

Elizabeth Langston sat in the very last seat in the very last row in Wolf Creek Theater and prepared to watch her daughter fall down the rabbit hole.

This was the theater's final play. Time was catching up with all of Wolf Creek. No longer was there room for quaint old buildings full of mystery. The town's next play would be performed on a modern stage, in a modern building.

Children barely old enough to be out of diapers sat on the hips of high school seniors, kindergartners held hands with junior high, fifth grade, fourth grade, tenth – all impatiently lined up behind the curtains waiting to take part in the theater's farewell performance. For this special night the theater was filled with proud parents, all anxiously awaiting their child's entrance.

All, that is, except Beth.

An empty breeze filtered through the rafters, smoothed the hair on darkened heads, swayed curtain edges frazzled by time's not-so-gentle usage. The stench of too-buttery popcorn and stale sweat oozed from the theater's wooden pores. The building had never known how to be anything but a theater. For almost one hundred years, the padded walls had cradled audiences close, giving permission to laugh and to cry, to hate and to love within its deep, velvety darkness.

But the theater never gave up its secret. Not until Beth's tenth birthday, when she stumbled from the stage full of humiliation at having forgotten her lines, and discovered a decaying tunnel hidden beneath aging floor boards. A tunnel only a curious child who loved dark, dank places that reminded her of death could love.

Beth Langston killed Lisa Church one week later.

Then Beth killed her own mother.

Lisa's soul took off for Heaven in a blaze of aural light, the way Dorothy Langston's would have – if not for the damned doll now clutched in her granddaughter's hands...