

Athens Messenger's Halloween Essay Contest, Middle School winner:

Halloween SJP

Anne Li

Middle school, first place



"SJP, SJP ..." Eliza muttered under her breath, flipping through the pages of the local encyclopedia in the local library.

"Whatcha looking for?" the loud, intruding voice of her friend Mark said.

"SJP," Eliza replied, not looking up. "And if you haven't noticed, we're in a library."

"Oh. Right."

Eliza shut the encyclopedia, discouraged, and began to walk away. "I'm going to visit SJP's stone again."

Eliza huddled in her coat against the autumn wind while walking to the graveyard. She couldn't believe her luck. Her history teacher, as an "appropriate, fun Halloween project" decided to assign the class a project - research an assigned "corpse" from the graveyard.

Eliza's "corpse," SJP, owned a stone without any information. Her tomb only contained the three initials.

As Eliza neared SJP's stone, she noticed another girl standing by the stone. Unlike the shivering Eliza, she seemed unaffected by the cold autumn wind.

"Hi," Eliza said affably.

The girl slowly transferred her gaze from the stone to Eliza.

Eliza shivered, this time not from cold. She had the distinct feeling that the pale girl was odd; the girl's face bore no expression.

The next day in history, she realized that the girl in the graveyard was in her class.

Eliza whispered to Mark, "Hey, I saw the new girl in the graveyard yesterday!"

Mark replied, "Makes sense. Everyone calls her "Ghost Girl."

"Eliza," the history teacher's monotonous voice droned, "your new partner will be Sarah Parker."

Eliza glanced at Sarah Parker. "Ghost Girl" did not even notice that her name was called. At lunch the next week, Eliza knew that her project was doomed. Having a partner like Sarah Parker could not help, especially if the partner wouldn't even acknowledge her.

"Well," Mark said brightly, "on the bright side, it's almost Halloween."

"Halloween," Sarah Parker whispered for the first time.

An awkward silence hung in the air.

"Yeah," Eliza said. "You like Halloween?"

Sarah Parker stared into nothingness. "I loved Halloween, but then she killed me."

The bell rang; Eliza, Mark and Sarah Parker filed into the hall.

"Let's go to history," Mark said.

"Great..." Eliza groaned. "Come on, Sarah!"

Sarah, as usual, did not hear her. She gazed down the hall, and slowly began to walk in the opposite direction of the history room.

Eliza and Mark glanced at each other. Eliza felt that being tardy to history could not bring down her day much more. The two began to follow Sarah Parker down the hall.

Sarah seemed to be counting locker numbers. Her expressionless eyes lingered on each number plate, then moved on.

Mark was counting under his breath, "662, 664..."

Sarah suddenly froze in front of an ancient-looking locker. Her pale arm extended and fumbled with the lock.

"666. Excellent, the devil's and Sarah Parker's locker number!" Eliza mumbled.

The locker swooped open, letting out century's worth of musty air. Eliza's eyes widened at its contents.

The four walls were hidden behind hundreds of pictures ... of horses.

Eliza bent down to pick up a picture that had fallen to the ground. A young Sarah Parker was sitting atop a cheerful horse.

"Sarah Parker, on her horse Halloween," Eliza read aloud from the caption.

Sarah stood, staring into her locker. No one noticed that she seemed to fading away.

"Hey - hey Eliza! Look at this, an obituary!" Mark called out, waving a newspaper article in the air.

Eliza snatched it. "Sarah James Parker, age 13, died on a riding accident on her horse Halloween."

Eliza's eyes widened. "Sarah James Parker. Hey Sarah, I think we've found SJP!"

But Sarah Parker had vanished.