

Ghost Story Competition

As the wind howled at the trees filled with drips from the chilled frost, the faded light of the moon shone onto the lonely field. The lights glowed out from the old house. There was something inside. If you approached this house on Christmas Eve you would have a feeling shivering down your spine and that feeling was fear. You may wonder why this would be happening. That means you've never heard of The Old Man of Christmas Eve. The old house had been empty for many centuries and is visited by the locals every year for one evening only. The house was last owned by a farmer who died years before. The house was now owned by the community church who on Christmas eve lit candles a metre high from the front of the house reflecting onto the lonely field. However this changed some years ago...

On Christmas Eve years ago, the locals from the community church were walking up to the old house. There was no one particularly young in attendance this year, just a gathering of aged people with a hideous fashion sense. When they got to the house it seemed different, and everyone sensed the change. The front door of the old house was open. Someone was inside, but who? They looked at each other in despair for a split second and then a man called out "let's go inside". At first they felt it was right to light the candles as some locals wanted to ignore the signal that something could be inside the old house.

They all huddled together in fear in such a way that they couldn't have possibly been closer to one another than they were. As they stepped closer to the sitting room door which was also open, the floorboards creaked, and as they did so fear filled their veins and took over any other thought in their minds. Even the sound of a pin dropping would have been a sign of fear to them. A few locals went into the kitchen and some stayed in the hallway as they could not bear the tension. The kitchen was full of dreadful things, rusted cups and cutlery, and cupboard doors practically falling off their hinges. After a few minutes of observing the wreckage of the downstairs, they then went to check upstairs in an attempt to clear all the fear that had consumed their bodies. Most of the stairs were chipped, broken and some parts were not even there.

As they peered through the darkness of a bedroom there was a faint shadow against the wall next to the window facing out onto the field. It moved. The locals all shuddered in fear. There was something there. What was it? A local whispered hello to whatever was there, the shadow moved again and started very slowly creeping towards them, which in turn made some of the locals run down the stairs and evacuate to the field in unimaginable fear. The locals that had remained, recoiled onto the landing with the shadow still creeping towards them. The shadow was now less of a shadow and was transforming rapidly to the resemblance of a faint old man. He was too faint to be an actual man and too man like to be a shadow.

The faint old man stopped and looked at the locals, making each of them increase in anxiety. The faint man then spoke in an attempt to allay their fears. He began by telling them that he was the former farmer Richard, who had died many years before. He went to explain that it was always his wish to return to the house, but for a reason he could not ever explain, he had never made it back. His reason for returning?, well this after all was the place where all his happiest memories were created.

This was a really important journey travelling back from the afterlife for Richard. The first year he ever came back to the old house was the first year the Christmas candle lighting had begun. He thought that the locals would remember him if they saw him on such a poignant occasion, but instead they were terrified and ran away. He was heartbroken, even his beloved friend Fred did not recognise him. Richard realised that it was going to take the locals a bit of time to accept and get used to what they had seen....

Grace Crutchley (7P)

The Ghost That Once Lived

13th October 1945

Dear diary,

It is my first day writing to you, I am going to explain a bit about myself. My name is Elena Swan, and I am 12 years of age, born on 2nd April. I have blonde, silky hair up to my shoulders. I have a little sister who is 8 years old, called Meredith Swan, her hair is auburn and in a neat bob. We are both very excited today as we've just moved into a new house. I have a Father called, Peter, but call him Mr. Swan. My Mother, called Katherine, she died when Meredith was born, which was on 25th December. All I remember was she had long, elegant fingers that she would use to stroke my hair with before I fell asleep and dreamed about whatever 2-years old dream about. I am going to tell you how she died.... Oh, Father is calling us down for supper, I ought to go, I will write tomorrow.

1st December 1945

Dear diary,

I heard Father talking about Christmas presents for Meredith and I, we are extremely excited. However, we have recently discovered that there are unquiet spirits living here in our new house. I have not the faintest clue what they are but, I do not believe in ghosts anyway. Nasty little Milly at school told me about the old housekeeper who died here last year. I will write later, but for now I am going to have a look in our attic and find the Christmas decorations and make our house look merry. To add to the excitement, I am also listening to the latest song, Goodnight Sweetheart, my favourite tune! Got to go.

