

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## Don't fear the reaper

Eyes and creepy crawlers force students to duck under the covers in fear

By Tori Foster  
THE BATTALION

Jessica Brazeal and her mother were at the kitchen table studying and talking one night when she heard a tap on the window. As the sound grew louder, Brazeal looked up to see two eyes staring back at her. Then, Brazeal said, she opened her mouth and screamed. Her fear of dark windows was born.

Brazeal faces anxiety over more than just things that go bump in the night. She, along with others who have been similarly scarred, must learn how to adjust their lives around these fears.

"Ever since then, dark windows just creep me out," said Brazeal, a sophomore journalism major. "Of course, all of a sudden, my dad ran in and said, 'I'm sorry, I was just playing.'"

Now as Brazeal is living on her own and attending college, she said her fear has led to a new evening routine.

"It's an automatic thing now," Brazeal said. "Once it is dark, that means it is time to walk around and close the blinds. I also have a tendency to check windows and make sure no one is out there."

When it is time for Brazeal to turn out the lights and go to sleep, she will be awake until her eyes become adjusted to the darkness if there is a window uncovered.

"I automatically assume that when I look at a dark window someone is going to be staring back at me because of what I experienced when I was younger," Brazeal said.

Tuff Staine said windows are not her problem; her sick feeling of dread is induced by something of a creepy-crawly nature.

"I am extremely terrified of roaches," said Staine, a junior journalism major. "They disgust me. I am more afraid of a nasty roach than I am of any other insects."

With reality show mania taking over the television you never know what you might see people doing or eating.

"I have seen those shows and all I can say is 'yuck,'" Staine said. "How people eat a nasty roach I will never know. I mean, just imagine the roach crunching in their mouth."

The way Staine copes with her fear of cockroaches is to not be in the vicinity of them. Now, Staine stays as far away from cockroaches as possible.

"If there was a roach in my room I would freak out," Staine said. "Someone else would definitely have to kill it because I am not going to do it. But until it is dead I wouldn't sleep."

The thrills and chills of theme parks and roller coasters are exciting to many people, but to Vivina Rivera, the emphasis is on the chills.

"I have a terrible fear of roller coasters," said Rivera, a junior communications major. "If I am ever at a theme park and I see a roller coaster, my heart begins to race and my palms get sweaty."

Rivera's trepidation over roller coasters stemmed from a family outing to Six Flags in Dallas.

"While I was there, I got on a kiddie roller coaster and I was terrified," Rivera said. "I was yelling and pleading with the operator to turn the machine off because I couldn't take it anymore. I felt as though my heart was being torn out of my body. At the moment I didn't think anything worse than this could ever exist."

Though Rivera hasn't had any medical treatment to overcome her fear, she said she has tried to be brave and face it head-on.

"I have tried to get over this fear by making the situation more familiar by riding roller coasters," Rivera said. "But I think I will always be this way. It's a horrible feeling, and even just talking about them makes me nervous."

When Haley Love went to sit at the window of the top floor of the Hancock Tower in Chicago, she realized that her fear of heights made the window too threatening to stand there for any length of time.

"I was miserable and could not do it," said Love, a senior psychology major. "I am afraid of heights, specifically of falling off high things."

If Love cannot see the ground in front of her, an immediate rush of physical symptoms comes over her.

"I feel a sinking feeling and I get really unbalanced," Love said. "I have to hold on to something. I don't know that I really picture anything, I'm just kind of scared I will slip or someone will push me off by accident."

Love said she does not feel it is necessary for her to seek medical help but she said that she needs to learn to cope with this anxiety on her own.

"I have tried to tell myself it is stupid and I am okay — I won't fall out of a building," Love said. "I have never sought out treatment because heights are not that big a part of my life, and I figured I can just avoid the situation."

Though she may not be affected by her fear of heights at this time in her life, Love said one day this fear may be an encumbrance.

"Later on when I get to do what I want in regards to vacationing and outdoor activities I think I will be limited," Love said. "I love to be outside and a lot of the most beautiful places are near mountains and other high places."

As Brazeal has gotten older, she said her fear has decreased because she has learned how to cope with the panic and is not the only female who has learned to live with this apprehension.

"It has probably subsided a little by being on my own," Brazeal said. "I think (we all) have fears and have a tendency to protect ourselves from them."



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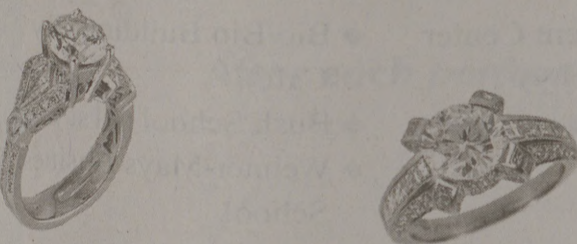
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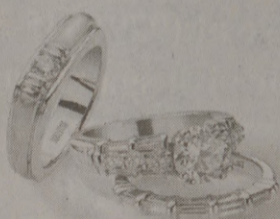


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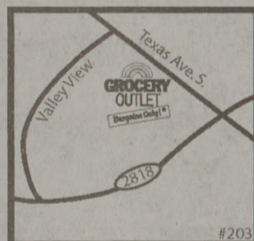
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