

# Mystery and



# Suspense Unit

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# Ghost story

A ghost story is a mixture of the supernatural and the mysterious. The storyteller, whether in writing or in speech, attempts to create a mood and atmosphere that help the audience accept the possibility that ghosts exist.

## Milk Bottles

This happened many years ago in a small country village in Alabama.

One day the storekeeper looked up and saw a pale young woman in a gray dress standing at the counter.

"What can I do for you, ma'am?" he said.

She did not answer, but pointed to a bottle of milk. The storekeeper handed it to her, and without a word she walked quickly out of the store and down the main street of the town.

The next day she came back.

"What will you have today, ma'am?" the storekeeper asked.

The young woman in gray pointed to a bottle of milk.

Again the storekeeper handed it to her. And once again the woman took the milk and hurried away without saying a word.

That night the storekeeper told his neighbors about the strange young woman in gray with the sad, pale face who came every day for milk and walked away without thanks or payment, in silence.

So the next day when the woman in gray appeared and again walked away with the milk without speaking, two or three of the villagers followed her.

She walked swiftly down the main street of the town. The men were amazed that they almost had to run to keep sight of her.

She passed the school; she passed the church; she kept right on through the little town up the hill to the graveyard.

She passed swiftly in among the graves and stones and trees, seemed to stop for a minute — and then was gone.

The followers stood quietly beside the grave where the slender gray figure had seemed to pause. It was the new-made grave of a young mother and her baby daughter who had died three days ago of a fever. In fact, she had died just one day before she first came into the store for milk.

It all seemed so strange and mysterious that the villagers thought they ought to investigate. So they came back with shovels and soon unearthed the young mother's coffin.

Then, while they were moving the coffin, they heard — or thought they heard — a tiny muffled wail.

They listened.

They heard it again — the feeble little cry of a baby.

Quickly they opened the coffin.

Yes. Here was the frail young mother in gray who had come for the milk. And in her arms lay a baby girl — ill and weak, but *alive*.

Beside her lay the empty milk bottles.

One of the men took the baby home to his wife, and the little life was saved.

No one ever saw the young mother in gray again. She had accomplished her task. She had saved her baby girl.

Now she could rest.

MARIA LEACH

- 1 What techniques does the author use to create the ghostlike atmosphere?
- 2 Re-tell this ghost story in the first person, as if you were one of the people who followed the woman in the grey dress.
- 3 Truth is stranger than fiction. What stories have you heard people tell that involved the supernatural? Re-tell one of these stories as a ghost story.
- 4 Write a short essay in which you state your viewpoint on the existence of ghosts.

### THE TELL-TALE HEART

True! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all the things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but, once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture - a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees - very gradually - I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded - with what caution - with what foresight - with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it - oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly - very, very slowly, that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha, ha, ha! - would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously - oh, so cautiously, cautiously (for the hinges creaked) - I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye.

And this I did for seven long nights - every night just at midnight - but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never, before that night, had I felt the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back -

but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on, steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out - "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening; - just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death-watches in the wall.

Presently, I heard a slight groan, and I knew that it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief - oh, no, no! - it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it

has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in his bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself - "I-it's nothing but the wind in the chimney - it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel - although he neither saw nor heard - to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a

little - a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it - you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily - until at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open - wide, wide open - and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness - all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses? - now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound - such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely

breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me - the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hours had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once - once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me;

it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye - not even his - could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out - no stain of any kind - no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all - ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labours, it was four

o'clock - still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, -for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search - search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs in to the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon

the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: it continued and it became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness - until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale - but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased - and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath - and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly - more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose



and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men - but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! - no, no! They heard! - they suspected! - they knew! - they were making a mockery of my horror! - this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear these hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! - and now - again! - hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! - tear up the planks! - here, here! - it is

the beating of his hideous heart!"

The Tell - Tale Heart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ -

1. Throughout the story, the narrator ( the person who tells the story ) claims that he is not

A. a murderer, B. a madman, C. a careful person

2. The narrator says he killed the old man

A. for his gold, B. because of his evil eye, C. because he hated him.

3. For a week before the crime, the narrator

A. tried to get someone else to kill the old man, B. tried not to commit murder, C. entered the old man's room at midnight.

