

(THE GRATE KEEPER)

by

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INT. COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOL - DAY

The scorching sun beats down on the placid suburban sprawl, where trimmed lawns and pastel-colored homes dot the landscape like a painter's deliberate dabs. The community swimming pool, an oasis of cobalt blue, shimmers invitingly.

RYAN (12), sandy blonde hair sticking to his forehead, cannonballs into the water with a gleeful shout. His lean frame cuts through the cool surface, displacing waves that lap against the concrete edge.

MARLENE (13), long dark hair tied back in a practical ponytail, follows more gracefully, slicing the water with the precision of an arrow. Her green eyes scan the depths as she surfaces.

Ryan emerges next to her, shaking water from his ears.

RYAN

Way hotter than yesterday, right?

MARLENE

Definitely. And it's not even noon yet.

They share a smile before Ryan's gaze is drawn to the deep end, where sunlight dances on the metal grate at the bottom.

RYAN

Hey, Marlene, check that out!
What's

that shiny thing by the grate?

Marlene squints, interest piqued.

MARLENE

Let's go see!

They take synchronized breaths and dive. The world becomes muffled and distorted under the rippling surface. Bubbles trail upward as they descend.

At the bottom, the siblings hover over the grate. A glint catches Ryan's eye again, but it isn't just reflected light — there's a boy, GRIM REAPER (10), his jet-black hair swaying like seaweed around his pale face.

RYAN

(muffled)
Mmph!

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Ryan points urgently, his bright blue eyes wide behind goggles. Marlene, equally stunned, reaches out but pulls back, unsure.

Grim looks up, locking eyes with them. He smiles, revealing an eerie calmness.

GRIM
(voice echoing
strangely
underwater)
Hello, Ryan. Hello, Marlene.

Ryan and Marlene exchange shocked looks. Grim's voice seems impossible, yet it resonates in their heads clearly.

RYAN
(telepathically)
How are you... talking?

GRIM
(telepathically)
I've been here a long time.

MARLENE
(telepathically)
Are you okay? You're stuck!

Grim's smile doesn't falter as he shakes his head slowly, almost pityingly.

GRIM
(telepathically)
I am exactly where I need to be.

Marlene feels a chill run down her spine despite the warm water enveloping them. She grabs Ryan's arm, signaling they need air. They kick upwards, bursting through the surface gasping and coughing.

EXT. COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOL - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Marlene climb out of the pool, dripping and panting. Other kids splash obliviously in the shallows, but the siblings are alone in their discovery.

RYAN
Did that really just happen?

MARLENE
We need to find out who he is.

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And why he's down there.

Ryan nods, determination setting his jaw. He glances back at the water, fearing what lies beneath but resolved to uncover its secrets.

RYAN

Yeah. Let's figure this out.
Together.

They exchange a look of silent agreement, the bond of siblings now intertwined with a shared mission. Something dark and unknown lurks in the depths, and they can't turn away – not now, not when the mystery has just begun to unfold.

INT. SUTTON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ryan and Marlene sit on the edge of the couch, their wet clothes sticking to the fabric. Their eyes are wide with a mixture of fear and fascination. The room is silent except for the ticking of an old grandfather clock.

RYAN

He said he's guarding souls. Lost
souls. In our pool.

Marlene nods, her mind racing to piece together the impossible puzzle.

MARLENE

But why? And how is he breathing
underwater?

Ryan's gaze shifts towards the window, where the sun casts long shadows across the yard.

RYAN

There's something we're not
seeing. Something dark.

MARLENE

We can't just pretend this didn't
happen. We have to do something.

They stand in unison, a resolve hardening within them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MS. EVELYN CARMICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

The siblings approach the quaint house next door, its garden overgrown with wild roses and ivy. They exchange a nervous glance before Ryan knocks on the door.

The door creaks open to reveal MS. EVELYN CARMICHAEL, her piercing eyes instantly reading their troubled expressions.

MS. CARMICHAEL
Children, you look like you've
seen a ghost.

MARLENE
Ms. Carmichael, we need to talk to
you about... the pool.

