

PROLOGUE

In the prologue, the narrative reflects on the uniqueness of October for young boys, creating a nostalgic contrast with other months. September is characterized as unfavorable due to the onset of school, while August remains favorable as it signifies the last month of freedom. July is deemed perfect, providing a complete break from academic constraints. June stands out as the best month of all, with school far behind.

October, however, presents a different atmosphere. The school year has commenced, but the boys find themselves adapting, contemplating mischief such as leaving trash on old man Prickett's porch or planning a fun Halloween costume for the YMCA celebration. As October progresses, especially around the twentieth, the environment becomes rich with the scents of autumn—smoky, sunset hues of orange and grey paint the dusky skies, and anticipation for Halloween fills the air.

This particular year, Halloween arrives unexpectedly early on October 24, just past midnight. The story centers around James Nightshade, who resides at 97 Oak Street, and William Halloway, his neighbor. Both are just shy of their fourteenth birthdays, both aged thirteen years, eleven months, and nearing that milestone.

The narrative hints at a transformative event during that October week when they experience a rapid maturing process, leading them to a point of realization that they will never possess the same youthful innocence again. The prologue sets a tone filled with a blend of nostalgia and an ominous foreshadowing of the events to come, encapsulating themes of childhood, change, and the inevitable passage of time. It creates an atmosphere rich in anticipation, with October serving as a pivotal junction in their lives.