4. The murder was committed on the eighth night because

A. the evil eye was open, B. the shades were finally drawn, C. the narrator had to leave town the next day.

5. For an hour before his murder, the old man

A. slept peacefully, B. sat in frightened silence, C. tried to leave the room

6. The narrator kills his victim with a

A. bed, B. gun, C. rope

7. The narrator first hears the beating of the heart

A. before the crime B. as the murder takes place, C. several hours after the murder

8. To hide the body, the narrator uses the skills of a

A. plumber, B. gravedigger, C. carpenter

9. " A tub had caught all - ha! ha!" The word all refers to

A. laundry, B. water, C. blood

10. The police officers came because

A. the narrator had called them, B. a shriek had been heard, C. light had been seen at the windows

11. As the police first searched the house, the narrator claims he was A. completely at ease, B. nervous, C. pale
12. After the search, the narrator talks to the police officers A. right over the dead man's body, B. in the cellar, C. outside the house.
13. Toward the end of the story, the narrator says that the noise he hears A. gets softer and softer, B. gets louder and louder, C. disappears altogether
14. When he confesses, the narrator seems sure that the police A. do not suspect him, B. are about to leave, C. can hear the noise too
15. The narrator does not know that he is very A. clever, B. insane, C. careful
16. The narrator A. Knows himself very well, B. knows only part of what is important, C. knows absolutely nothing about himself
17. Actually, the police officers A. don't hear the heart beating, B. hear the sound, but only softly, C. hear the sound as the narrator hears it
18. Which statement best sums up the story? A. Madmen, who have no guilt feelings, can commit perfect crimes, B. A killer's secret guilt may make him hear imaginary noises that force him to confess C. No matter how smart a criminal is, the police are smarter
19. The story shows that the author, Edgar Allan Poe A. was a madman, B. had been mad at one time in his life, C. could write as a madman might write

Question

1. Some readers think that Edgar Allan Poe used too much horror in his stories. These readers object to things like the cutting up of the body, ( A tub had caught all - Ha! Ha! ) What is your point of view? \_\_\_\_\_

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But aside from horror, is there any other reason the author might have had the body cut up? Why is it absolutely necessary for you, as a reader, to know that the old man is "stone, stone dead"?

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# LETTER ASSIGNMENT

## "The Tell – Tale Heart"

You are the victim of the crazed murderer in "The Tell-Tale Heart". Before your death, you suspect the man living with you is plotting to kill you. Write a letter to a friend or the police, telling them of your suspicions. What is the motive of the killer (other than insanity)? Why is he living with you? Who is the killer: friend, relative, acquaintance, border? Explain your situation in the letter and plead for help. Remember, you will get no help if you are not believed, give reasons for your suspicion. Use actual letter format (greeting and closing) and don't forget – **YOU** are the old man.

# 2 Letters

## The ABCs of Letters

Letters come in two basic forms. *Formal*, or *business letters* ask for and provide information. These letters are usually sent to strangers or acquaintances. *Personal letters* are sent between friends and relatives.

All letters have five basic parts:

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### 1 Heading.

A heading includes the date, your address, and, in a formal letter, the name and address of the person to whom you are writing.

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### 2 Greeting.

A greeting is a quick hello to the person receiving the letter. It usually begins with Dear. Be sure to capitalize the first letter in each word of the greeting. Put a comma at the end of the greeting in a personal letter, a colon in a business letter.

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### 3 Body.

The body is the main part of the letter. Many people indent the first line of the body. If you indent the first line, then indent the first line of every paragraph in the letter.

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### 4 Closing.

In a business letter, a closing can be Yours truly, Sincerely, or Regards. In a personal letter, you can write a familiar closing, for example, Your friend, Affectionately, or Love. Be sure to capitalize the first word of the closing and put a comma at the end of the closing.

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### 5 Signature.

Always sign your letter below the closing. In a formal letter, be sure to print or type your name beneath your signature.

# Writing a Formal Letter

147 Governor's Lane  
Maple Vail, HI 12345

May 31, 199X

Janice James  
Publisher  
Kid Talk Magazine  
1900 Corporate Dr.  
Metropolis, MD 67890

Dear Ms James:

Enclosed is my entry for the Kid Talk Essay Contest. I hope it meets your specifications.