INT. MS. CARMICHAEL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with old books and odd trinkets. Ms. Carmichael gestures for them to sit as she pours tea from an antique pot.

RYAN
There's a boy, Grim. He's trapped
in the grate at the bottom of the
pool.

Ms. Carmichael sets down her teacup, her face turning grave.

MS. CARMICHAEL
Ah, so he has revealed himself to
you both.

MARLENE
You know about him?

MS. CARMICHAEL
I've felt a presence there for
years. A chill in the summer
air... whispers beneath the
ripples.

Ryan leans forward, his curiosity piqued.

RYAN
What is he? Why is he there?

Ms. Carmichael stands and walks to a bookshelf, pulling out an old, leather-bound tome.

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MS. CARMICHAEL
This neighborhood holds many
secrets, children. Some are better
left undisturbed.

She flips through the pages until she finds what she's
looking for.

MS. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)
But if Grim has chosen to speak
with you, then it is time for the
truth to surface.

MARLENE
What can we do?

Ms. Carmichael looks at them each in turn, her eyes
softening.

MS. CARMICHAEL
You will need courage. And you
must be clever. But I will guide
you.

She hands them the book, its pages yellowed with age.

MS. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)
Start here. Learn what you can.
And be wary—the pool is but a
gateway to deeper terrors.

Ryan grips the book tightly, its weight heavy with
unknown knowledge.

RYAN
Thank you, Ms. Carmichael. We
won't let whatever's down there
scare us off.

Ms. Carmichael smiles faintly, her gaze lingering on the
book in Ryan's hands.

MS. CARMICHAEL
Just remember, children. Some
things are connected in ways we
cannot see. Be sure you are ready
for what you might find.

Marlene stands, determination etched on her features.

MARLENE
We'll be ready. We have to be.

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CONTINUED: (2)

The siblings leave, the air around them charged with an impending sense of destiny. Ms. Carmichael watches from the window, her expression unreadable as she whispers to herself.

MS. CARMICHAEL

Be safe, young ones. Your journey
has only just begun.

FADE OUT.

INT. COMMUNITY POOL - DAY

The sun beats down on the still surface of the water, a stark contrast to the chill that settles in RYAN's bones as he peers into the deep end. MARLENE stands beside him, clutching Ms. Carmichael's book to her chest.

RYAN

It's just water... right?

MARLENE

That's what we're here to find
out.

They exchange a look and then, with a shared nod, dive into the pool. The world turns to silence, the eerie quiet of underwater enveloping them. They swim downward, towards the ominous metal grate.

CUT TO:

UNDERWATER - AT THE GRATE

Ryan and Marlene hover before the grate, their movements slow and deliberate. Ryan reaches out, fingers brushing the cold metal when suddenly-

A SHADOW looms over them.

ANGLE ON RYAN'S FACE - his eyes widen in terror. Whipping around, he comes face-to-face with a WATERLOGGED SKELETAL FIGURE, its empty sockets seem to stare right through him.

MARLENE (MUFFLED SCREAM)

Ryan!

They kick off from the grate, propelling themselves upwards as the figure lurches after them.

CUT TO:

SURFACE OF THE POOL

Ryan and Marlene burst from the water, gasping for air, scrambling to the edge and hauling themselves out. They lay there panting, drenched and wide-eyed.

RYAN
(heaving breaths)
What was that thing?

MARLENE
(shivering)
I don't know, but I'm not sure we
can do this alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY PARK - LATER

Ryan and Marlene have gathered a group of LOCAL KIDS and NEIGHBORS. Among them are JAKE, ELLIE, and MR. THOMPSON, all with their own tales of strange encounters at the pool.

RYAN
(to the group)
We've seen something... something
not of this world. And we think
it's connected to the pool.

MR. THOMPSON
(nods)
My dog barks at the water every
night. There's an evil in there, I
tell ya.

ELLIE
(fidgeting)
I heard whispers once, near the
water. It scared me half to death.

MARLENE
(opens the book)
There's a story here, about
children who drowned. We need to
investigate, find out how this all
ties together.

