His best friend went out for a toke and completely vanished, and the world continues on like nothing's wrong. Nobody cares. Well Sid cared. Sid cared for the well being of his friends, and he was adamant that he would find out what happened to Jason.

The next day Sid skipped his English class. He waited in the hall for the janitor, right by the janitor's closet. He waited for what seemed to be an eternity, all the while the guilty feeling over Jason's disappearance grew and grew into determination. The janitor came walking around the corner still pushing his mop bucket with the mop. His walk had a long gate with a mechanical rhythm. His face was still fixed with the bulging eyes and the exaggerated smile. He walked right up to within two

feet of Sid.

“What the hell happened to my friend, Jason!” screamed Sid.

The janitor just stood motionless and silent. His bulging eyes fixed their gaze right at Sid's.

“Why don't you talk?” screamed Sid.

The janitor cocked his head to one side, but his facial expression never changed. He then lifted his hand and pointed a long, bony finger at the door to the janitor's closet. All the while his eyes continued to be fixed on Sid's eyes.

Sid glanced at the door and then turned his head back to the janitor. “What's in there? Why doesn't anyone return?”

The janitor reached over to the door and turned the doorknob. As soon as the doorknob clicked, the janitor lowered his arm. The door slowly swung open on its own, as if by a ghostly hand. The room was pitch black. Completely black. The light from the hallway did not illuminate anything at all in the room. It just did not look natural.

Sid turned toward the room. He tried to comprehend what this room was. It was supposed to be filled with supplies for the janitor; brooms, mops, buckets, and cleaning solutions. But this looked like a black absolute void. As he contemplated the room, Sid felt a fiercely frigid hand grab his shoulder. And then another frigid hand grabbed the other shoulder. Sid started to descend into a meditative state. The void ahead of him dominated his consciousness. It seem to call him. Sid could hear his name whispered from inside the closet. Sid's anxiety started to ebb. The guilty feelings over Jason's disappearance faded away. Then as if in a trance, Sid stepped into the closet.

Sid felt nothing. He could not feel a floor beneath his feet. He could not feel any air around his body. He could not see anything. He could not hear anything. And then.....