1st December 1945

Dear diary,

The strangest thing happened earlier, I was in the attic getting the Christmas box, when Father's most loved item from Mother, a beautiful, framed picture of our family, flew across the room and smashed. Father came upstairs, and just went bonkers - I felt so sorry for him. "It was not me", I said, but he would not listen. Instead, he said I had to go straight to bed without supper! Here I am now writing to you. I hope this was just a bad dream, and when I wake up it will be forgotten. In fact, I bet it was my evil little sister who followed me and did it. Oh no, now I have just stained my book with a tear, sorry. I am going to clear up. I'll write again soon.

17th December 1945

Dear diary,

I am terrified, I bet your wondering why? I have not got long, but I can explain a little. So, it was a lovely morning with golden rays of sunlight dancing around on my bedroom floor, when I thought I would have a few more minutes of sleep. You know I told you that my Mother would stroke my hair - I mentioned that before, did I not? Anyway, someone was gently touching my head when I first woke up. There were cold, long fingers stroking my hair, just like my Mother used to. But when I opened my eyes, there was no one there. I let out a blood-curdling scream that sent chills down my spine, and of course Father came sprinting up the stairs, thinking I was being murdered. I tried to explain to Father what had happened, but all he said was that it must have been a silly old dream. Now everyone thinks I am going completely crazy. I am not and it was not a dream! Meredith is finding it most amusing. I think it was my Mother's spirit trying to get in touch. Farewell.

Cont...

23rd December 1945

Dear diary,

Yet another strange occurrence happened today. As I was meticulously brushing my long hair, I saw a shadow flit behind me in the mirror and a strange chill spread across my body like somebody running icicles over my skin. At the same time, I heard my Mother's voice whisper in my ear, "Be careful honey-bee", which was always her pet name for me. I jumped out of my skin! Is she trying to warn me about the unquiet spirit?

25th December 1945

Dear diary,

It is Christmas Day, hoorah! I was so excited when I woke up and sprinted downstairs to open my stocking. Meredith was already tearing open her finely wrapped gifts, so I joined her. All was fine until my last present, which I tore open to reveal this strange and mysterious note:

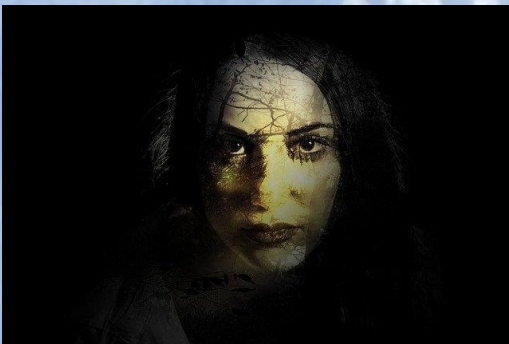
"Hello Elena, your Ghost of a Mother is not here anymore, Instead, it's me, the owner of this house, I died here and it is my house. Now it is my turn to ruin your life, like you have done to me! MAHAHAHAHA! Say goodnight sweetheart!"

I think my Mother's spirit was trying to warn me and protect me from this evil spirit. Now I understand what unquiet spirits are. Should I be worried for what is going to happen next? Should I keep this deep, dark secret to myself, or should I share it with my family?

25th December 1946

Hello diary,

I have just moved here into this house and the first thing I find is this diary hidden in the chimney breast. I'm going to keep it for my own and start writing in it too! The end part is a bit creepy – Elena must have had a very active imagination. My name Anna Mari. I live with my Father and Mother and I am an only child. I heard the people who last lived here mysteriously disappeared a year ago on Christmas day. Maybe when I read through this diary, I will discover some clues and solve the mystery. Brrrr, it's really cold suddenly in my bedroom. I'm going to go and warm myself by the fire and finish reading this diary. I'll write again soon.



Author: Isabelle Rowberry (7S)

I tore through the trees, blissfully ignorant to the thorns that slashed at my skin and the branches that grated my cheeks (well, knocking back four secret egg-nogs will do that for you). The paper crown that had once adorned my head had fallen off a while ago, no doubt ripped asunder like the rainbow flag I had presented to my parents in the hope that they'd finally understand me. Much like Harry and Marv's attempt to rob Kevin's house in Home Alone, it hadn't gone down well.

