



CW: Foul Language, Homophobia, Violence against Transgender People, Violence



Absence makes the heart grow ... hungry. Welcome back to the new season of Witchever Path, the interactive horror anthology. If you're new, here's how this works. At the end of each episode, you are given three options to vote on. After a week, the majority's choice selects the path of the next episode. Your choices determine the fate of our characters. And it's not always a happy ending.

We're trying something new with this one. We've done confessionals, full audio-dramas, and all manners of hybrids. But this time we wanted to give you a very special experience, and bring you even closer to the story. This is a story about YOU, told in second person. And we couldn't think of a better voice for this particular "you" than Tyler Bell, the creative dynamo behind [WestSide Fairytales](#).

Let's see what lengths you and Tyler will go to in order to protect your family. Here is:

SENTRY Episode 1: Old Home Day

Last night, the security cameras caught the hammock swinging in the backyard. Argus Pros are a decent mid-range camera, but you don't often see what movement first triggered them unless the branch, animal, or person is already coming into frame. You set its sensitivity to high last week. Right after the Old Home Day celebration.

You never really liked Old Home Day, but after being stuck inside for the better part of a year, your wife and kid needed some sort of contact with people. Your son, Cole, was actually excited about it. He wanted the local holiday to be the first public outing with his new name. Jaime, your wife has been really supportive. She bought him new clothes, helped him cut his tight, 3C Afro down into a fade. You even helped, because, fuck, with no black barbers nearby,



you wanted to be of *some* use. Shit, you never even heard of 3C, or hair types, until the third year of being married to a black woman. Once the kid had enough hair that needed to be managed, you learned all about the products and care they'd need.

What the fuck had been in the hammock? You replayed the footage again. It looked like something was weighing down the middle. You waited to watch a racoon pop its beaky-ass nose out of the folds. But nothing. You looked at the little windmill lawn ornament next to it. No wind. A week of hyper vigilance was getting to you.

The morning of Old Home Day, you went for a run. When you came back, Jaime was helping Cole with his binder in the bathroom, the door wide open. You caught a glimpse of it, and turned away.

"Sorry," you said.

"It's okay," he said, talking in a lower voice than he used just six weeks before. He always tried to talk low now. "Check it out."

The binder around his ribs looked like one of your old knee braces. At least it did to you. You told him that, thinking it was funny. The two of them looked at you like you were the biggest asshole on the planet. Maybe you are. Cole went to his room to finish getting dressed.

You and Jamie moved to the kitchen, where you got a beer and gave a plaintive shrug as an apology. She was going to lay into you, you knew it. But then Cole came in, in his new Bad Brains shirt and Doc Martens. He was beaming. Your little girl had never smiled like that ever since she turned twelve. But now, even though it filled you with a lot of fucking feelings you



couldn't even express, you were also proud of him. *Him*.

But Rowe's a small town. You grew up here, even though you ran to the Marines the moment you could legally enlist just to get away. You loved the pine trees, but you hated the sparse neighborhoods and newer, cramped little cul de sacs. The place is just... fucking predictably, well, "white," as your wife would say. But you'd argue that's everywhere that's affordable. You can't get this lawn in Massachusetts.

But what made the hammock swing last night? You reviewed the security footage through the app on your phone. The hammock rocked from 1AM - 2:30 and then stopped. The camera started recording again around five, just before sunup to catch the hammock rolling back to its resting position, the way it does when someone gets out of it. You didn't like that.

When you got out of the corps, you and Jamie spent a decade in Somerville, Mass. You had Colleen, and tried raising them in apartments that just kept getting more and more expensive until the prices pushed you back North, where the family house was yours for the taking. You didn't want it. But the last few years had turned the country ugly. Maybe getting away from the major cities was a good thing. You were fine with New Hampshire. But back to Rowe? While talking to your mom at the family cookout, you pretended to consider it a real option while repeating the same mantra in your head "not there, anywhere but there."

Rewinding the footage for the third time, you wish you had just been clear to everyone up front. But your mom's pitch was smooth. Take up the old house, give your kid a chance at a quiet life. You had to bite your tongue when she stressed to you and Jamie it was *safer* than Somerville. Had the Poulet place not been burned down after the family's arrest, you could have



pointed right at it. “I don’t know, Ma, the brown shirts over there owned three of the town’s gas stations.”