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JAKE
(resolute)
Count me in. This thing's gotta be
stopped.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The GROUP huddles around a table strewn with old newspapers and books, the dim light casting long shadows.

RYAN
(pointing to an
article)
"Tragic Drowning Incident" - says
here five kids were lost...

MARLENE
(connecting dots)
And Grim. He said he's guarding
lost souls.

A beat of silence as the revelation sinks in. Suddenly, Ellie's PHONE BEEPS with a message. She reads it, her expression changes—she's scared.

ELLIE
(voice trembling)
Guys, I need to tell you
something...

RYAN
(alarmed)
What is it?

Ellie hesitates, glancing down at her phone before locking eyes with them.

ELLIE
(low voice)
Someone knows we're looking into
the pool's history. They're
warning us to stop.

MARLENE
(suspiciously)
Who sent that message?

Ellie shifts uncomfortably, avoiding eye contact.

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ELLIE
I... I may have told someone about
our research.

The group erupts into whispers of disbelief and betrayal.

RYAN
(angry)
Who, Ellie? Who did you tell?

ELLIE
(defensively)
I didn't think it was a big deal!
It's just--someone from school...

Marlene steps forward, her gaze piercing.

MARLENE
(firmly)
Whoever it is, they want to keep
the truth hidden. But we won't let
them. We can't.

The group nods, newfound determination lighting their
faces.

RYAN
(determined)
Then we'll be careful. Together,
we'll uncover what lurks beneath
those waters. Whatever it takes.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SUTTON RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The moon looms large above the Sutton home, casting an
eerie glow as a gentle wind stirs the trees. Ryan stands
before the gathered group, clutching a backpack filled
with flashlights and old tomes from Ms. Carmichael's
library.

RYAN
(voice steady)
Tonight, we face whatever is in
that pool. Remember, stick to the
plan.

Marlene nods, her determined eyes meeting each member of
their makeshift alliance.

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CONTINUED:

MARLENE

We're stronger together. Let's do this—for those who can't fight anymore.

INT. MS. CARMICHAEL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ms. Carmichael hands out amulets, each one etched with intricate symbols. Her fingers lightly touch the charms as she speaks, her voice low but clear.

MS. CARMICHAEL

These are for protection. They've been in my family for generations—said to ward off evil spirits.

Ryan takes his, feeling the weight of responsibility settle onto his shoulders.

RYAN

How will we know if they're working?

MS. CARMICHAEL

(smiling faintly)
Trust me, dear. You'll know.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY POOL - NIGHT

The group approaches the pool, the water still and reflecting the starry sky like a mirror. As they near the edge, a chill sweeps over them, causing Marlene to shiver despite the summer heat.

MARLENE

It feels different tonight.
Something's waiting.

RYAN

(nods)
Let's not keep it waiting then.

They form a circle around the pool, holding hands, the amulets glowing faintly on their chests. Ryan and Marlene step forward, gazes locked on the murky depths.

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CONTINUED:

RYAN

(shouting)

Grim! We know you're down there!
Show yourself!

A silence hangs heavy in the air until, slowly, a figure rises from the water. Grim's pale face breaks the surface without a ripple, his black hair clinging wetly to his skull.

GRIM

(voice echoing)

Why have you summoned me, surface dwellers?

MARLENE

(firmly)

We want answers. About the drownings, about you... about what you're protecting us from.

Grim floats closer, the water parting effortlessly around him.

GRIM

I am bound to this place, to these souls. I cannot leave until they are freed... or taken by something far worse.

RYAN

(taking a step back)

What could be worse than being trapped here forever?

Grim's eyes flicker with a shadow of fear, a haunting glimpse into the abyss he guards against.

GRIM

There is an ancient evil here. It seeks to escape, to consume. I am not your enemy. I am a sentinel against the darkness.

Suddenly, the ground trembles, and the water in the pool begins to swirl, forming a vortex. The group tightens their circle, the amulets now blazing with light.

MARLENE

(eyes wide)

That thing... it's here, isn't it?

Grim nods solemnly, his gaze fixed on the churning water.

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CONTINUED: (2)

GRIM

Prepare yourselves. The true
horror lies beneath.

