

Midnight Gazebo Kiss

Contributor: Chris Fuchs
Informant(s): Brandon Deerwester
Title: Midnight Kiss
Semester/year: Fall, 2014
Instructor: John McDowell

Genre: School Legend

Text: “There’s the one legend they like to tell us at Orientation. So they used to lock the doors to the dorms at midnight. It was said they would try to run out to the Gazebo, you know, the one kind of by like... uh... sample gates area. So they would try to kiss their boyfriend or girlfriend... their partner and then run back to the dorms before they were locked. Apparently if you kiss your true love at midnight now on Valentine’s day, you’ll be with them forever.”

Context: Brandon was a friend of mine that graduated from IU in the Spring of 2014. I asked him if he had heard any memorable legends while at IU.

Points of Interest: It’s interesting to me that a dorm game was created out of rebellion against the institutional enforcement of the Dorms. It pushed how far the student folk group can go against these official rules that they were forced to obey. It was celebrated and turned into a tradition. It was a ritual the students created. Now, as the dorms no longer lock the students out at twelve and all that’s left is the story of how people would kiss under the moonlight, legend has started to take form. It celebrates folk freedom and promotes romanticism, reflecting something that is one many minds of the students at IU, finding a loved one in a period where we’re becoming who we are going to be for the rest of our lives.

Ghost of Read

Contributor: Chris Fuchs
Informant(s): Cecilia Gutknecht
Title: Ghost with no face
Semester/year: Fall, 2014
Instructor: John McDowell

Genre: Dorm Legend

Text: “In the 1960’s there was a Medical Student who got in a fight with his girlfriend. They were living on the 3rd floor of Read, and they were upset and stressed out because of school. He went into an angry frenzy and grabbed a scalpel that was lying nearby, because he was a med student. Well he ended up slicing her throat and removing her face from the body. He hid her body in the tunnels that are under Read. Later on, he was being questioned by the police and they saw red, like, liquid dripping out of a cabinet drawer that was in his room. The police officer went over to look, and when he opened the drawer, he saw her face! Well the medical student then admitted to the murder. Now people say that they see the ghost of her walking around the basement where her body was hidden, or sometimes on the 3rd floor where she was killed. People even say that sometimes when they around those areas, they feel something grab their shoulder, but when they turn around no one is there.”

Context: I asked Ceci if she knew of any legends about IU while we were in my apartment, which is located off campus of IU. It was around Halloween when she told me this story, which might contribute to the gruesome contents of this legend. She drew me a picture of how she pictures the ghost, describing the ghost as wearing a yellow blood stained dress with dark hair.

Points of Interest: I find this legend the most interesting of the legends told to me, because of the detail provided in the story. It describes many details, from the weapon used to end her life, to the way it was used, to finding her face in a drawer, and even what happened to the murderer. These details seem to serve as a shock factor, yet, like most legends, despite being farfetched, there is still a sense of believability provided. I believe the key detail aiding to the believability of the legend is the fact that the man was a Medical Student under pressure from school.

The Woman in Black

Contributor: Chris Fuchs

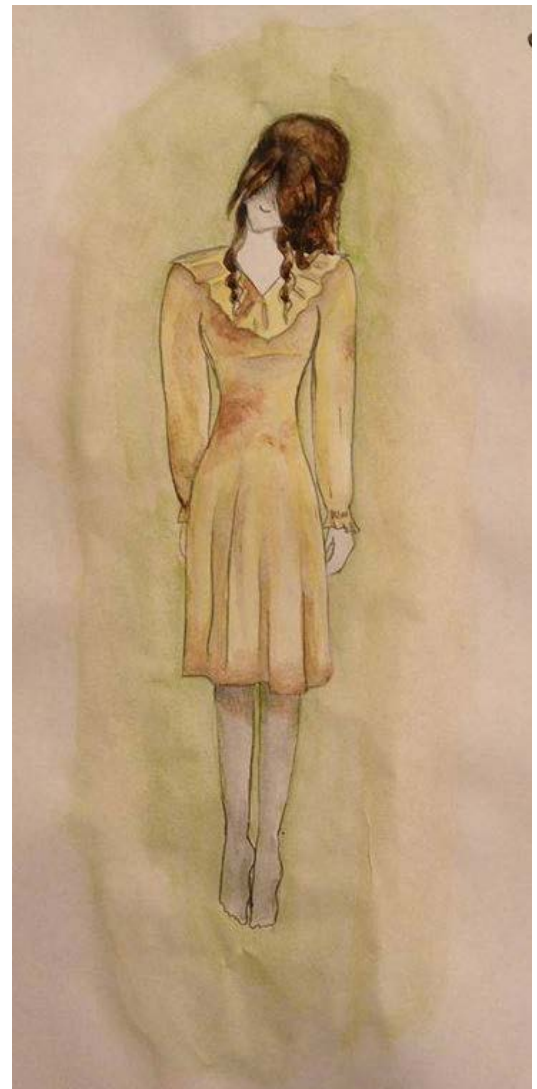
Informant(s): Unknown

Title: The Woman in black by the Cemetery.

