

The Chocolate Man

A Children's Horror Tale

by
Waide Aaron Riddle

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Reviews of *The Chocolate Man*:

"Thanks again for the opportunity to share *The Chocolate Man* with my class. The kids are still talking about it. As you know, all of my students are English language learners, and, in addition to the horror-story genre, I think the main "hook" for them (both sparking their interest and facilitating access) was the abundant use of rhyming verse. This highly original story has been most helpful in these children's development as English speakers, readers and writers."

—Tony Davison
Elementary School Teacher
Los Angeles Unified School District

"Very Interesting – the tight rhyme is playful and engaging – enhances a great story. The narrator you chose would scare the bejabbers out of a prison guard. He sounds as though he is creaking open the lid of his casket for a midnight stroll."

—Dan Masterson, Professor
S.U.N.Y. Rockland Community College

"Each October, we happily expect the mindless horror flicks and expensive haunted houses that lure us with well-executed designs. But it's rare when something comes along that induces goosebumps drawn from the deeper fears of imagination. That's why *The Chocolate Man: A Children's Horror Tale*, a story-poem by a Texas-born writer, Waide Aaron Riddle, is so refreshing.

The 40-minute poem, recorded on compact disc by actor Ron Geren, tells a macabre tale about the evil title character, whose tempting candy turns children into tasty treats that he then consumes. In 1899 New York City, The Chocolate Man sweeps into town periodically to collect the children, bringing them into his dungeon at Black Raven Manor. It brings new meaning to "death by chocolate."

Told in rhyming meter, the story is fascinating throughout and builds in a manner that revives campfire-worthy spoken narrative.

"I wrote this story to encourage storytelling," Riddle says, "and to remember the great American ghost story because that genre is all but faded."

If the story sounds a bit Grimm, it's no coincidence. In 1999, Riddle was cast as an extra in the L. A. production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*.

That's when *The Chocolate Man* came to him. Several months and revisions later, a printed version was completed. Though the work was initially planned for a radio reading, he was persuaded to record it on CD. This format is perfect. Geren's oral theatrics are engaging and his character voices exceptional. The entire piece is underscored with creepy, inventive music. Riddle's impressive enchantment for rhyme, meter and intensely descriptive storytelling are the real stars.

Mass torrents of angry clouds/Waved . . . crawling to earth with fog and mist/Alley cats hissed as the sewer mice dared not risk/Frostbite bit, the street lamps lit/This was just a hint of what was to come/For pure evil wanted some pleasure and a little fun/Beware/The Chocolate Man, he has come/Run children, run."

—Mark Lowry
Star-Telegram Staff Writer
Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

"When is a book not exactly a book? When it is an audio book. When is a children's story not exactly a children's story? When it's just as entertaining for adult. Both of these descriptions apply to this superlative dramatic adaptation of Waide Aaron Riddle's very creepy children's horror tale, *The Chocolate Man*.

As though written by the evil twin of Dr. Seuss, *The Chocolate Man* tells the story of a truly nasty predator who entices children with promises of candy, only to turn them into chocolate children for devouring. Our hero is the young boy, Dean, who is taken to the chocolate man's lair, Black Raven Manor. He must try to find a way to save himself, as well as a captive girl named Jean, who has already lost her arm to the villain. "He said I tasted like pumpkin pie," she tells him.

The story is written in rhythmic, hypnotic verse consciously evoking the traditional fairy tale. The lilting narration and dialogue are all the creepier for it. The audio is ably narrated by actor, Ron Geren, who employs different voices for the various characters and has particular fun with the title character. In the manner of classic radio dramas, the CD also employs a very creepy music soundtrack and some sound effects to enhance the reading.

In many ways, this project is a revival of several traditions that have long been on the wane and are well overdue for a comeback. Audio is a particular good medium present horror stories in. It forces the listener to use his own

imagination to picture the events being described. There's no chance of having the spell broken by seeing a zipper running down the back of a monster costume like can happen in cinema. Horror stories have always been popular choices for oral storytelling. After all, when people are clustered around a campfire in the dark woods, who says, "He, let's all tell some love stories!"