Yours sincerely,  
J.R. Goodwriter  
J.R. Goodwriter

P.S. My entry for the art contest was received in your mail room last week.

return address

date

closing with comma

script

see

ss

ng

olon

t

not in a friendly letter

# Addressing an Envelope

My Name Here  
111 Scholars Road  
Thoughtful, KS 87965

U.R. Lettergetter  
8910 Postal Ave.  
Reading, FL 24153

return address

address

place for stamp



# THE SWEEPER

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY A.M. BURRAGE

Tessa Winyard thought that it was strange that Miss Ludgate was kind to beggars. For there was a thin streak of stinginess in her. Miss Ludgate was rich enough not to care what others thought. But she was old enough to be crotchety.

Miss Ludgate gave little to local charities. Yet she was very generous in her charity to individuals. Her neighbors were not grateful to her for this. They said that she encouraged every strange character who passed that way.

Tessa Winyard first agreed to work as a companion for Miss Ludgate on a month's trial. She knew that Miss Ludgate would be difficult. She did not know whether she would be able to keep the job—or if she would want to keep it. Tessa had found the job because she knew a niece of the old lady. The niece was able to give Tessa hints about her aunt's behavior.

When Tessa entered the house for the first time, she fell under the spell of it. She loved old country mansions. The house was called Billington Abbots. It was very old. The gardens around the house had many trees. They gave the house an air of melancholy.

At first, the interior of the house filled Tessa with awe. She loved pretty things. But she was afraid of furniture and pictures that were so coldly beautiful.

Tessa spent most of her time with Miss Ludgate in the drawing room. There were homelier rooms that held photographs of living people. But Miss Ludgate preferred to sit in the drawing room near the cabinet of priceless china. It was as if she realized that she was only the guardian of her treasures. She wanted to have

them within sight now that her term of guardianship was drawing to a close.

Miss Ludgate must be over 80, Tessa thought. She was very small and frail. Winter and summer, she wore a white shawl inside the house. In summer, she wore a lighter-weight shawl. It matched her hair in color. Her eyes were blue and piercing. Her once-beautiful mouth looked grim. She always spoke very slowly. Since she knew that she had only to be understood to be obeyed, she made sure that she was understood.

Tessa spent her first week with Miss Ludgate without knowing whether or not she liked the old lady. She had no idea how Miss Ludgate felt about her. Tessa did what she was told and thought before she spoke. But she wondered what place she was to fill.

The truth is that Miss Ludgate wanted to see somebody young around the house. The servants were old family servants. They remained faithful to her because of rumors of legacies. She was lonely and starved for companionship.

Tessa was able to play the piano well. So was Miss Ludgate, until her fingers stiffened with rheumatism. Now the piano was no longer silent. Miss Ludgate regained an old lost pleasure.

Tessa was 22. She was not a beauty. Her good looks were the result of perfect health and her youth.

When Tessa had been with Miss Ludgate a week, the old lady called her "Tessa" for the first time. She added, "I hope you intend to stay with me, my dear. It will be dull for you, and you may find me a bother. But I will not take up all your time. I think that you will be able to find friends and amusements."

So Tessa stayed on beyond the first month. A friendship existed between the two women. At times, they were able to touch hands over the barrier between youth and age. Tessa felt ten-

An adaptation of "The Sweeper" from *Someone in the Room* by Alfred McLelland Burrage. Reprinted by permission of J.S.F. Burrage. All rights reserved.



derness toward Miss Ludgate. She reminded Tessa of a poor actress who played the part of a queen. She wore cheap crown jewels and gave commands which other actors obeyed. The realities of life—wet streets, poor meals, and cold rooms—waited for her when the curtain fell.

Tessa was filled with pity when she thought how short a time Miss Ludgate had to live. She wondered how it must feel to think every evening of a tomorrow that might not be.

Tessa would have found life dull except for the complete change in her surroundings. She was the daughter of a country minister, one of seven brothers and sisters. They had worn one another's clothes, worn out carpets, and mishandled furniture. They had broken everything but their parents' hearts. The grandeur of living with Miss Ludgate broke the monotony for Tessa.

She wrote a letter home to her mother:

"This house might have come out of a book in which there is a mystery. There is no mystery that I have heard of. But at least it ought to have a ghost. I don't like to ask Miss Ludgate. She might believe in ghosts, and it might scare her to talk about them. Or she might not. Then she would be furious with me for talking about them. But we are certainly haunted by tramps."

Her letter went on to describe the daily visits of those who beg and steal on their way from workhouse to workhouse. Three or four of them showed up each day. None went away empty-handed. Mrs. Finch, the housekeeper,

had orders and she carried them out. When there was no spare food, she gave them money.

