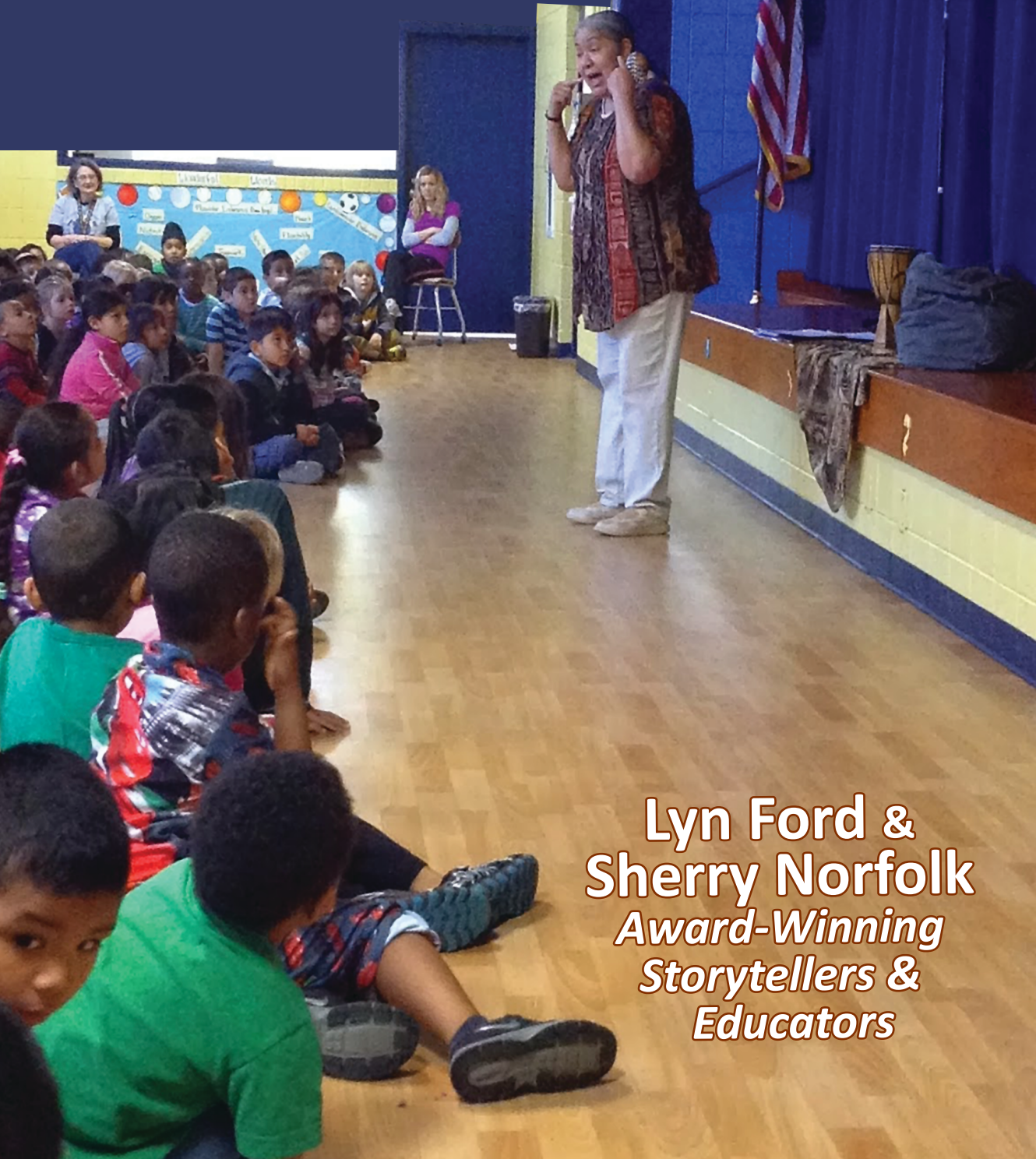


# BOO-tickle tales

not-so-scary stories for ages 4 to 9



Lyn Ford &  
Sherry Norfolk  
Award-Winning  
Storytellers &  
Educators

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**Lyn Ford & Sherry Norfolk**  
*Award-Winning Storytellers & Educators*

*Illustrations by Wendell E. Hall*



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# INTRODUCTION

## To Boo or Not to Boo...

*“Technology does nothing to dispel the shadows at the edge of things.”*  
—Neil Gaiman, author of the *Sandman* series and *The Graveyard Book*,  
at TED 2014’s “secret” Q & R session in Vancouver, B. C.