The Chocolate Man very consciously evokes the traditional fairy tale, like those written by the Brothers Grimm. If you've ever read the original versions of classic stories like "Little Red Riding Hood" you know they've often been watered down in adaptations. Riddle avoids this like the plague. He doesn't dumb down his language for children, nor does he temper his disturbing images. It's quite possible some parents will think this story is too strong for younger kids, but I doubt the kids will feel that way. Riddle was invited to present the story in several Los Angeles area schools last year and was so well received he has been asked to return this year. *The Chocolate Man* has even had several successful radio broadcasts.

Riddle has also commissioned a series of illustrations by artist Robert Aragon and hopes to have a picture book published, but as of this writing the audio is the only form it is available in. I hope the book version is published and that it comes with the audio CD included, for they make an excellent compliment to one another.

Do yourself a favor and purchase the CD. Turn the lights down low, settle back, close your eyes and allow this story to take you away. Even better, share it with your kids. It will remind you what it was like to be a small child, shivering at the powerful magic of storytelling. It might even help you regain a little bit of that magic for yourself. Your guaranteed four book wyrms worth of entertainment.

—Garrett Peck
Horror Writers Association

This book is dedicated to all those,
both young and old,
who thirst and hunger
for the great, old-fashioned
ghost story.

Blackraven

Enter into night
in this house
of dark and no light.

Where Evil lives
and ghosts and specters remember. . .
and never forgive.

This house, known as Blackraven,
haunted by death,
where there is no God. . .there is no heaven.

—Originally published in the California State Poetry Society
Poetry Letter 2002

The Chocolate Man

A Children's Horror Tale

Once upon a time,
Long ago in 1899.
In the gritty city of New York City,
'Twas the dead of winter. . .
Listen. . . The ghosts of the dead. . .
Listen. . . As they whisper.
The chill filled the night and the grey day.
Priests and nuns, safe in the church, prayed.
Evil will come, yes it may.
The cobblestone was cold.
Each rotted wood soaked in fungus and mold.
The sky fell with black snow,
Brown currents spiraled down,
Mass torrents of angry clouds
Waved. . . crawling to earth with fog and mist.

Alley cats hissed as the sewer mice dared not risk
Frostbite bit, the street lamps lit.
This was just a hint of what was to come.
For true Evil wanted some pleasure and a little fun.
Beware.
The Chocolate Man, he has come. . .
RUN CHILDREN RUN!

Black snow fell.
Time to tell the tale of The Chocolate Man.
In the distance, the toll of Hell's Bells.
He walked slowly down the town's avenue.
Bats fluttered and flew.
Scavenger rats scurried and hurried through his feet.
They knew. . .
That the dark angels lived
And the guardian angels had died. . .
HIDE CHILDREN HIDE!
For The Chocolate Man is full of lies.
At his side, two black stallions,

With eyes like black diamond medallions,
Drew a funeral carriage. . .
"This is a marriage for the children and death. . ."
Whispered the dead.

May the dead silence their whisper and hold their breath.

Satan's serpents with ruby fire eyes
Entwined and dined on the flies
Burrowed in the carriage casket.
The gift of a basket, full of flesh and maggots,
For every little boy and girl.

The Chocolate Man dressed himself in classic black.
All other colors he lacked.
A frayed top hat and cane.
Stains of death remained.
The Devil's breath blew the stallion's mane.
Hair danced in the wind,
as the horses bowed their heads to sin.
His long black cloak blended in. . .
Flapping in the wind. . .

A suit with copper buckles and buttons suited him.
Boots with soot and earth.
The dead unleashed.
Unearthed.
His skin was as white as chalk.
The stink of children pleased him.
All the better to stalk.

A knock, knock, knock. . . at Satan's door.
Take their dear souls to hell forever more.

His fingers were long. . . thin. . .
And grossly disjointed.

His nails even longer.
Manicured.
And finely pointed.
TALON SHARP!
The grim reaper strikes his harp.
His face was gaunt, sunken and pasty.

