Women In White (Urban Legend)

The story of a woman in white, haunting roadsides, rivers, or mirrors is one that appears all over the world. Her story is fluid, changing to fit circumstances in each local history. Each reemergence of her story shares similarities with the other versions she has appeared in. Usually, the woman in white is a restless spirit who has lost her children. She may also be a young woman who died before her time, or a woman who was murdered and seeks vengeance. Whatever her reason, the result is the same. She walks the earth long after death, searching for her children, her murderer, or just some nameless thing she needs before she can move on.

Picking up hitchhikers in the Midwestern and Central United States greatly increases the chances of seeing the Woman in White. She often stands on the side of the road and waits for someone to pick her up. She sits through the ride, usually not very willing to talk to her driver, and before they reach any place she could call home, she simply disappears out of the car. Sometimes, instead of accepting rides from strangers, she’ll walk up and down the same stretch of land, holding a lantern or the like, searching and searching. Even if new features are built on top of the path she so tirelessly paces, she’ll still stay in the place her memories have bound her to.

La Llorona is bound differently than her more benign sister spirit. Instead of a roadside, La Lorna is stuck by the body of water where she killed her babies. La Llorona weeps for her lost children and searches for them near her river after dark. When she finds a child out of bed, she will take him, thinking he is hers. She can never find her own child on this earth so she will kill the new one she abducted. La Llorona stories usually occur in southern states or wherever there is a large Hispanic population, and are used to scare children enough to stay indoors at night.

Bloody Mary stories are not used by parents at all. They pass insidiously through young girls at school and slumber parties. These stories may also feature a woman who has lost her children, but in the stories told by children for children, her origin is less important than her purpose. Bloody Mary appears in the mirror after she summoned by a ritual. Whether she harms the one who called her varies based on who is telling the story, but even if the story says she just appears, the ritual is rarely tried because it is so often believed.

Another kind of woman in white is more of a young lady in white. These are quite nice spirits, who just haven’t moved on because their life was cut so short. They are usually very pretty and the color of their clothes may even vary away from the traditional white. They may have died after attending a dance, or wedding because they are always in formal wear. The main feature that these Spectral
Dates all share is their chill. Though they may not be the ice cold of death, they are usually cold enough to warrant the temporary gift a jacket to wear by the man they inevitably encounter.

Selected Examples of the Urban Legend:

**Hitchhikers:**

FA 03 2.1.1.1.11.

Three young men were in a car and picked up a hitchhiker in white. She gave them only enough directions to reach a gnarled tree and when they reached it she disappeared. They went back to the same spot and there she was again, so they gave her another ride and watched as she disappeared at the tree. They rushed back to the same spot to see if she’d be there. When they discovered the same woman standing by the road with no possible way to have reached it so quickly, they didn’t stop to pick her up. They drove on in the same direction without a passenger, but when they arrived by the tree for the third time, she reappeared in the car anyway and rushed for the driver’s throat. Their car crashed into the tree, killing one of the boys.

**La Llorona:**

FA 03 2.1.3.1.1

A beautiful Native American woman was used by a Spanish conquistador and became with child. He decided to take the child with him to Spain without her, so she drowned the child and herself. She was cursed to roam the earth forever, searching for her baby.

FA 03 2.1.3.1.2

The story teller’s father was a girl-chaser who walked home very late at night after wooing women. One night, as he made his way through a park, he ran into a woman in white. She wouldn’t speak to him to answer his many questions. Instead, she disappeared. In fear, he ran out of the park and over a dark bridge. On the bridge, he heard footsteps, but couldn’t see anyone following him. He made it home safely, but was haunted by dreams of his past actions. He knew that if he did not change, he would be in danger, so he sought to turn his life around. According to his daughter, he succeeded.
The La Llorona for one town was a teen mother whose parents gave her baby away. She was so devastated by the loss that she ended up killing herself. Now her spirit looks for him by searching homes with new babies. Usually she just looks at the precious babies, crying because if she touches the child it dies. Sometimes she cannot resist, so another family must experience the pain she feels, hearing her weeping in the night to signify what she has done.

**Bloody Mary:**

*Bloody Mary–Are You There?* (FA 01 1763)

The Bloody Mary ritual is a girls only activity. In a darkened girl's restroom, a single young girl will be forced in front of the mirror. To summon the specter, she must call her name three times with her eyes tightly shut. When she opens them, Bloody Mary is in the mirror. Sometimes, spinning in a circle three times is required, sometimes blowing out a candle or splashing water on the mirror will bring the ghostly visitor.

**Spectral Dates:**

FA 03 2.1.1.1.12- FA 03 2.1.1.1.13, and FA 03 2.1.1.1.17

If a girl dies young, sometimes her spirit cannot give up the giddiness of dating. She’ll go back to a dance hall or similar social scene and spend the evening with a young man. Afterwards, he’ll give her his jacket to combat her deathly chill and drive her home. Not until he returns to her house to pick up his jacket and get to know her better will the young man even know she was dead. The grieving family living in the home is usually the one to inform him of the location of her tomb, where his jacket can be found folded neatly.