As a child in the 1950s, I did not even understand the word “technology.” And I probably didn’t care. The term was something I may have heard in some science fiction movies, or on the evening news of a growing cold war. For me, technology was Robbie the Robot in the 1956 movie *Forbidden Planet*. Technology was Wiley Coyote purchasing worthless inventions from a sinister company known as Acme in beloved Warner Brothers cartoons. Technology was the radar guns in the local department store’s toy area for boys, which I visited often, and from which I acquired a set of Lincoln Logs, a cap pistol with a white “ivory” handle, a cowboy hat, and a sparking radar gun.

The word was created in the early seventeenth century, from the Greek *tekhnologia*, meaning systematic treatment. That word is rooted in the Greek word *techne*, meaning art or craft. All of that was important to me only because of a trademarked phenomenon we didn’t have on our black and white television set, that marvel of the theaters, Technicolor. When I eventually saw *The Wizard of Oz* on my grandfather’s television, then Disney’s *Fantasia* on our boxy, brand new color TV...wow. Just, wow. I appreciated technology. But these stories couldn’t compare in scope and power to the



ones I heard from our family's storytellers.

Until, in 1958, a movie came out that I wasn't supposed to see. My older cousins in Franklin, Pennsylvania, told our parents they would take all of us little monsters to the movies to see—who remembers what they claimed we'd view? They left us sitting in the front row of the local debut of a British flick that had been released the year before. The movie was—dramatic music, please—*The Curse of Frankenstein!*

This was Hammer Production Company's first color horror film (I don't remember the term Technicolor™ being a part of that pronouncement, but the movie wasn't presented in black and white) with Peter Cushing as Dr. Frankenstein and Christopher Lee billed as The Creature. This flick had outraged reviewers and been critiqued as gruesome ghoulish, and horrible. When the movie began, my eyes were wide and attentive. But the music was loud and eerie, the screen too close. I remember keeping my eyes closed a lot of the time, but the squeals of my peers let me know that this was the most horrifying event of my entire seven years of life.

Why, oh, why, you ask, would my older cousins subject their little relatives to such terror?

They were teenaged girls and boys, meeting teenaged boyfriends and girlfriends, to smooch in the back rows of the theater balcony. We younger ones were their excuse to go to the theater. And there were enough of us within the same age group to make our parents giddy that the teenagers would get us out of my aunt's and uncle's house for two or three hours.

Now, I loved creepy programs, creepy stories, creepy poems. I crept downstairs to catch segments of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. I'd watched and mimicked Bela Lugosi speaking in strange syllables in *Dracula*: "Listen to them, children of the night. What music they make!" My dad told fantastic scary stories, and I was thrilled when he recited Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven." It fascinated. I analyzed the art, considering the play of words, the light and shadow in films, the music and silences that made things seem bumpier in the night in viewed, written and spoken stories.

The crafting of such work didn't frighten me, for my great-grandmother



had told me I shouldn't be afraid of things like ghosts.

"Dead folks don't bother you much," she said. "It's the livin' folks you need to worry about." The evening news always proved she was correct.

But Frankenstein's monster in color?!? This was my first truly frightening experience. I had no "systematic treatment" in mind for coping with what little I'd dared to watch on that movie screen. Years later, I would not watch the movie on television.

And, as an adult with sons who loved creepy tales, and a younger son and daughter who did not, I wondered...why had technology frightened the bejeebers out of me, when the scariest stories my father told had not?

Back to Neil Gaiman (2014) for the answer:

We have been telling each other tales of otherness...for a long time; stories that prickle the flesh and make the shadows deeper and, most important, remind us that we live, and that there is something special, something unique and remarkable about the state of being alive...

Fear is a wonderful thing, in small doses. You ride the ghost train into the darkness, knowing that eventually the doors will open, and you will step out into the daylight once again. It's always reassuring to know that you're still here, still safe. That nothing strange has happened, not really. It's good to be a child again, for a little while, and to fear—not governments, not regulations, not infidelities or accountants or distant wars, but ghosts and such things that don't exist, and even if they do, can do nothing to hurt us...

In order for stories to work—for kids and for adults—they should scare. And you should triumph. There's no point in triumphing over evil if the evil isn't scary...