Little boys and girls are so-o-o-o-o tasty!

He haunts their dreams.
Drowning them in streams of chocolate blood.
The Chocolate Man smiled. . .
A flood of pleasure, he would treasure,
Oh! The thought!
He could not be stopped.
More kiddies to kill!
No way to measure his thrill.
!Be still, little children, be still!
The Chocolate Man is horribly real.
His lips were blackish blue,
Casting spells and hexes from a witch's brew.
The curse is on you.
His teeth were white - razor sharp - like his nails.
Feel free to shudder. . .
Listen carefully to this tale.

His hair was long, silvery and white.
Strands danced in the cold breeze.
He's pleased to meet you,
So pleased.
He's such a tease. . .
In the air, there is dis-ease.
Darkened specs hid his eyes.
There was no mirror to his soul,
For the Devil had stolen it so long ago.
As the wind blows the snow,

The Chocolate Man walked slow.
Slowly through the city's township. . .
Ghostly hands unlocking a crypt. . .
He came to stand in a small court yard.
Stone statues.
Ice covered, gloom hovered.
Placed in a web-like maze.
An eerie mist of haze brushed
Against a stone mansion. . .
Potions for dark passions

The front door bore:

A House for Children
The Homeless, Orphaned and Unwanted

It's halls haunted by the spirits of forgotten children. . .
All of them seeking a friend.

They would trust him.
The crack of a tree limb.
The ghost of Mother Death appeared,
The children would be leered.
Dressed in layers of black veils and lace. . .
She had no face
She strolled and steered a black baby's carriage,
The ghost of Crib Death.
It's reasons of demise was one's guess.

The Chocolate Man 'dinged' his service bell.
Snow fell.
'Ding, ding, ding
Let the cemeteries sing.
'Ding ding ding'
Aring. . . so the bell rang.
And then he sang,

"Chocolate treats for children,
Come little children come,
Delicious and fun. . ."

The Chocolate Man sung and continued to sing on.
"For little girls there are pink swirls and white twirls.
For little boys there are candy toys
Wrapped in bright foil.
Oh, the joys!
All kinds of chocolates
From The Chocolate Man.
That's me! That's who I am!
Homemade and crafted from these skillful hands.
Treats for all the kiddies and little ones.
Come children come
It's delicious and, oh, so fun."

Mother Death moaned. . .

As the children wandered from their warm home.
Cautious at first, they were
Huddled timidly in coats of fur.

"Hello, who are you sir?"
"I am The Chocolate Man,
Peddling my chocolate treasures and jewels of candies
For all to enjoy, especially for you kiddies."
A little girl stepped forward, her name was Beth.

Mother Death looked on. . .

"We have no money. . ."
"Not to worry honey.
Accept these sweets as a gift from The Chocolate Man.
Understand?"
"Thank you," said Beth.

The faint cry from Crib Death. . .

And The Chocolate Man reached into the casket
And pulled out the basket
Of maggots.
He was the master of illusions
And dreams of all fun things. . .
So it seemed.

“Chocolates, chocolates, chocolates.”

The children one by one reached in for a treat
And something neat.
Each pulled out something tasty and sweet.

“My candy can’t be beat. . .
Go ahead. . .
Eat! Eat! Eat!”

Aaron and his sister Karen
Took a handful of white and strawberry chocolates
With pockets of swirls with blueberry.
Mary and Larry, Gary and Barry,
And Terry and Carrie
Ate milk chocolates with nuts -
Some with a bright red cherry!

No more did the children see. . .
For the lie was in the candy.
The world was no longer cold, dark and scary. . .
Not even to Little Harry,
Who ate chocolate balls wrapped brightly in Blue Royal Foil.
Dean was the only one that had seen how mean
The Chocolate Man really was.

The candy man shot Dean an unearthly gleam

As the specs sheened upon Dean a dark shadow.
The Chocolate Man held his hand out for Dean.
It was full of treasured chocolate candies.

“Go ahead. They taste mighty dandy.”

