

*September, 1939*

*Under a sunset sky streaked with pinks and yellows, a scarecrow stands alone in a field. She's a sorry sight in a tatty red gingham frock that was once someone's Sunday Best. She has a sack for a head, buttons for eyes and stitches for a smile. Draped in a musty old shawl, she hangs on her cross like forgotten laundry, buffeted by the breeze as a murder of crows peck at her head. She will give herself a name, Suky, but for now her mind is as empty as her pockets. Across the tilled soil comes the clonk-clonk-clonk of a cowbell.*

*A figure stalks across the field, swinging the cowbell like a priest with incense, but he moves unnaturally, limbs all herky-jerky as if new and in need of a stretch. His dusty dinner jacket billows behind him, his scuffed top hat is at a jaunty angle. The crows caw at him to keep away, but he keeps coming.*

*His head is a pumpkin of prize-winning orange. His smile a jagged sawtooth, his eyes triangles of black.*

*The crows know enough to fly away at this point, leaving Suky alone with him. He rattles the cowbell some more to ensure they don't come back. The echo dies and there is only the gentle rumble of the breeze. The air is Autumn crisp, the soil damp, the sky now bleeds red.*

*Pumpkinhead stuffs the cowbell into his dinner jacket. It sometimes clonks as he moves closer to Suky. He circles her, his feet skipping like a dancer's, then he cradles her sack cloth head and whispers words in a language not heard since his kind were banished.*

*The words sink inside her, filling her to the brim. It takes time and Pumpkinhead is patient. Suky shudders, her straw stuffing rustles and she looks up. There's a light in those button*