Marveling in just being alive. Facing fear with a child's heart and in a safe environment. Triumphing over evil. Yep, those were the things I truly





loved about my father's stories. I got to run into the darkness, to howl with the wolves in the woods or to conquer them, to peer into the shadows of the unknown, and to safely come home again—all within the realm of "this didn't happen." Always I was within the listening range of my dad's scary yet soothing voice and the warmth of his loving embrace.

That's a pretty good way to grow into the larger and real troubles of adulthood, isn't it?

But some kids just don't like scary stories, whether they're ghost stories or fairy tales or news reports. And that's okay, too. They're kids.

It is up to us, as the big people who love them, to be aware of our little people's curiosities, interests and real fears, and to be responsible enough to steer away from moments like meeting the Technicolor monsters. In 1958, my parents and aunts and uncles reprimanded the amorous adolescents who had acted so irresponsibly—hey, they were kids, too. That satisfied some of us, but left the potential for nightmares or running and jumping into parents' beds or other coping mechanisms coming into play. Two of my young cousins stayed up, chattering about the movie. I put little crawdads from the creek in my teenaged cousin's bedroom and went to sleep with a sinister smile on my face.

And I had crept out to the creek in my pajamas, tiptoeing in the darkness, wandering in the cool rippling water, alone and unafraid.

Fairy tales, then, are not responsible for producing in children fear, or any of the shapes of fear; fairy tales do not give the child the idea of the evil or the ugly; that is in the child already, because it is in the world already. Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.

—G. K. Chesterton, *The Red Angel* (1909)



In words from someone who is far more connected to the educational aspects of scary stories than I:

...scary tales serve an important purpose, say psychologists and children's literature specialists...[providing] great entertainment [and helping] kids through key developmental stages...fairy tales actually help kids face the fears they already have—and vanquish them.”

—Originally published by Patti Jones in the October 2001 issue of *Child* magazine.

Thus, Sherry Norfolk and I offer to all those who love gentler squeals, giggles, and groans, a collection of stories to tickle with fearless frights: *Boo-Tickle Tales*. Within these pages, younger listeners, capable of enjoying stories for Pre-K through Grade Four, and those who love them enough to read stories with them and encourage reading and stories from them will find silly monsters, gentle ghosts, slightly spooky rhymes, and strange adventures.

Mentors, educators, parents, and story-lovers both young and young-at-heart will enjoy the discoveries, face the little fears, and find the giddy joy of racing through the darkness and stopping in the light.

These are not horror stories. Think of them as happy tales. Weird, but happy tales.

*Lyn Ford*

## CHAPTER 1

# Creepy, Squeaky, Haunted Houses

Bad joke: What should always run around a haunted house? A big fence!

### Too Noisy

By Sherry Norfolk

#### Baby Boos

Little Spider lived in a haunted house that she thought was too noisy, because the Daddy Ghosts howled, "WOOOOOO!"

And the Momma Ghosts yowled, "Wooooooo!"

And the Baby Ghosts cried, "Boo, boo, boo!"

"Too noisy!" said Little Spider, "I'm going to talk to the Wise Old Owl. He'll know what to do!" Off she went, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

"Help!" said the Little Spider, "My haunted house is too noisy!"

"Go back," hooted the Wise Old Owl, "and put some bats in the house with you."

"Bats?"

"Bats!"

So the Little Spider went back, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl,



creepy-crawl.

She put some bats in the haunted house, and they hung from the rafters squeaking, "Eee-eee-eee!"

And the Daddy Ghosts still howled, "WOOOOOO!"

And the Momma Ghosts still yowled, "Wooooooo!"

And the Baby Ghosts still cried, "Boo, boo, boo!"

"Too noisy!" said Little Spider, "I'm going to talk to the Wise Old Owl. He'll know what to do!" Off she went, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

"Help!" said the Little Spider, "My haunted house is too noisy!"

"Go back," hooted the Wise Old Owl, "and put some black cats in the house with you."

"Cats?"

"Cats!"

So the Little Spider went back, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

She put some black cats in the haunted house, and they meowed, "Mroooowwwww!"

And the bats still squeaked, "Eee-eee-eee!"

And the Daddy Ghosts still howled, "WOOOOOO!"

And the Momma Ghosts still yowled, "Wooooooo!"

And the Baby Ghosts still cried, "Boo, boo, boo!"