But Dean looked at the candies with a scowl.
Something wasn't right, he felt,
Something was afoul.
He could have even sworn he heard the candy man growl.
“No,” he said to his foe.

And for a moment the earth stopped still.
Dead still.
The cold froze to a steel chill.
Evil rose within The Chocolate Man.
An expression of unspeakable malevolence.
Then it slowly turned to a smile of devilish anger.

Danger! Children! Danger!

One that gave Dean nightmarish chills up his spine.
Chills of the creepy kind.

“Hide and seek
Take a peek.
Trick or treat
Meet the freak.
Hop and scotch
Tick Tock
Tick tac toe
Another dead soul.”

The candy man sang his words in time like a favorite nursery rhyme.
His smile was wide and full of dark joy,
Then he said,

"So, you want to play a game, boy?
Excellent!
You're it. You'll be the toy."

Mother Death bowed her head.
Crib Death lay silent in it's bed.
Guardian Angels turned and fled.

Dean felt his face flush from red to white,
The contrast was quite a sight.
Suddenly - except for Dean - the children gasped
And clasped their hands around their throats.
Slowly their faces shaded in coats of blue. . .

Blueberry and blackberry treats
Rich raspberry and chocolate chips to eat

Their eyes turned black as licorice sticks,
Exquisite treats.
Handmade by the freak.
Mother Death would meet them soon,
Greeting them after their doom.
Without breath the children collapsed into the arms of death.
One by one life was drained.
The snow stained with chocolate children.

Dean was mystified, horrified
Almost hypnotized. . .
Murder.
He was witness to this.

The Chocolate Man smiled a toothy mile-long smile.
Then said, "It's time for me to play mean, Dean.
The fun is always filthy, never clean.
Girls and boys are my toys.
Lucky you. One. . . Two. . .

Let's play the game.
I'll give you just one more clue.
You're it!
It's just between me and you. . ."

Dean was frozen in fear.
What was the candy man's next move?
It was unclear.
Even the cautions of the dead wouldn't dare whisper in his ear.

The Chocolate Man smiled an even longer smile of razor sharp teeth,
As the 'hench creatures' prepared beneath the carriage.
He sang a rhyme that turned Dean's blood to cold terror
In no time.

"Chocolate children are so yummy and munchy.
Some of them are crunchy.
Some of them are gooey
And s-o-o-o-o-o ooooozey and chewy.
My recipes are a hit,
Especially the one's with peanut bits.
Try my black chocolate syrup,
As sweet as a forgotten crypt."

Dean screamed the scream of all screams,
As the team of hench creatures crawled from the funeral trolley.
These things with claws clawed at him,
Gripping him in a grasp too fast for him to run,
To escape.

"Your fate is now mine!"
The Chocolate Man said as he hissed a laugh,
Then yanked Dean by the wrist and held him still
Till. . .

"You missed your chance to run.
Now kiss the night hello."

Welcome to my bliss!"
With that and the flap of a black bat's wing,
The candy man threw Dean into the trolley.
A black wreath with holly adorned the door.
 "Keep against the floor and no more talk.
 Is that clear, brat?"
 . . . The scamper of a black cat. . .
 "Let's move!"

 And the moon soon cast the shade of green upon the world
 So all would be seen in green.
And as The Chocolate Man and his evil deed doers raced into the hills,
 Green traced their path like a map.

 The Dead Nun, with no face, stood by her bicycle,
 Like an icicle.
Seeing the path grow green as The Chocolate Man blurred by,
 The Dead Nun sighed.

 Die! Children! Die!

 The cemeteries full of dead children sang.
 The bells and chimes clanged and rang.
 They sang the nursery rhyme out of time. . .
 "Starlight, star bright,
 Whoever finds the green ghost tonight
 Yells 'green ghost'!
 Starlight, star bright,
 Whoever finds the green ghost tonight
 Yells 'green ghost'!"

