



DAVID ANAXAGORAS
MISS SPYDER



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MISS SPYDER

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JEFFREY THOMAS

YOU SIT IN CLASS and you are nine years old. Your hair is so blond it's white. So is your skin. That's why they call you Ghost. Your name really is Griffin, like the myth, but no one knows that except your teacher.

She is called Miss Spyder.

At least, that's what you call her. You haven't told anyone about the nickname. They think you're weird as it is. Someone would ask why you call her that, and it would be the fat bully Hopper. You would have to tell him you call her Miss Spyder because of her eyes.

Then Hopper would think you're weird and pull you into the bathroom and smash your face up against the dirty mirror and make you say "Bloody Mary" five times. Bloody Mary would come and you'd get cut up. You've seen her waiting in the corner of that mirror. She looks like a rusty smudge in the glass, but it's her. She watches every time you pee. She has a knife. If you don't say her name, she can't get out of the mirror.

So you decide you won't tell about Miss Spyder's eyes. You saw them on the day you saw the dead bird. No else saw that either. The bird and the eyes, those are your secrets.

Right now Miss Spyder is working at her desk and you are supposed to be reading your history book but you look at Nat instead and watch as she digs a wet gray gob of snot from her nose and slurps it up without any thought at all of being watched. Your stomach flops over. Then you see it's not snot, it's brain--she's eating her own brain one small morsel at a time.

The day you saw the bird you had just finished reading aloud. No one heard you. You looked out the window and a dead bird fell out of the sky. You never saw it happen before but it seemed right that once in a while a bird would die in mid flight and have to fall to the ground. You almost said to the class--hey, look, a dead bird--but the words fell back into your throat when you saw how many eyes Miss Spyder has.

She has eight eyes and they are black as demon tongues. Two large eyes in front. Four in a row across her forehead. Two more, much smaller, by her ears. She sees everything.

And now, so do you.

Reading time is over and children buzz to the playground. You resist the urge to flit out but it's hard because you hum inside all the time. You skip and skim and flutter and dart. But today you hold still because you want to see the eyes again. Because they don't scare you even though they should. Because you want to be seen.

Hopper trips past you and kicks your leg on purpose. You try not to flinch but you do. Hopper's hair isn't on right today and you can see the metallic green scales underneath his scalp.

When Hopper finally moves past, Miss Spyder is looking right at you. She lays her book down, gets up from the desk. Eight black

reflections of you curl up in her eyes. The white peach fuzz between your shoulder blades stands up and your arms tingle.

You don't move.

She reaches out, long arms covered with black and white bristles. She leans down to give you a very special kiss and you don't mind because she sees you and you dreamed about this kiss many times and it always made you tingly inside. When you feel the hot blood draining away from your body, it is a relief.

You don't even scream.