"Too noisy!" said Little Spider, "I'm going to talk to the Wise Old Owl. He'll know what to do!" Off she went, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

"Help!" said the Little Spider, "My haunted house is too noisy!"

"Go back," hooted the Wise Old Owl, "and put some witches in the house with you."

"Witches?"

"Witches!"

So the Little Spider went back, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl. She put some witches in the haunted house, and they cackled, "Ah ha



ha ha ha ha ha!"

And the black cats still meowed, "Mrooowwwwww!"

And the bats still squeaked, "Eee-eee-eee!"

And the Daddy Ghosts still howled, "WOOOOOO!"

And the Momma Ghosts still yowled, "Wooooooo!"

And the Baby Ghosts still cried, "Boo, boo, boo!"

"Too noisy!" said Little Spider, "I'm going to talk to the Wise Old Owl. He'll know what to do!" Off she went, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

"Help!" said the Little Spider, "My haunted house is too noisy!"

"Go back," hooted the Wise Old Owl, "Take out the bats. Take out the black cats. And take out the witches."

"Really?"

"Really!"

So the Little Spider went back, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl, creepy-crawl.

She sent the witches back to their cauldrons, "Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

She sent the black cats back to their families, "Mrooowwwwww!"

She sent the bats back to hang in the trees, "Eee-eee-eee!"

And the Daddy Ghosts still howled, "WOOOOOO!"

And the Momma Ghosts still yowled, "Wooooooo!"

And the Baby Ghosts still cried, "Boo, boo, boo!"

"Ahhh!" said Little Spider, "My haunted house sounds just right!"

And she lived Happily Ever After!

BOO!



## NOTES

Inspired by the noisy house in Margot Zemach's *It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folktale* (Square Fish, 1990), this haunted house is brought to life when the kids join in, howling and yowling and crying and



creepy-crawling! The very repetitive text allows even very young listeners to learn the story as it is being told, to predict what is going to come next in the text, and to join right in!

This story is fun to act out in a classroom or library. Cast kids in the roles of Spider, Owl, Daddy Ghosts, Mama Ghosts, etc. Use everybody—you can cast several kids as each character. You'll narrate the story and let the kids say their lines or make their sounds and act out the story. Encourage the Spider to "creepy-crawl" and the bats to fly. You will have already modeled how those actions can look as you tell the story, so the kids will know how to do it appropriately.

Dramatization is not only fun, but educational! As they re-tell the story, the kids are demonstrating an understanding of sequence, setting, characters, problem, attempts to solve the problem, and resolution. If you have time, switch the roles around so that they are re-telling the story from different perspectives. Watch them problem-solve as they collaborate to tell the story.

The pattern of this story is so clear that it's easy to lead children in developing a whole new story using this story framework. It looks like this:

- Where will the new story take place? (Setting)
- What's the problem? Too Noisy (always!)
- Who thinks it's too noisy? (Main character)
- What three noises are causing the problem?
- Who is the Wise One?
- What three noises does the Wise One add?
- How does the problem get solved? Remove the last three noises—always!

Several years ago, a kindergarten class I worked with wrote their own story, "The Noisy Graveyard," and turned it into a play complete with



costumes, props, and a backdrop. They put on their play for the entire school, proudly announcing that they had written themselves!

## The Scary House

By Sherry Norfolk

Inspired by a Puerto Rican folktale

### Baby Boos and Little Boos

Once there was a little girl named Nita who lived in a house that she thought was verrrrry scarrrrry—because...

*The floors went eee, awww, eee, awww.* [With flattened hands parallel to floor, seesaw them like loose floor boards in time to the sounds.]

*The doors went squeeeeak.* [Use your forearm as a door with your elbow as the hinge.]

*And the lights went SNAP!* [Pull imaginary light cord.]

Every night, Nita's gramma took her up the stairs—*tap, tap, tap, tap.*  
[Pat thighs rhythmically.]

Down the hall—*eee, awww, eee, awww.*

To Nita's room, where...

She opened the door with a *squeeeeak!*

She turned on the light with a *SNAP!*

She pulled the covers up to Nita's chin.

And every night she said, "Now Nita, are you going to keep me awake with your moaning and groaning and crying like you always do?"

And every night Nita said, "Not me!"

So Grandma kissed her goodnight—*SMACK!*

She turned off the light—*SNAP!*

And she'd go back down the hall—*eee, awww, eee, awww.*