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For Now It's Eight O'Clock

By Alex Irvine, illustration by Arthur Broughton

1 March 2004

"What it is," said my neighbor Jeff, "is I'm going to get that Wee Willie Winkie."

The little voice had just faded from the keyhole in my front door. It was 8:01. When I went out in the morning, I'd see a fresh set of little dents in my front door. Willie Winkie might have been wee, but he had knuckles like chisel points.

Jeff came over to my house about 7:30 every night. Since Wee Willie had taken his daughter Jenna, he couldn't stay home. His wife Sharon stayed in the house doing God knew what while he sat on my couch tanking up on bourbon so he had a barrier between him and that little bastard who terrorized us every night. I never asked Jeff what Sharon did while he was out. I imagined her standing in the upstairs bathroom, on the floor I'd helped Jeff retile two years before, running the shower and counting her gray hairs so she wouldn't hear Wee Willie and think about Jenna. If I'd been married, I'd have asked my wife to go over there, do something, I don't know what. Nobody else was going to do it -- Wee Willie had made us all suspicious of each other. Standoffish. Which wasn't to say we didn't help each other, because we did. You picked up the paper when someone went on vacation, you jump-started dead batteries or held a ladder when it was time to clean the eaves. Neighborly things. None of that standard camaraderie included talking about Wee Willie.

I have a theory that this silence persisted because to talk about it we'd have had to come up with some kind of fairy tale, and we'd had quite enough of those.

That night, Jeff was a bit more loaded than usual. Or that might have been an illusion. Maybe he'd just come to the point where he couldn't take it any more: Sharon upstairs crying in front of the mirror, him crocked because he couldn't face her, his little girl gone. Everything slowly falling apart.

"I'm going to get that Wee Willie Winkie," he said again. "Tomorrow night. You with me?"

Was I with him? Lordy, I thought, how was I involved in this? Which was cowardly, yes. But it was my thought.

See, I don't have any kids. I get up in the morning, go to work, sizzle up something on the stove, and kick back with the tube until I fall asleep on the couch. Used to be I'd turn up the volume around eight so I wouldn't have to hear Wee Willie. Usually I heard him anyway, and more often than not I found myself catching an involuntary glimpse of him through one of my front windows. If I'd

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by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

[Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

You can never let anyone suspect, his mother told him.

That was the first rule she taught

him, and the last, before she left him here alone

[Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