 The carriage wheels slashed through the dirt road's mud and sludge.
 Passing a road sign that read:
 Black Raven Lane
 As they climbed the cliff of a hillside,
 A hillside sign identified the grounds as:

Black Raven Falls

Hide! Children! Hide!

The cliff was no myth.

It was real.

Rocky and raw with tall towers of jagged earth.

The carriage wheeled by an estate sign,

Warning of the upcoming fate:

Black Raven Manor

. . . From within there is no escape. . .

It's shape was behemoth.

Puffs and gusts of billowing mist and bog fog
Rested in layers around the ground of the first story.

. . . Be witness to his dark glory. . .

Rising several stories,

Built of thick brick and stone

That would moan with each snaking angry wind.

. . . Shudder at the thought of his sharp grin. . .

. . . Don't be fooled, he's no friend. . .

Marble statues of gargoyles. . .

Sweet chocolate boils

Lined the manor roof and it's four points.

Dead chocolate pigs with cherry insides that go

"Oink, Oink, Oink!"

Thunder clouds rolled and crashed like a hammer against the manor

And its upper most windows.

Good froze and chose to close it's eyes.

It knows the evil lies inside

Black Raven Manor.

At the front court,
The Chocolate Man stopped and hopped from the carriage.
The hench creatures followed. . .
"Take the brat back to the cellar where the others are.
I'll make him into chocolate tonight,
Before first light.
Thick caramel chocolate with black walnut sounds just right.
Beat him if he puts up a fight,
I want to break his might."

With the orders sent,
The Chocolate Man went to the manor to prepare.
Oh, how he loves a good game of dare.
Quiet!
Whatever you do, don't even say a word. . .
Don't you dare.
He listens. . .
From the shadows he stares and plots the game with innocent fair children.
Don't even blink,
For he can even hear the flutter of an eyelash hair.

Mothers and fathers,
Grandfathers and grandmothers,
Sisters and brothers,
Kin of kin
Mourned the loss of the children.
The township looked for clues and tips.
The Chocolate Man. . .
Everyone knew,
His name was on their lips.
One by one the crowds began to materialize.
Organize and philosophize to justify.
Torches in hand, they sought The Chocolate Man.
Fire in their eyes, they sought wicked's demise.
Sticks and stones, they sought to crush the bad man's bones.
Ohhhhhh. . .

If they only had known what their neglect had sewn. . .
If only they had been shown they were never alone on the road home.
 "Together we can stop this madness."
 "Will our children ever forgive us?"
 "We'll chain him to the brick and stick by stone
 We'll encase him bone by bone
 - Alone - Alive -
 In his very own home.
 His soul will forever grow old like an old crone.
 No one will ever know.
 He'll die and lie in his lies.
 No one will speak of him.
 Let's do it! Let's follow through with it!
 It's not too late. Let's not let him escape.
 Are we in it together?"
 "To the end of The Chocolate Man, forever!"

The angry mob lifted their torches towards Black Raven
And moved quickly up the green gleaming glowing road. . .

Warts, hogs and the croak of a toad.

Black Raven Manor. . .

Its rooms were tombs for the dead.
 Its halls led to dread.
 Its paintings bled red.
Its trapdoors led to secret passageways
That surrendered to an infinite endless maze.
A dungeon of racks with sharp nails and tacks that stab the back.
Torture chambers of chains that cling and clang.
Its attic is cold, dark and dank and stank of old mold.
Bold wood furniture, chairs and beds, carved like a giant vulture.

How utterly sinister.

The kitchen adorned in black glass.
Dishes and tea sets set to rest at each arm rest.

God bless and may you rest in peace.

Press the floor into a new door.
Touch the ceiling,
The feeling will leave you bleeding and reeling.
Bathtubs that walk like a spider and have life.
Door knobs of purple crystal that slice like a knife.
Walls that bleed chocolate and coffee malt.

He'll even turn you into chalk that tastes just like a vanilla malt.

Children have fought him but have always lost with him.
Rugs that bugs and slugs have dug and burrowed into.
Chandeliers of candle and poisonous warm wax.

Please. . . Be his guest and relax. . .

