

Cuisinart and the Cowboy

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It was a cold October night in the Pines of Prescott. It was so freezing and foggy that night, the brightest glow stick would be obliterated. Frederick's mid-century home was tucked among manzanita bushes, wild gourds, butternut squash and field pumpkins. Palmer Oaks and Alligator Juniper surrounded the property. Frederick, a young lad age twelve, was home alone. His house loomed at the end of a cul-de-sac like an ominous mansion featured on Scooby Doo.

Television and media were Frederick's preferred pastimes. Whenever he was bored or done with homework, he would watch his favorite shows, *Scoob!* and *Alaskan Bush People*. Since Frederick was a burgeoning gakusei, his other favorite show was *Cobra Kai*. On this particular night he was so fascinated by the karate images on screen, he failed to realize his parents slipped out the door and left him behind. As the light of the full moon shone through the window and caught the silver frame of his great grandmother's portrait, he felt like her eyes penetrated through him.

The old wooden house swayed and creaked as chilly, autumn winds rustled through the Pines. Shadows of long limbs grazed across the living room windows. Bigger branches bumped the backside of the house. The clanging sounds caused Frederick to pause his favorite show and call out "Mom, Dad." He heard nothing, so he called again "Mom, Dad!" as he tried to keep fear out of his voice. He got no response. Frederick's mind began to race with scary thoughts of homeless men breaking into the house, abducting him and his parents not knowing what happened.

Realizing he was alone in the big, old house Frederick scrambled to his feet. Hearing sounds of footsteps creaking on the oak floors, like an old cowboy meandering through a saloon Frederick cautiously peeked his head out the bedroom door. Then he heard what sounded like panting. Frederick peered down the dark hallway to see what was making such scary sounds.

Suddenly, he saw a seven-foot-tall shadow of what appeared to be a strange man, prompting Frederick to run out of the house screaming. As he ran, his elbow knocked his mom's favorite china teacup off the hallway shelf and it fell to the ground and shattered.

Outside, crows cawed and coyotes howled at the moonlight. Frederick was terrified so he ran like a sprinter into the garage. As he did, he accidentally kicked over a gnome statue which made a loud crash. Keys jingling in hand, the loud crash scared Frederick so much he thought the seven-foot-tall man was behind him. Frederick jimmied open the car door. He struggled to put the key in the ignition but used too much force. The key jammed, the car stalled, Frederick flipped. After a few minutes, he chastised himself for being so fearful. He sheepishly walked back into his house. When he came into the main entryway he looked up and saw his 6'6 father standing in the hallway, adorned in western attire, suppressing a smile. He asked Frederick, "Why did you run out of the house?" "What sounds scared you?" Frederick replied, "I saw a shadow of a man, and he was breathing really heavy and stomping his feet and then I heard banging and clanging and sputtering." "I called you and mom, but you never answered. I thought there was a strange man in the house, so I ran outside to the garage." His dad chuckled and told him "Son, that was me in the hallway. I was wearing my Halloween costume and I was walking down the hall to show you. I have been planning to change the light in the hallway but have not had time. Those sputtering, panting sounds were coming from the coffee pot as your mom poured steaming water into the reservoir.