Tessa was always meeting these vagrants on the path. She grew used to them. They knew she only worked there and could be fired. But they knew that they were always welcome guests. Tessa resented their presence. She secretly raged against Miss Ludgate for encouraging them.

The girl knew about the struggles of the decent poor. Her upbringing had taught her about the poverty of farmhands and laborers. On Miss Ludgate's estate, some families lived on bread and potatoes. Yet the old lady had no sympathy for them, and gave everything to beggars.

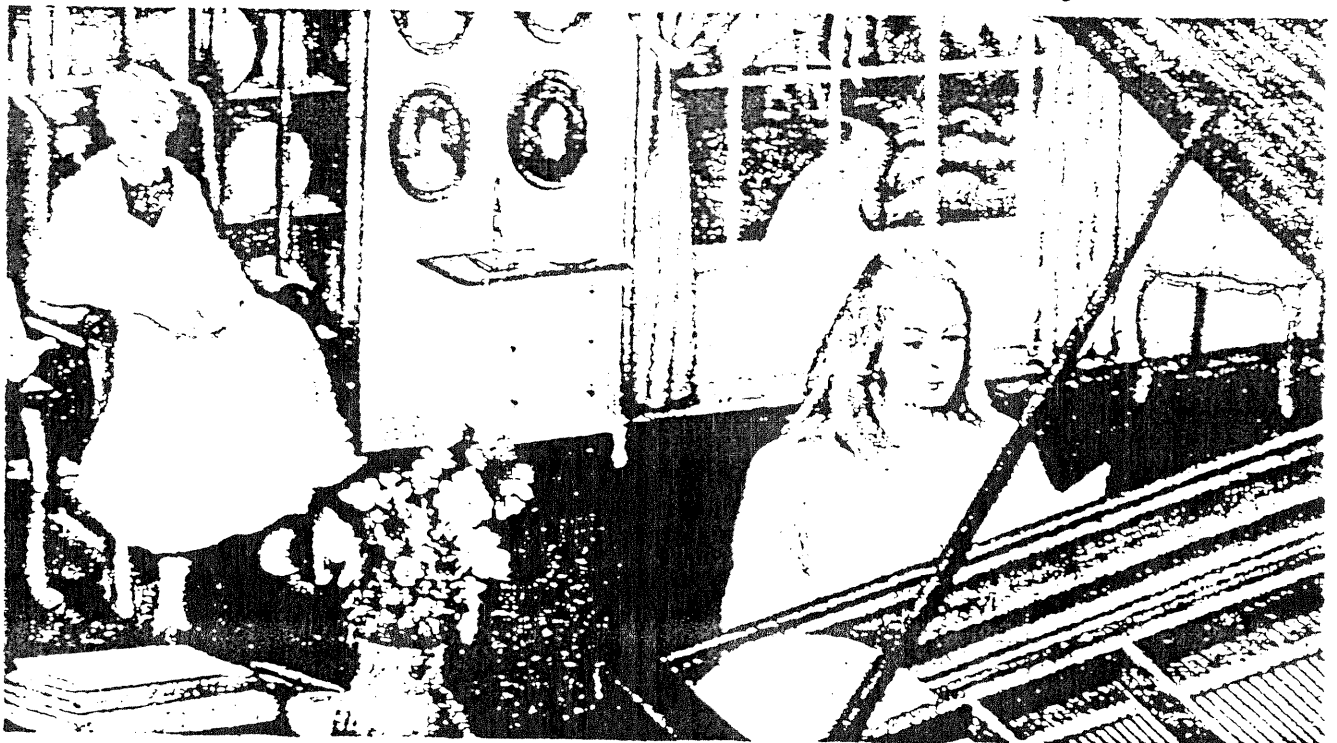
Tessa could not speak to Miss Ludgate about the subject. If she did, she might lose her job. But she did mention it to Mrs. Finch.

At first, Mrs. Finch said only one word—"Orders!" After a moment, she added, "Miss Ludgate has her own good reasons for doing this—or thinks she has."

It was late summer when Tessa first moved to the estate. She looked at the trees from her window every morning. And she watched the progress of the year. The yellow leaves began to give way to gold and brown and red.

One evening, Miss Ludgate appeared in her winter shawl. She seemed depressed. As she sat at the table, she leaned on her elbows and rested her face between her hands.

"Are you well, Miss Ludgate?" Tessa asked.