Deep in the belly of Black Raven,
Within the tributaries of its caverns,
Dean sat on the floor chained.
An orange-skinned girl sat arranged next to him.
She had only one arm.
He could see she was emotionally maimed.

How pitiful, what a shame, he thought.

Almost beyond fear and its tears, Dean was torn.
Flies swarmed to the sound of the storm outside.
She cried to herself.
He wanted to cry for her.
He wanted to die at this sight,
In the shadows,
Where they were,

Where there was very little light.
"What happened?" he asked, trying to mask his feelings.
After a moment she whispered, "He ate it."
"I'm sorry," Dean said back, speechless,
For the proper words he lacked.
"He said I tasted like pumpkin pie."
And then she sighed as a fly buzzed by.
"I'm going to die."
"No, you won't and I'm not going to let him hurt you anymore,
For that is my promise."
"Thank you. . . My name is Jean."
"I'm Dean."
And for a moment there was a gleam of hope in both their eyes.
"They were before us," Jean said.
The cavern cell felt aswarm with ghosts.
The floor strewn with bones and remains of the candy man's victims.
"Listen. You can hear them. . ."
The stench stank.
It crawled high and lowly deep.
It seeped here and there and every where.
This stink of rot caught cryptic drafts and breeze. . .
There was dis-ease in the moans and groans and cries and sighs
And chants and rants and mourning and warning
In the sounds of the dead.
Ghosts that showed themselves in white-blue transparent shadows.
Specters and phantoms that haunt and taunt
Wafted by and high in a macabre phantasmagoria dance.
Wall to wall, tall and small,
Claws in the wall,
Fall in a slow motion fall,
Jean and Dean saw as the apparitions spun and twirled,
Floated and rotated,
Inflated and deflated,
Hung and lunged to and fro and about.
Dean and Jean watched in wonder as the thunder thundered outside.

Too late to hide.

The door of some unknown cold chasm had been unlocked. . .
This was real. . .
No phantasm.

He was, has and will always be evil.
A bad seed of bad deeds.
A mother and father who bore a monster.
A twist of fate.
A caller who crept under the gates of another place and time.
A place with no map.
A time with no existence.
A trickster. A prankster.
A clown of the night made up in black and white.

"Lollipops, lollipops
Tops that spin and hop.
Kids love candy
My sugar is poison, it sure is dandy.
Try a sip of my candied brandy
With my candied dandies."

Season after season the reason remains a mystery.
A history of mystery.
He succeeds in his deeds.
Planting the seeds that lead to the end.
Never to mend.
"Why," said the fly, "should they die?"
His mask is powerful.
To remove it takes special task.
Now, aren't you glad you asked?
Listen up carefully. . .
There is no answer, unfortunately, for something that just is.
End of quiz.

Swarms. Thousands of them.
Of flies. . . darted and dived.
Of roaches. . . scampered in bunches and packs.
Of spiders and snakes. . . webbing and slithering their way down through the
cavern tunnels.
Lizards skipped over stone and whipped their tails from side to side
In what appeared to be a sea-like tide of insects and crawlers.
Fowl flew through, too.
Crows flapped,
Ravens and vultures flapped back at black rats
That pittered pattered past.

Clickety clack.

The hench creatures reached with disjointed elongated hands and arms.
Pointed fingers with claws spread web-like and stuck like slime muck
To brick, stone and clay,
Searching for prey to play with.
Their bodies spiraled and coiled along the way.

Pray! Children! Pray!

The Chocolate Man slowly floated on air,
Overseeing his lair.
Gliding over and up spiral stair wells.
The bells of Black Raven rang low and deep.
This was the moment he had waited to reap.

Quiet.
For his is the dark eternal sleep. . .
Shhhh. . . Not a peep. . .

Over and through the ancient stone that comprised his home,
Over carcass and bone that had rotted and decomposed long ago,
The moans and groans of the damned sang the sweet music of Hades to him.

"Praise me. Sing to me. Sing to your king."

And he bellowed a laughter that echoed from room to room
Faster and faster.