As the whirlpool grows, spectral forms rise to the surface—faces of children, their expressions blank and void of life. The group recoils in shock, but Ryan steps forward, his amulet shining brightest of all.

RYAN

(bravely)

We're not afraid. We'll stop it,
whatever it takes.

Grim watches the siblings, an ancient respect dawning in his eyes.

GRIM

Then be vigilant, children of the
land. The battle has only just
begun.

The spectral children vanish as suddenly as they appeared, and the pool falls still once more. The group exchanges glances, their resolve strengthened, knowing that the real test is yet to come.

FADE OUT.

INT. COMMUNITY POOL - NIGHT

The moon casts eerie shadows over the water's surface, flickering like specters dancing on a grave. The stillness of the night is shattered by the SCREAMS of the unseen entity. Ryan clutches his amulet, the light flickering in tandem with his racing heart.

RYAN

(fearful)

Did you hear that?

Marlene nods, her eyes scanning the pool as if trying to pierce the darkness itself.

MARLENE

(whispers)

It's coming from below...

Suddenly, the pool erupts in a maelstrom of chaos. WATER SPLASHES violently against the edges as a deep GROANING echoes from the depths. A MASSIVE SHADOW rises from the bottom, its form obscured and writhing.

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CONTINUED:

EVELYN
(shouting over the
din)
Back away from the water!

The group stumbles backward as the shadow breaks the surface, revealing TENTACLES of pure darkness reaching for them with malevolent intent.

A tentacle lashes out, narrowly missing Ryan as he DUCKS. Another wraps around a nearby ally, dragging him toward the churning abyss. His SCREAMS are cut off as he is pulled under.

MARLENE
(horrified)
No! We have to do something!

Ryan, gripped by terror, shakes his head helplessly.

RYAN
(despairing)
We can't... it's too strong.

Their allies, those not seized by panic, rally together, forming a protective circle around Ryan and Marlene, their own amulets glowing weakly against the oppressive darkness.

EXT. COMMUNITY POOL - CONTINUOUS

Ryan and Marlene sit huddled on a bench, their clothes soaked and their spirits drenched in defeat. Evelyn approaches, her face etched with concern but her eyes burning with an unspoken fire.

EVELYN
(kneeling before
them)
You must not lose hope, children.
This entity feeds on despair.

Ryan looks up, his blue eyes dimmed by doubt.

RYAN
(bitter)
What good is hope? We just saw it
take him... What chance do we
have?

Evelyn takes their hands in hers, her touch surprisingly firm.

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CONTINUED:

EVELYN

(resolute)

Your chance lies within each
other. The love between siblings
is a powerful force—one that no
darkness can extinguish.

Marlene lifts her gaze, tears glistening in her green
eyes like dewdrops in morning light.

MARLENE

(softly)

Our love?

EVELYN

(sincere)

Yes. It's not just about fighting
what's out there. It's about
believing in what's in here.

She places her hand over their hearts, and a warm glow
seems to emanate from their amulets once more.

RYAN

(voice gaining
strength)

So, our bond... That's how we beat
it?

EVELYN

(nodding)

Exactly. Your unity, your
determination to protect this
community—that's where true power
lies.

The siblings exchange a look, a silent pact forming
between them. They rise, standing shoulder to shoulder,
their resolve hardening like steel tempered in fire.

MARLENE

(determined)

Let's do it, Ryan. For everyone
who's ever been afraid of what
lurks beneath.

RYAN

(grimly)

Yeah. For all of us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They join hands, their amulets blazing like twin stars against the encroaching darkness, ready to face the entity with the full might of their united spirit.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

The moon casts its pale light over the pool, casting eerie shadows that dance across the water's surface. The once placid waters now churn with an unnatural force, as if something below seeks to break free.

Ryan and Marlene stand at the water's edge, their hands clasped together. They are not alone; a small contingent of brave souls from their neighborhood joins them, forming a protective circle around the pool.

RYAN
(to Marlene)
Ready?

MARLENE
(nods)
Let's end this.