# THE SWEEPER

"My bad time of the year is approaching. If I can live until the end of November, I will last another year. But I don't know yet."

"Of course you're not going to die this year," Tessa said in a voice that would soothe a child.

"If I don't die this autumn, it will be the next." The old voice quavered. "It will be in the autumn that I will die. I know that."

"But how can you know?" Tessa asked gently.

"It does not matter how I know. Have many leaves fallen yet?"

"Hardly any," said Tessa. "There has been very little wind."

"They will fall very soon now," said Miss Ludgate.

Two days later, it rained heavily. The wind sprang up. Showers of yellow leaves fell to earth. Miss Ludgate sat watching them.

During dinner, the wind and the rain stopped. Tessa peeped between the blinds. It looked as though it was going to be a fine night.

Miss Ludgate got out a deck of cards. Tessa picked up a book. There was silence except for the sound of the cards being placed on the polished table.

Tessa could not have said when she first heard it. But gradually she had become aware of sounds in the garden outside. Finally, she was forced to wonder what caused them. She could not guess how long they had been going on.

Tessa closed the book and listened. The sounds were crisp, dry, and drawn out. There was a pause after each one. What was it? Then Tessa knew. On the long path behind the building, somebody was sweeping up leaves with a broom. But what a time to sweep up leaves!

She continued to listen. She was sure that was the sound. But she could not imagine any gardener working at this hour. She looked at Miss Ludgate—but she said nothing.

Miss Ludgate sat listening. Her face was half-turned toward the window. It was dreadful to see someone who was so old be so tense. Tessa not only listened, she now watched.

There was a movement in the silent room. Miss Ludgate had turned her head. Tessa knew that Miss Ludgate had caught her listening to the sounds from the path outside. For some reason the old lady was annoyed with Tessa for hearing them. But why? And why was there a look of terror on the poor old face?

"Will you play something on the piano, Tessa?"

Although it was a question, Tessa knew it was a command. She was to drown out the noise of the sweeping from outside. So Tessa played songs that allowed her to use the loud pedal.

After half an hour, Miss Ludgate stood up.



She gathered her shawl around her shoulders and hobbled to the door. She stopped on the way to say good night to Tessa.

Tessa began to play softly. The sound of sweeping from the path outside had stopped now. Was Miss Ludgate ashamed because she had a gardener at work at this hour? And why was Miss Ludgate so terrified? Did it have any-

thing to do with her belief that she would die in the autumn?

The night was calm. Many more leaves will not fall tonight, Tessa thought.

But the next morning when Tessa walked out into the garden, the long path was thickly covered with them. Toy, one of the gardeners, was sweeping them with a broom.

"Hello," said Tessa. "A lot of leaves fell last night."

Toy stopped sweeping and shook his head.

"No. This little bunch came down with the wind in the early part of the evening."

"But they were all swept up. I heard somebody at work here after nine. Was it you?"

The man grinned.

"You will never catch any of us at work after nine o'clock," he said. "Nobody has touched them until now. As soon as you sweep them up, more are waiting. At this time of year, 100 men could not keep this garden tidy."

That night, Miss Ludgate went to bed early.

Tessa went into the drawing room to pick up her book. She had taken only two steps into the room when she stopped and stood listening. It was now nine-thirty. In spite of what Toy had told her, somebody was sweeping the path.

She tiptoed to the window and peeped out between the blinds. She could have walked out the door and into the garden. But she felt that she would rather see the mysterious worker — for the first time — from a distance.

Then Tessa remembered that there was a window on the upstairs landing. She walked upstairs on tiptoe. Through the window, the moonlight threw a pale blue screen on the opposite wall. Tessa raised the window softly and silently, and leaned out.

On the path below her, a man was slowly sweeping with a stable broom. The broom swung and struck the path with a soft, crisp swish. The strokes were as regular as those of the pendulum of some slow clock.

Tessa was unable to see most of the features of the figure underneath the window. It was a workman who seemed to be wearing old and baggy clothes. But there was something odd about the whole scene. She knew that there was something missing. Yet she could not say what it was. Suddenly she felt sick and dizzy. She stepped away from the window.

The coward in Tessa urged her to go to bed and forget what she had seen. But the Tessa who despised cowards urged her to have courage. She said to herself, "Go down and see who it is and what's wrong with him."

Tessa walked downstairs again. She unlocked the door and stepped into the moonlight.

