**Llorona, Omen of Death**

**A California Ghost Story**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

They say that the Llorona was once a poor young girl who loved a rich nobleman, and together they had three children. The girl wished to marry the nobleman, but he refused her. He told her that he might have considered marrying her if she had not born the three out-of-wedlock children, which he considered a disgrace. The girl was determined to have the nobleman for her own, so she drowned her children to prove her love to him. But still he would have none of her and married another. Mad with grief, the girl walked along the river, weeping and calling for her children. But they were gone. So she drowned herself. For her crime, her spirit was condemned to wander the waterways, weeping and searching for her children until the end of time. It was said that whenever the wailing woman appears, someone will die.

Now I have heard that one night, two young men were car-pooling home from work with the windows down when they heard a terrible wail. It sounded like the desperate cry of a baby or perhaps an injured tom-cat. Beside the road, a white mist began to gather. It moved swiftly among a grove of palm trees and when it reached the largest tree, it became the figure of a lovely young girl dressed all in white. Long dark hair hung loose down her back. She began to weep and wring her hands in agony, and the men realized that they were seeing the ghost of the Llorona. The driver gunned the engine and they drove away as fast as they could. The glowing figure of the Llorona remained visible in the rear-view mirror until the car turned the corner.

The men were upset by the vision, afraid that the rumors about the Llorona might be true. But nothing happened to either of them the rest of that night, so they laughed away the incident, deciding that they had imagined the whole thing.

The next night, the men were riding home from work when their front tire burst at the place in the road where they had seen the ghost the previous night.  The car spun out of control and hit the largest tree in the palm grove in the exact place where the Llorona had appeared to them.  Both men were killed instantly.