

Junior Division, Prose
Isabelle Chaignon, Goulds
The Old Hag (an excerpt)

I try to scream, but my jaw simply shakes. No sound comes out.

Her grin spreads even further.

She dips down so her nose nearly touches mine. Her breath washes over me - it smells like salt, rotting wood, and something dead for a long time. I feel sick.

“Are you awake now?” She asks me.

The voice creeps into my ears like cold water, high and broken, but there is that little glimmer of joy in it - as if she enjoys my helplessness. I am awake. But I still cannot move.

I try to push back, to lift my arms up, to shove her, to do anything, but I can't. I can't even blink without effort. My body doesn't work right now and my mind is screaming inside of it.

She cocks her head. “You've been sleeping in my bed,” she tells me in a soft coo. “Didn't your mother teach you any manners?”

My head is spinning. I do not know what she's saying. I do not even know what is real anymore. I can feel every single part of her - the weight of her bones all the way through the thin blanket, the points of her knees pushing against me. She's solid.

Her fingers are twitching again, creeping up towards my throat. I can feel her nails, sharp and dry like splinters.

I am going to die here. That is all I can think of. I am going to die in my own bed, and when they find me, they will say my heart just stopped.