Semester/year: Fall, 2014

Instructor: John McDowell

Genre: Halloween Legend



Text: This is a legend that I believe I had heard in my supernatural folklore class a previous semester, but an event that happened a few days after Halloween revitalized the legend in my mind. There was a legend told to me by someone in a previous class, I can't exactly remember who, who said that on Halloween a scary woman who wears all black roams a street looking to spook students. I can't exactly remember the details involving which street she would roam, but sometimes she would chase kids and even crash parties. This seems like a wacky old bitter woman to me, if it weren't for the fact that this woman has been seen scaring people around Bloomington since the 1911's. Cecilia Gutknecht and I were driving to campus, by the cemetery which lies between Third Street and Kirkwood just a few days after Halloween. I glimpse a shadow of a figure in the corner of my eye. In front of a house, relatively close to the graveyard, maybe two houses away from the edge, was the palest woman I've seen, wearing an old, all black dress and hat. The stare she gave me as I drove by and the stillness of her body, all but her head that followed me, tilting slightly as I drove off out of view gave me a shock, and I don't get scared easily. There was something just unsettling about this woman, who seemed out of place, out of time, and ill dressed for the weather. It wasn't later that I recalled the legend of the woman in black. I later researched that the woman is often spotted on East Third Street.

Context: This legend was told to me in the past, in one of my classes, but it came to significance when I had my own encounter, face to face with the legend. I was driving by the cemetery which is located between Kirkwood and Third Street.

Points of Interest: It's interesting that the legend only happens on Halloween. Many stories are told around Halloween to frighten fellow students and create excitement and set the mood for Halloween. What might have been a woman trying to scare kids in the past could have potentially been an event so frightening, that her story lives on, told through the ages. Now, such as what happened to me, there seems the possibility that any figure that can fit into the format of the legend, will, tricking our minds. It gives us an explanation for what we didn't understand, something that scared us, and our minds desperately try to make sense of it. This legend is told to entertain for most people, as it's often told at parties, where the sole intent is to scare the party goers on a night where they are supposed to be scared.

IU Statues

Contributor: Chris Fuchs

Informant(s): Brian Pepper

Title: IU statues do things
Semester/year: Fall, 2014
Instructor: John McDowell

Genre: School Legend

Text: “You know that one statue, is it Herman Wells? Well he has a hand that is sticking out which students like to shake. I think it does something, but I can’t remember what... Maybe it guarantee’s you to graduate in four years or something? I don’t know. I just know everyone does it. And then there is another statue. By the library, by the fountain... you know, by where you lived [Wright]? Like... where everyone goes to walk. A guy is playing the piano and I think people put stuff in his hand. Or his hat? I can’t remember. I think both... Flowers I think. I think that does something too. Or maybe it’s just a tribute to the guy. But I think if you put a flower in his hand while it’s raining he’ll play you a tune.”

Context: This legend took place over a cell phone call. We were talking about IU.

Points of Interest: The uncertainty was interesting in this legend, even as he wasn’t sure what he was telling me, he told me something, whether he made it up or not. I think this is a good, possible example of when a legend gets changed as it is passed around. Legends can tell you something of the person telling the legend. Knowing Brian, he is a dedicated student who makes sure he will graduate on time. He often questions me on how my classes are going, so his remark about graduating in four years stood out to me. We also like playing music, so the legend about a statue playing a tune seemed to express the informant’s personality, funny, but also into music.

Discussion

The small amount of legends I’ve collected gave me a good understanding of the people telling the legends, and the significance of the setting the legends took place. Many of them gave mentions to historical events or people, and enlightened us to rituals and traditions that are created from these events.

The Gazebo legend made a distinction between institutional powers and the effect it has on its related folk culture. Running out to kiss a loved one under the stars and running back before the doors were shut demonstrates the significance of freedom and romance over the penalties given by the institutional rules. This theme was so strong and prevalent in the folk culture that a ritual took place, in a sort of game. It exemplifies the importance of liminality in folk groups. The students ran out to kiss someone, hoping not to get locked out. In this flight, anything can happen, and this state of liminality is important for self-expressionism in the folk group.

The ghost of Read demonstrated the fear of pressure from the two greatest sources of stress in college, school work and relationships. It teaches a lesson of what is possible if a person is pushed beyond their limits in their culture. The other legend that touched on the severe stress of school was the IU statues legend. The informant is often concerned with graduating on time. The legend is symbolic to his desire to graduate. He believes that simply shaking a statues hand will magically allow one to graduate. Also, it signifies the strength of tradition and ritual, as he shook the statues hand, without actually knowing what the legend was about. He did as other people were doing, because it worked as a rite of passage; one from the adolescent high schooler to the young adult who is preparing for the onslaught of college stress.

The other legends were ghost stories that are often told around Halloween. These sorts of stories are told more as a performance than anything, and they are told to scare and thrill you. The stories told around Halloween have become almost ritualistic, and signifies the strong importance Halloween is in the student folk culture.