But my booze-fogged memories were the least of my troubles when the spindly silhouettes of the trees dropped out of sight and miserable houses that squatted in clusters and watched me with brooding eyes replaced them. Tinsel in all manners of colours clung to window ledges, tacky fairy lights winked bleakly from their own personal hell, and there was even a blow-up Santa nodding morosely at me as if inciting me to keep running, reminding me that no number of useless, perfectly-wrapped presents were worth the pain that a Christmas with my family brewed and spat at me; all as its unnecessarily gluttonous tummy deflated.

I slowed to a walk, heart thundering and mind scrambling for rationality - to no avail. I glanced about me for a clue as to where I was; only cold misery (masked by the pretence of joy) greeted me, and I sighed, watching the cloud of breath unfurl in front of me, so serene in the current circumstances. It was when the thin mist dissipated into the bitter air that I saw her: a girl, wrapped in a black cloak and scarf, hunched over on the ground. She seemed to be hastening to pick something up, clearly failing in the dim attempt at illumination from the Christmas lights. Hesitating for a second, I took a few steps closer and leaned down to help her. Christmas crackers were spewed across the damp concrete and a brown paper bag lay weakly on its side, the source out of which the crackers must have fallen. She looked at me as I picked a few up and a sudden need to make at least someone's Christmas nice spread a smile across my face.

I offered the handful of crackers back to her and she took them gratefully. "Thank you," she said, voice dancing through the cold breeze that had sifted into motion. We stood back up slowly.

"Hi," she said, having gathered the bag handles into one clenched hand and readjusted her scarf. I smiled again, unsure of what else to do.

"So why are you out here? Not to mention, without a coat," she asked, looking me up and down and noticing the flimsy dress my mum had forced on me this morning.

I think hangover must have hit right at that moment because a throbbing pain started kneading at my head as if it were the gingerbread my sister had pummelled into shape for dessert. Trying my best to push away the headache, I replied, words tumbling out of my mouth as soon as I started, "My family hate me so I've run away and I'm never going back, because I tried to come out to them and they will never love me so what's the point?"

She frowned and my eyes widened. "I'm so sorry. I've had an awful day," I said, glancing everywhere for a hint as to what I should do after telling a complete stranger practically everything about me. I finally settled on a solution: "I'm Sam," I announced, reaching to take the girl's hand into a handshake.

She yanked it away but not before my hand passed right through it, a grey chill shooting up my forearm and stimulating my heartbeat tenfold.

Her face shifted as I took a startled step back and she grabbed my arm. "You need to go back to your family," she declared, and suddenly we were in a white field, snow crunching as our feet touched the ground.

I looked around. There was a boy, crawling towards us from - what I soon realised was - a trench. He held a gun shakily in his hands as he struggled forwards with his elbows. "He had an argument with his family before he left," the girl said from beside me.

All of a sudden, stealthy and silent, a bullet whispered past my ear, heading straight for the boy. I flinched and whipped my head away.

When I opened my eyes, we were in a hospital. "She didn't apologise to her best friend," the girl uttered, gesturing to a figure splayed out in a bed, drip extending from its arm. Before I had time to comprehend what the girl meant, beeping erupted from a machine beside the bed and spiky red lines on a screen collapsed into one fatal line.

Just as doctors rushed towards her, the world caved in and I was back on the cold street again. "You see? You have to go back!" the girl exclaimed.

I shook my head, taking a few unsteady steps back. "No," I said. "What my family did is unforgivable. I'm not going back."

I turned away; I didn't have a clue what had just happened but I wouldn't let some insight into people's awful lives suddenly guilt me into going back to that nuclear fallout zone.

But before I could move, she grabbed my shoulders, sending a rush of freezing air through my bones. "Fine. You want to have the same fate as me? You want to be dead too?" she demanded, shaking me, manic snarl tearing her face. "Sure."

"That's not what I -" I tried in vain to tug away from her, but her grip was deathly tight. With one hand, she yanked her scarf from her neck and began looping it around mine. I kicked, shrieked, tussled, but the scarf kept tightening more and more each second until, Christmas lights still flashing mercilessly from the houses, the world turned misty....foggy....black.

Daisy Ashcroft (10E)