Together, they step forward, their amulets glowing brightly against the night. The group follows, some clutching makeshift weapons, others holding onto talismans provided by Evelyn.

Suddenly, the dark entity emerges from the depths—a swirling vortex of liquid malice that takes on a vaguely humanoid shape. Its presence sends a chill through the air, and the very ground seems to tremble.

RYAN
(shouting)
Now!

On cue, the group begins to chant, words of unity and strength taught by Evelyn. The air vibrates with their voices, the amulets pulsate in harmony, and the entity recoils, as if wounded by the sound.

The water around the entity begins to bubble and steam, its form losing cohesion. Ryan and Marlene step closer, their eyes fixed on the roiling mass.

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CONTINUED:

MARLENE

(yells)

You don't belong here!

The entity lashes out, sending a wave crashing towards the group. But Ryan and Marlene stand firm, their bond unbreakable.

RYAN

(defiant)

We're not afraid of you!

As they speak, the amulets' light envelops them in a shield, repelling the water. The group's chanting grows louder, more insistent, driving the entity back.

Marlene turns to Ryan, her eyes full of fierce love.

MARLENE

(urgent)

Now, Ryan! Together!

They raise their amulets high, the symbols etched upon them igniting with a blinding brilliance. The entity lets out a thunderous howl as the light strikes it, piercing through its darkness.

The entity's form shatters like glass, dissolving into countless droplets that rain down harmlessly into the pool. The waters calm instantly, the malevolence that tainted them purged completely.

A hush falls over the group as Grim Reaper emerges from the grate, no longer bound. He looks at the siblings with an expression that might be gratitude.

GRIM REAPER

(voice echoing)

You have freed them... and me.

Ryan and Marlene exchange a glance of relief and triumph. As the first rays of dawn begin to touch the sky, Grim fades away, his duty fulfilled.

The community members embrace one another, their fears washed away along with the entity. The pool is just a pool once again—a place of laughter and life.

MARLENE

(softly)

It's over, Ryan. We did it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RYAN
(beaming)
Yeah. We did.

They look out over the water, now glistening under the morning sun, a symbol of their victory and the enduring power of their love.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SUTTON LIVING ROOM - DAY

A sunbeam pierces through the window, casting a warm glow over the room where RYAN and MARLENE sit on the floor amidst a circle of open books. The atmosphere is peaceful, a stark contrast to their recent trials. Their friends are scattered around, some lounging on couches, others perched on armrests—all sharing stories of ordinary life.

RYAN
(leafing through a
book)
"Here it says that victory doesn't
come from vanquishing enemies, but
from finding peace within."

Marlene looks up, her face thoughtful as she takes in her brother's words.

MARLENE
(smirking)
"Finding peace" sounds like
something Ms. Evelyn would say.

The group chuckles, remembering their mentor's wisdom.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Ryan and Marlene walk side by side down the street. The neighborhood kids play without a care, the haunting past now just a memory. Marlene nudges Ryan playfully.

MARLENE
(teasing)
Look at you, all philosophical.
You've changed, little bro.

Ryan grins, his eyes glinting with the same adventurous spark, yet now tempered by experience.

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CONTINUED:

RYAN
(grinning)
Maybe I have. But so have you,
sis.

EXT. COMMUNITY POOL - DAY

The siblings approach the once-menacing waters, which now reflect nothing but blue skies. Children splash joyfully while parents relax nearby, the community pool reclaimed as a hub of laughter and fun.

MARLENE
(calmly)
Remember when we were terrified to
even dip a toe in here?

RYAN
(nodding)
I do. But look at it now.

They sit on the edge, dipping their feet into the clear water. A moment of silence passes—an homage to their journey.

MARLENE
(softly)
It's strange... how something so
normal can feel so new again.

RYAN
(looking at the
water)
We made that happen, Marlene. We
brought normal back.

A beat.

MARLENE
(solemnly)
We couldn't have done it alone. It
was all of us...together.

Ryan splashes water playfully at her, breaking the solemn mood.

RYAN
(laughing)
And don't you forget it!

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CONTINUED:

Their laughter rings out, mingling with the playful
shouts and splashes around them.

FADE OUT.