

Spring 5-1-1989

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Recommended Citation

Grush, Olga (1989) "Caves at Midnight," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 8 : No. 2 , Article 34.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol8/iss2/34>

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CAVES AT MIDNIGHT

Olga Grush

Caves in palisades along rivers, lecherous
 maggoty moldy purgatories of wickedness,
 spooked with dripping stalactites and ominous
 stalagmites abounding in fickleness
 like snooping ogres bewitched, elated,
 enjoying the terror of terrified boys
 at midnight. Here, terrible pirates
 bury buccaneer booty in the noise
 and melodeon smoke of paddlewheels
 churning rivers to foam past fern-fringed
 entrances to caves; and gamblers deal
 crooked poker with jeweled-fingered
 evil intent, aces from the bottom
 of the pack! And, shot in the head
 with pearlhandled revolvers by rotten
 jealous brothel beauties, they lie dead,
 buried right here in this very cave!
 Little boys at midnight want to go home,
 locked in the dark dank dismal glitter
 of quartz, silver and gold, the dome
 overhead full of bats' velvet flutter.
 Little boys sneaking out after dark alone
 in hiding, shiver! Phantoms lurk over graves
 of Blackbeard, Pegleg, John Silver! Crossbones
 on their pirate hats, swords unbuckled.
 Brooding shadows on the jeweled walls,
 thieves slithering with ghostly chuckle
 out for revenge at midnight when owls call.
 Who left behind a cozy bed, warm cookies,
 hot chocolate, for an old man's gory
 tale of adventure? Two scared rookies
 who only wanted to live the story.