The Poulets sucked shit and always had. Them getting brought down for racketeering and illegal gun sales tickled you. Your mom saw that as proof the town was on the upswing. And when you were still dragging your feet, working hard at your job doing PT at the VA, your mother moved in for the kill with Jamie and Colleen. Promising the house below asking price, waiving a lot of the things that would usually be a hindrance, even with a VA loan. That Colleen could get a big, giant dog, hell, maybe chickens. When you got home one night after a long shift, you found Jamie really wanted the place. And, she puts up with you. She means the world to you. What could you do except move up here?

You all adjusted, more or less. The first thing Jamie missed was the food. There was one good pizza place in town, a Chili’s, and a Chinese restaurant that you and a few other families kept alive during the pandemic. She had taken to shopping a town over to get most of the ingredients she needed to make what she judged a decent meal. You spend your time at work, the shooting range, and home. Your friends live half a world away, anyway. Everyone you care about is in this house.

You go outside, and you walk the perimeter of your backyard’s stockade fence. You think about the moment at Old Home Day that Cole, smiling and proud standing by the ring toss, got pelted with a soda that flew out from a crowd of kids. You were in the thick of those little shits before they could run, demanding to know who threw it. Then Andy Calhoun, the fucking loser, sauntered over yelling at you, trying to cape for his son and his goon squad.

“They’re just kids, kids have fun. I don’t tell your kid to put a fucking dress back on.”



And you remember Andy having his fun with little Paul Fay in middle school, where he held the smaller boy, crying and scared, in the cold shower of the locker room until he made Paul scream out he was a faggot. In the present day, Andy was balding, more wrinkled than he should be, but still the same prick. With a crowd forming, someone had to back down before this went ugly. You didn't move. Andy pretended to turn away for a second and then put his hands on you. And you whispered, "thank you."

The ice from your drink bounced off Andy's nose as you tossed your drink at him. If you were writing this story, you would have shot off a snappy line. But the only snap you heard was Andy's nose as your fist rushed to catch up with your discarded cup. The cops were on the two of you in an instant. You put up your hands, lazily, and they told you to follow them. Once they brought you behind the event tents, to the field's pitcher's mound, you expected the handcuffs. They never came out.

This town backed the blue, but the one thing they all loved more was a vet. So they let you go, provided you take your family home and keep them away from the rest of the festivities. You knew it was likely Andy would press charges. You also knew that at least fifteen people filmed it. It wouldn't stick. But looking at your son, on the way home, quiet and staring out the window, you knew what the cool kids in Rowe would do. They'd take the weekend, wait, get angry, and then find a way to get to Cole.

You're still thinking about that when you find the three loose boards in the fence, near the hammock. Scanning the perimeter, you're ready to draw before you catch yourself. *They're still kids*. They could turn it around. But if they hurt Cole, well... How bad would it be to wear the same thing every day again? Pushing on the boards with your foot, they bend away from the frame too easily to your liking. You look back at the house, at the backyard camera. This part of the fence isn't in frame. A blind spot. You gotta fix that.



And then you notice the glint of a phone screen in the grass just on the other side of the fence. Crouching down, you brace against the wood and hold it away from the fence while you slide your foot under and manage to drag the phone closer until you can pick it up.

It's a Smart Phone. Old, cracked screen. Your property extends a good 50 feet beyond the fence before the treeline starts. Hell, you had mowed that spot three days before. Someone dropped this. You try to turn on the phone, but its battery's dead. Jamie was gone with Cole to the dentist. You have three options.

NARRATOR:

What will you choose to do?

1. Bring the phone inside and charge it.
2. Call a friend on the local PD
3. Put the phone back, install a camera on that side and see if someone comes for it.

You can vote now at Witcheverpath.com/vote. You have until November 4, 2021.

Old Home Day was written by Journee and Steven and produced by Steven.

It stars:

- *Tyler Bell as You*

Featuring:

- *Mars LaFond as Cole*
- *Journee LaFond as Jaime*



- *Steven as Andy Calhoun*

Art for this story comes from Alison Salenetri AKA Busy Flea Art.

Foley Effects by Witchever Path, ZapSplat, and Audio Hero

The Witchever Path theme is by RYDR.

The Song "Burning Out" is by Under Earth. Get more of their music at [Epidemic Sound](#).

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That's it for this week. Come back in three more to see how your vote turned out. Until next

time, Sleep with a Clear Consequence. Choose The Path.