The ghosts illuminated the cellar.
They pulsed from blue-white to green-white.
Shades that brushed lush thought over the human senses.
The ambience was alive and intense.
'They' held back no resistance.
A show of shadows aglow.

Dean and Jean watched in awe as they saw beauty and wonder in the presence
of the hereafter.

Beware, the Master is coming.
Then suddenly, as fast as they appeared -
The spirits disappeared.
There was a sudden eerie silence,
Foretelling of the coming of his Highness.

Jean and Dean watched the cellar door in silent horror.
Fear overwhelming.
Anticipation numbing.
Dim grey shadows played and flirted from around the frame of the door
As unearthly vibrations shook the cellar floor.
"What is it?" said Dean.
"It's him." said Jean.
The cellar door exploded open.
Dean and Jean shuddered as the entourage
Of 'crawly cridders' and 'creepy creatures'
Flooded into the cellar cell.
Both knew instinctively not to scream or yell.
The 'crawlers' surrounded and circled around them.
The Chocolate Man entered floating in,
Looking down upon them with a hellishly offensive grin.

"It's time to make some chocolate and have pumpkin pie for dessert.

Don't worry, it won't hurt. . . too much.
Take them and chain them to the racks in the dungeon."

The hench creatures grabbed Jean and Dean
And unlocked the chains from around their wrists and ankles.
Pain stung from where the chains had hung.
Both screamed and tried to fight but they were no match for the hench
creatures.

They were after all the perfect catch.
Talons and claws latched on to them tightly,
Dragging them deep down into the stomach of the torture chamber.

The dungeon was cold and torch lit.
It stank of the old and ancient.
It cried from oppression, depression and repression.
Like mist, melancholy was adrift more here than anywhere else
In Black Raven Manor.
It painted over each dull stone.
It lay in each splintered bone.
The perished whispered for help. . .

"Set our souls free. . . please"

Pockets of chocolate scent sent a chill up Dean's spine.
He sat chained and latched to a chair.
Link around link bound his body so he could not move.
The ceiling moved sickly with the squirm of black bats as he sat immobile.
They totaled in the hundreds,
Darting and diving, nicking his head
As they passed with a flap of a wing,
Then resting against him,
Nuzzling to his chest, hands, arms and neck.
They hissed to him in high squeaks.
Each reeked of drunken blood.
The bats waited for the command from The Chocolate Man.

Jean lay tied to a rack.
Rope to her legs, feet and arm.
Knotted with no slack.
Black rats sat on her chest.
Staring. Leering at her.
Their tails stirred and thrashed against her.
Spears dangled over her as tears streaked her cheeks.
Dean and Jean's spirits devastated and weak.
The outlook bleak.

Ghosts moaned and groaned as they slid and drifted cloud-like through the
dungeon walls and air.

The Chocolate Man cursed as he immersed himself in his chemicals.
Pouring potions into lotions and stirring them in a slow rotating motion.
A thick brown brew bubbled,
Then he mumbled something as he injected the goo into a large syringe.
Dean cringed at the thought.
With a cutting knife in his hand,
The Chocolate Man swiveled towards Jean
As she sniffled through more tears.

"Hello, my precious.
In my cookbook dessert is first.
How about a piece of pumpkin pie, Dean?
Jean won't mind sharing herself."

The candy man giggled a gurgle down in his throat.
Low and so slow as he drifted closer to Jean
Who burst into a blood-curdling scream.
The rats on her chest wriggled with excitement.
Dean could not stay silent
For he had made his commitment.
The candy man put the blade to her arm. . .

. . . I won't let him harm you again. . .

"Hands and fingers, the sugary taste lingers.
Toes and feet, sweet as meat to eat."
The Chocolate Man said in song.

"Be strong," the dead said, whispering to Dean.
"Stop him."

"All you are is a monster," Dean suddenly said
Loudly and proudly
"And you're ugly. But most of all, your chocolate is boring."
"What did you say?" The Chocolate Man said
In a roaring shout

As he spun to face Dean, looking mighty mean.