The Sweeper was still at work where the path ended and a gate led to the stable yard. The girl saw that he was not making progress with his work. The broom rose and fell, but the dead leaves remained beneath it. This was not what she had noticed. Something was still missing.

Her footsteps made only a light noise on the path. But the Sweeper heard them while she was still half a dozen yards away from him. He paused and turned and looked at her.

He was a tall man with the face of a corpse. His eyes bulged like huge rising bubbles. It was a foul suffering face that could make you feel disgust or horror, but never pity. He was dressed in rags. The hands that grasped the broom seemed to be only skin and bones. He was so thin that Tessa thought he was almost transparent. She was sickened by the thought.

They faced each other for a fraction of eternity. Then Tessa screamed. She suddenly realized the Something that was missing. The path was flooded with moonlight, but the visitor had no shadow. She saw dimly through the figure that the ivy was moving upon the wall. As her mind raced to tell her that the Thing was evil, she was left suddenly and dreadfully alone. The spot where the Thing had stood was empty except for the moonlight and the litter of leaves.

The next thing that Tessa remembered was being in the hall, faint and sobbing. She saw a light on the wall above and wondered if she was going to meet another horror. But it was only Mrs. Finch walking with a candle in her hand.

"What is the matter, Miss Tessa? Have you been outside?"

Tessa sobbed and tried to speak. "I have seen—"

Mrs. Finch put her arm around the shivering girl. "Hush, my dear. I know what you have seen. You should not have gone out. I have seen it, too, but only once."

"What is it?"

"Now don't be frightened: He doesn't come for you. It's Miss Ludgate that he wants. You have nothing to fear. Where was he when you saw him?"

"He was close to the end of the path near the stable gate."

Miss Finch threw up her hands. "Oh, poor Miss Ludgate. Her time is growing short. The end is near now."

Tessa sobbed. "I must know. Tell me."

# THE SWEEPER

"Come into my parlor, and I'll make a cup of tea. But you should not know tonight."

"I must, if I am to have any peace."

The fire was still burning in Mrs. Finch's parlor. In a few minutes, the tea was ready. Tessa took a sip and felt her courage returning.

"I'll tell you, Miss Tessa," said the old housekeeper. "But don't let Miss Ludgate know I've told you."

Tessa nodded.

"Miss Ludgate did not always give to beggars — not until about 15 years ago. She was old then, but active. She was fond of gardening. Late one afternoon while she was cutting some roses, a beggar came to the side door. He was sick and starved. But you have seen him. I felt sorry for him. I was just going to risk giving him some food when Miss Ludgate walked up. 'What is this?' she said.

"He whined about not being able to get work. 'Work!' said Miss Ludgate. 'You don't want work. You want charity. If you want to eat, you will work first. There is a broom, and there is a path covered with leaves. Start sweeping at the top. When you come to the end, you can come and see me.'

"He took the broom. A few minutes later, I heard Miss Ludgate shout. I hurried out. The man was lying at the top of the path where he had started sweeping. He had collapsed and fallen. I didn't know then that he was dying. He gave Miss Ludgate a look that I cannot forget.

"'When I have swept to the end of the path,' he said, 'I'll be back for you, my lady. We will feast together. Just make sure that you are ready when I get there.' Those were his last words. He was buried by the parish. It upset Miss Ludgate so much that she ordered something to be given to every beggar. Not one of them is to be asked to do a stroke of work.

"But the next autumn, he came back and

started sweeping right at the top of the path where he had died. We have all heard him, and most of us have seen him. Year after year, he has swept with his broom. It makes a brushing noise, and it hardly moves a leaf. But when he gets to the end—well, I would not like to be Miss Ludgate with all her money."

Three evenings later, just before the hour for dinner, the Sweeper completed his task. That is to say, if we believe Mrs. Finch's story.

The servants heard somebody burst open the side door. Two of them rushed into the hall. They saw that the door was open, but no one was there. Miss Ludgate was already in the drawing room. Tessa was still upstairs dressing for dinner. At that moment, Mrs. Finch walked into the drawing room to speak to Miss Ludgate. Mrs. Finch's screams warned the household of what had happened. Tessa heard them just as she was ready to go downstairs. She rushed into the drawing room.

Miss Ludgate was sitting in her favorite chair. Her eyes were open but she was dead. Her eyes were filled with a terror that Tessa could not bear to see.

When Tessa stopped staring at Miss Ludgate, she saw something on the carpet. She bent down to pick it up.

