

# The Incident at Draycott Woods

I step into the cold fall night. A thin layer of fog hovers above the fallen autumn leaves, and the scent of fireworks lingers in the air. It is Halloween, a night of worshipping witches and goblins and whatever ungodly creatures exist in common folklore and urban myths. I try not to get caught up in the night, partly because I am a high school senior now, but mainly because of my town's dark past. Two years ago, on this same night, four kids disappeared. They were in the notorious Draycott Woods, and seemingly vanished without a trace.

As bad as that sounds on its own, the police were left with no leads, other than a circle of salt surrounding some belongings of the kids. There were no weapons found nearby, no forensic trail left by the killer, and no known enemies of any of the victims. While the police department struggled to find the missing kids, the conversations of Waterville citizens quickly began to encompass rumours and theories of a gruesome quadruple murder.

It was this preconception of the night that led to my trepidation when I stepped out into the Halloween air. I was well aware that the assailant had not been found yet, and whatever 'evil' forces lingered in Waterville may be just as inclined to attack me as they were with the 4 other kids, 3 of whom I was friends with.

To get to my friend's house, I would have to cut through Draycott Woods. I take a deep breath, and start towards the treeline. I can't see past the first couple rows of trees, but I know this area of the forest well.

As soon as my foot steps off the road and onto the grass of Draycott Woods, a ululating howl of what I presume to be a coyote, echoes through the forest, as if to forewarn me of the dangers ahead. I tentatively continue into the forest. I look back to see fog engulfing the streetlights, and soon find myself to be lurking amongst dancing shadows, as naked fall trees sway with the cold breeze.

*Crunch.*

I stop. My heart beats uncontrollably. I reach for my phone to use the flashlight.

*SNAP.*

I turn around as fast as my hips permit. About ten feet away from me stands a figure. I can see his silhouette against the faint light from the street lights. Adrenaline begins gushing through my veins, and before I know it, I am turning the other way and running as fast as I can. The crunching of leaves behind me becomes louder and louder, until...

*Thump.*

I trip over a log and land face-first into the moist dirt. But something tastes weird, almost like-

The footsteps stop behind me. I take my face out of the dirt, and shine my flashlight in the general direction of the sound. My light illuminates a masked man standing behind a tree. I shine the light to the ground next to me, and notice I am surrounded by something. As blood begins to ichor from a wound on my forehead and my vision becomes blurred, I realize what I am surrounded by...

I am surrounded by a circle of salt...