

## Assignment: To write your complete mystery story



The mansion stood before him. Ali had only read about these houses in mystery books; he had never seen one in real life. The dark-grey brick walls, covered in vines, had collapsed gradually over the years, leaving a view through to the gardens. Rusty old gates, held up by ornamental concrete pillars, were padlocked. But one of the metal bars was bent, leaving just enough space for a small person to fit through. 'Should I?' wondered Ali. Warily, he squeezed between the metal bars and entered the garden.

Ali gazed around at the once grand, now overgrown, gardens. He saw flowerbeds with the blackened stems of old roses, now overrun with a jumble of grass and brambles. Round the outside were weeping trees, their gnarled branches, uncared for for years, touching the ground. A paved path was almost invisible because grass had sprouted between the slabs. Ali began to inch slowly along the path, occasionally stumbling over the thorny brambles, towards the house. Halfway along he stopped and looked up at the house looming over him. It was three stories high, with a dilapidated roof with cracked chimneys perched on top. All the windows were barricaded apart from one. Its wood had been torn down and its glass shattered. The once grand front door was rotten, its black paint bubbling and peeling away.

Ali stood silently looking at the door. With a slow creaking sound, it opened. Taking a deep breath, he stepped inside...

The musty smell filled his lungs causing him to cough. He glanced around but could barely see anything in the gloom so he fumbled for a light switch. But there was none to be found. In the shadows he saw a candle flickering. Ali reached out his now trembling hand and grabbed the candle. As he crept forward in the candlelit room he saw rose-red wallpaper peeling from the walls. Hanging from the ceiling was a vintage chandelier, half covered in a white patterned cloth. An old pair of shoes lay on the floor, long abandoned. Everything was covered in a thick layer of dust. Ali raised his candle and in front of him appeared an old wooden staircase with carved banisters stretching up into the dark abyss above. Ali was petrified but something inside compelled him to approach it. The fractured floorboards creaked as he stepped over them, watchfully weaving his way towards the stairs. That was when he saw them - a single set of footprints in the dust leading upwards. Ali froze.

Eventually, he bravely plucked up the courage to begin to climb the stairs. He followed and followed the footsteps up the many stairs, along corridors, past carved wooden walls with many paintings hanging from them, past balconies looking down towards the bottom until it led to a grand door. Carefully, he turned the dull brass handle. The door moaned as it opened. Fearfully, he entered the room. The room was barren except for an inky-blue bed, two miniature tables and an antique wardrobe. Ali tiptoed across the room towards the wardrobe, he stumbled over a raised floorboard and fell to the floor with a thud. Suddenly Ali heard footsteps behind him and the door groaned; an old man walked in. Ali looked round in horror "AHH" they both bellowed.

"What you doing here?" the old man demanded in a croaky voice.

"Um, I was just looking around," Ali mumbled.

"Why are you in my house? I thought you were a thief!" he exclaimed.

Ali explained that he had been out on his daily run and had taken a different path coming across this house. The old man, Albert, told Ali about how he had been working in this house for his whole life, and that the last family member of the Jones family died leaving the house abandoned. So he stayed there because there he had nowhere else to go. Albert lived in the old gardener's cottage around the back of the house.

Suddenly, they heard a strange scraping noise coming from above. Ali trembled, and his eyes widened. 'What is that?' he wondered. Albert said that for many generations no-one had entered the attic rooms because they believed they were cursed.

"Can we go up there?" asked Ali, suddenly feeling brave.

"Definitely not young man!" declared Albert, "that place is haunted."

Ali pleaded with Albert. "Please Albert. If we both go together we will be safe."

Finally Albert agreed. Reluctantly, he went off to find the keys, leaving Ali all alone in the room. More noises came from the attic, giving him second thoughts. Ali stood still, his heart racing until at long last he heard Albert's footsteps approaching. Albert saw Ali's white face. "Come on boy, it's now or never," he said, holding the huge set of rusty keys.

Albert set off with Ali trudging behind. They climbed the steep, narrow steps until they reached the door. An ominous silence filled the air. They looked at each other fearfully. Albert tried each key in the door; finally finding the right one, he turned the lock. Nervously, he gripped the ancient handle and pushed. The door creaked open and they peered inside the dim, shadowy room.

A thick, cobwebby substance seemed to cover everything inside and a noxious smell, desperate to evacuate the room, filled their nostrils. Against the nearest wall was the remains of a wooden

cabinet that had long ago collapsed to the floor. A jumble of broken chairs had been abandoned in one corner. The putrid bodies of decaying mice were strewn around. Piles of long forgotten objects lay littering the floor. But, what held their attention, was the rusty metal throne-like chair in the middle of the room. Every step they took the floorboards creaked and sagged until one metre from the throne they stopped. The chair was shrouded in cobwebs containing shrivelled spiders and the husks of dead flies. They bent forward together and peered at what looked like an inscription on the top of the chair. Albert blew away the cobwebby dust to reveal the words 'Jack Jones 1619 - 1700'. In the base of the chair was a drawer. Albert knelt down and gently pulled the handle. With an ear-splitting squeal it opened; simultaneously, the ravens, up on the roof, flapped and let out sinister squawks. That was when they saw them, a bundle of bones with an eyeless skull staring upwards. Shocked they leaped backwards. Looking at each other they both realised this was Jack... Jack Jones.

Ali stood at the grave running his fingers over the inscription. He had been back to visit Albert many times since they had found Jack's body. He was glad it had finally been laid to rest. Albert and Ali were now firm friends, united in their adventure forever.