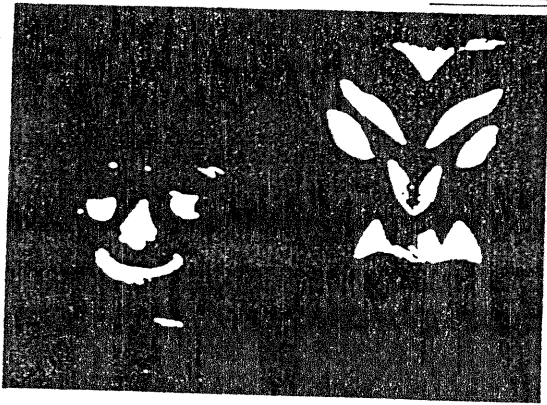
It was a little yellow leaf. She did not ask how it got there. She dropped it, shuddering. It looked as if it had been picked up by, and later fallen from, the birch twigs of a stable broom. ■



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Miss Ludgate was very generous in her charity to beggars. Why?
2. At the end of the story, Tessa finds a yellow leaf on the carpet. Is she surprised to find it there? Why or why not?

TRACKDOWN

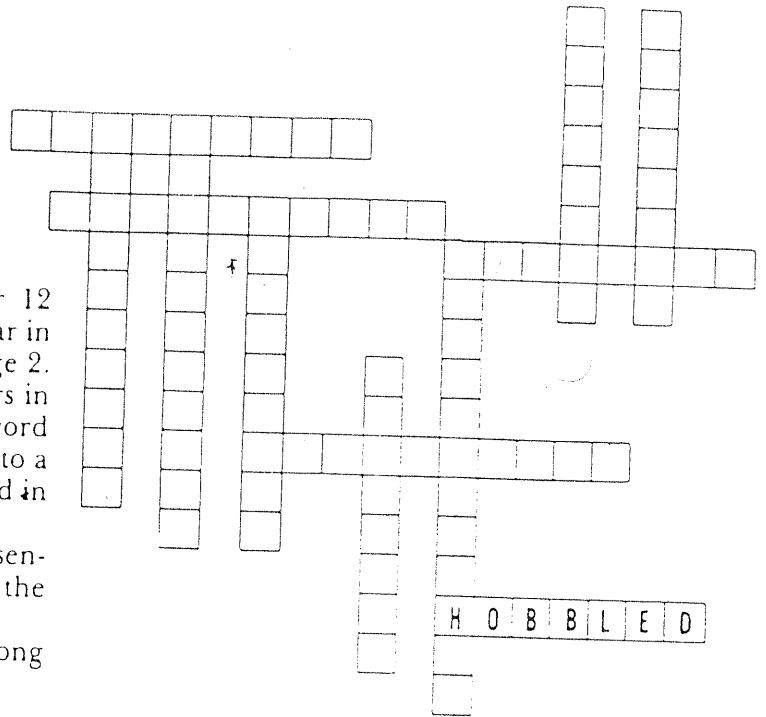


Will Kellogg

The puzzle at the right has squares for 12 criss-crossed words. All of these words appear in "The Sweeper," the story that begins on page 2. The 12 words are listed below. The numbers in parentheses tell how many letters each word has. Fit the words into the letters, one letter to a square. Use each word only once. We've filled in one to get you started.

There are also 12 sentences below. Each sentence can be completed with one word from the puzzle.

Watch your spelling. A letter in the wrong place could throw off the whole puzzle.



1. In the rain, the deserted playground had an air of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. As the race ended, exhausted runners \_\_\_\_\_ at the side of the road.
3. He won't give you a cent because he is known for his \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At the play, we saw scenery behind the \_\_\_\_\_ curtain on the stage.
5. The orphan was placed under the \_\_\_\_\_ of his aunt.
6. I have pains in my elbows because I suffer from \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The cat is fascinated by the movement of the \_\_\_\_\_ on the old clock.
8. Artisans worked to restore the old mansion to its former \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Sometimes, babies fret and become \_\_\_\_\_ when they're hungry.
10. When Tim sprained his ankle, he \_\_\_\_\_ to the doctor's office.
11. Memories and photos are wonderful \_\_\_\_\_ to receive.
12. Joe broke the \_\_\_\_\_ of the bike trip by stopping every 10 miles.

hobbled (7)	monotony (8)	irritable (9)	stinginess (10)
grandeur (8)	pendulum (8)	melancholy (10)	transparent (11)
legacies (8)	collapsed (9)	rheumatism (10)	guardianship (12)

**THE SWEEPER- COMPREHENSION**  
**QUESTIONS**



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What position has Mrs. Finch held for many years in the home of the Ludgate family?