"I said, you're nothing but a monster.
Your candy is boring and so are you.
You're nothing but an ugly fool."

Bats danced around Dean's face,
Lacing him in a web-like chain.

"You're insane, boy.

Don't even think you can toy with me."

And the candy man grabbed the syringe and drifted slowly to where Dean sat
As bats fringed the chair.

Don't let him scare you.
Whispers of the specters.

"Anytime is chocolate time and what a fine morsel you'll make.
Make no mistake, I'm no fake."

The monster pressed the needle against Dean's neck.
He flinched and tried to wrench away but the chains held and didn't give way.
The bats stayed put with a flap.

"Tell me, brat, what kind of chocolate would you like to be?
Let's see, bittersweet maybe?"

The needle point was breaking skin.
The Chocolate Man was going to win. . .
"Such a sin."

He said with a grin, then he pressed the thin pin deeper.

. . . I'm so sorry, Jean, this is the end. . .
"No, it's not," whispered the ghosts, "this monster must be stopped!"

When suddenly the dungeon doors exploded open.
The chamber came alive with voices of anger.
The townspeople lynched the hench creatures,
Stuffing them into the chocolate ovens to bake in the blaze.
There was a craze in the air as the folk made their way through the maze
To haze the manor.
The candy man stammered as the people clambered and overtook him.
Mothers and fathers whisked Jean and Dean away to safety.
Holding, cuddling and loving them in warm blankets.
The bats, rats and crawlers crawled between the cracks,
Nic-naks,
And escaped out the back.

"No!" The Chocolate Man quaked in fury.
The townspeople wasted no time for they were in a hurry to bury this monster.
"Tie him in, brick him in, send him to his end," they said.
Ropes and chains criss-crossed and tied in knots.
From head to toe they strung him high and low,
Pulling him to and fro
Till they had him pinned from the doors and floor.

The Chocolate Man laughed,
"I have more in store. You can be sure."
With rocks and blocks and sticks and bricks
And mud and sludge and stone and bone
They began to seal him up all alone.
"I'll be back and that's a fact."
Stone after cold stone,
The dungeon seeped and deepened into darkness.
Each doorway, hallway, pathway and stairway
That made way to the chamber was solidly sealed.

Cast fast to forever last.
As the last stone was placed to encase,
The people faced him one last time in the darkness blind. . .
"Die Monster Die! In hell may you forever lie."
The final stone completely sealed the chamber.
In the darkest of dark.
A sudden spark and two eyes marked in demon green could be seen.
A blink of green gleam.
In a raw moist voice he spoke slowly.
"I can never die.
As long as there are children, I will always be alive.
I will always survive.
Chocolate children, chocolate fun, chocolate for everyone."
He laughed low and so very slow.
A creepy eerie laugh,
In a macabre tone,
That was as cold as ancient stone.

. . . Like a tomb. . .
. . . In the womb of death. . .

The ghosts were now alone with him.
Watching him. Watching his every move.
Hearing his every breath.
They moved cautiously around him. Surrounding him.
They finally had him. He was theirs.
And in a slow, oh, so low raspy gurgled giggle, he whispered,
"I know you're there. . .
I see every single one of you there. . ."

And the manor of Black Raven was boarded up,
Bricked up, Nailed up, And shut up.
Never to be discussed.
Never to be opened up.

THE END

About the Author

Waide Aaron Riddle was born in Kingsville and raised in Houston, Texas. He now resides in Los Angeles.

Mr. Riddle is the winner of the National Author's Registry: Honorable Mention 1996, National Author's Registry: President's Award 1997, Certificate of Achievement: Excellence in Poetry 1997 and the 3rd Place Winner: California State Poetry Society Poetry Competition 2002. He self- published his first book *All-American Texan* in 1999.

Waide has been published in numerous publications including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Dallas/Fort Worth Star Telegram*.

Waide is not only an author; he has been a barber since 1982 and received his masters in the barbering arts in 1993. For entertainment, Waide has become an avid country-western dancer.

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