

23:19



James, who was a young teenage detective, glanced back down at the piece of paper. Yep, this is the address, he thought to himself. He took one look at the garden around the abandoned home.

EVERYTHING was overgrown: gnarled trees stretched out with their finger-like branches; dead rose bushes with their thorny arms and large vines climbed the walls menacingly, like a spider scuttering away. Moss covered the snake-like pathway, slithering towards the slightly ajar door. James suddenly remembered why he was here; he had received an anonymous call from a man concerning strange things which had been going on in the house on his street, things such as squawks, screeches, even the sound of someone hollering as if someone or something was murdering their soul.

James took a deep breath... and again. I can do this, he muttered bravely, before he stumbled towards the metal barred door. Just like the windows, he thought to himself. The door creaked open. Almost instantly he heard the eerie drip of the tap; additionally, he noticed with his eagle eyes that there was a cup of coffee, still warm. Squawk! James wanted to scream but was chilled to the bone and numb with fear...

After five minutes James had gathered his senses and calmed down; as a detective, he felt a heavy weight on his shoulders to get to the bottom of this case. With this in mind he silently climbed the stairs towards the bone-rattling sound. A single doorway, open in the gathering gloom, let a slither of light pour out like a waterfall. This lone doorway stood towering over James like a seven-foot giant. He struggled to see anything through the crack in the unwelcoming door.

'Help me!'

... A small message was engraved into this strangely terrifying door. James knew what he had to do, and somehow he did it...

The door creaked open. He hadn't noticed it before but there was a loud munching sound emanating from the room and he now saw the source: an old hag gnawing on a dead body. She had a sticky bush of hair, white with age, sprouting from her liver-spotted skull. Without warning, she whipped around and a blood-curdling hissing sound filled the room. James yelled in fright, startling the wretch who with broken, hole-filled wings flew out, smashing the vine-covered window. He stumbled back and fell to the blood-stained floor. James passed out.

A loud frightened groan filled the room as if a whale was waking up after a small snooze. James looked around and realized where he was - **THE HAUNTED HOUSE!** He hadn't noticed before but the room was filled with dead bodies hanging from the walls with sorrowful yet peaceful faces; everything had the red, sticky substance splattered on it. Old victorian drapes billowed in the wind from the shattered window. As James clambered tiredly up in the small room, he noticed the time: 23:25 it read. Only 5 minutes, he thought to himself then he checked the date. THREE DAYS! Then he realized the old oak door was shut, a flow of questions swarmed through his mind: How is the door shut? Who shut it? Is there someone in here with me?

A scraping sound filled the room. There was a man, a man with a black hood. "Jacob buddy?" James ventured. "That's me - you're wondrous best friend," replied Jacob with a smile and a cheeky wink. Jacob then explained how he had been worried sick about James and how the whole town thought James was dead when he had gone missing.

Together they decided to search the mansion top to bottom, looking for clues. After a long heated discussion, they concluded that they should leave the bodies where they were until their backup arrived with the gloves.

They worked at their grim task until 7:00am; they were both exhausted. Slumping on the sofa seemed an inviting and necessary option to the two men, whose eyes were now heavy with sleep.

The old dusty sofa sagged down and crumbled into nothing but a pair of ghostly eyes staring up at them. Half concealed by the floor the mysterious head rose up revealing the rest of her shaggy, lucid body...

The two men let out a horrified scream. The peculiar woman was an intriguing and ghastly sight; she had a thorny headdress, like Jesus, a threadbare dress and a pair of white tattered shoes.

“I am the ghost of Jemima Mississippi; the lady of this house...”