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2. What is the name of the mansion where Miss Ludgate lives?

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3. What are two reasons why Tessa was hired by Miss Ludgate?

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4. List three facts about Tessa's life before she came to live with Miss Ludgate.

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5. Find and quote a line from the story that proves that Tessa and Miss Ludgate are fond of each other.

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6. At what time of the year was Miss Ludgate convinced she would die?

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7. When Tessa saw the Sweeper in the garden, she knew that "something" was missing. What was missing and why did this terrify Tessa?

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8. Why had the Sweeper returned to the pathway each autumn to sweep? Explain.

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9. What type of broom did the Sweeper use to sweep the leaves?

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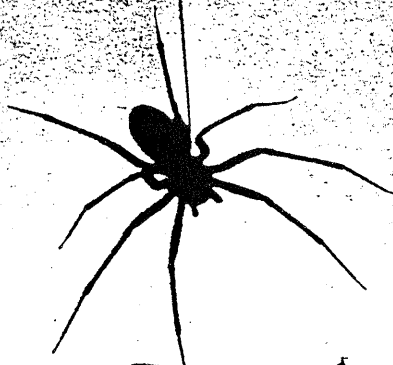
10. Why was there terror in the eyes of the dead Miss Ludgate? State your opinion.

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# THE SPIDER

a short story by Philip Thibodeau, Southington, CT

It was after midnight and the man still had not fallen asleep.

There was no relief in sight.

He had crawled into bed, thinking that sleep would quickly overtake him. Four hours had passed since then. The thick, humid air had soaked into the sheets. The moisture seemed to glue him down.

The night was also dark. The only light was a menacing beam from a streetlamp. The beam cut a narrow path across his ceiling. He stared at it. Except for that path, it was dark. The dark was a force in which he seemed to be drowning.

He searched for something to fix his gaze on. The search took only a few minutes, but to him it seemed to take hours. At last, it was successful. A black dot entered at the far end of the path and staggered up the middle of it. The dot seemed innocent until it dawned on him that it was a spider. The realization tore at his nerves. In his mind, the little spider grew into a giant tarantula. Fear seized the last thread of his reason. His head flooded with questions. How big was it? Would it fall from the ceiling onto him?

The spider continued down the path toward him. Sweat ran into his eyes as they followed it. The path of light did not pass directly over him. He would be safe if the spider continued to go the way it was. But just then the spider reeled off course—into the dark over the man.

His last nerve snapped. He rose from his bed and ran. He did not stop until he was outside,

but even here the heat and darkness followed him. There were no stars. A woolly layer of clouds held in the dark.

Light! He needed light. With a jump he was inside, and the soft glow of the kitchen lamp was on.

He squinted while his eyes adjusted to the light. His heart settled down. He poured himself a glass of lemonade and sat. He fished the sports page out of the pile of newspapers. When he was finished with his drink and his newspaper, he headed back to his room.

The bedroom looked completely different. Now it looked like a place where sleep was possible. The heat had let up slightly. Sleep was not far away as he lowered his head onto the pillow. It seemed that peace was his.

And it was, until he felt the fangs of the forgotten spider on his neck. ■

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Near the end of the story, the man calms down. How does this affect your reaction to the ending? Do you think the story would work as well if the man remained nervous until the end?

2. How does the author use physical elements, such as light and dark, to create an atmosphere of suspense?

Student-written poems, stories, and plays may be sent to: Student Writing, Scholastic Scope, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. Please print or type your work. Be sure to sign a statement saying: "This is my original work; it is not a copy of someone else's work. I understand that if it is published in *Scholastic Scope*, it becomes the property of Scholastic Inc." Have your teacher or a parent sign it, too. We cannot acknowledge the many contributions we receive. If we cannot publish your work and you want it returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



*"Cemetery Path" by Leonard Q. Ross*



Ivan was a timid little man--so timid that the villagers called him "Pigeon" or mocked him with the title "Ivan the Terrible." Every night Ivan stopped in at the saloon which was on the edge of the village cemetery. Ivan never crossed the cemetery to get to his lonely shack on the other side. The path through the cemetery would save him many minutes, but he had never taken it--not even in the full light of the moon.

Late on winter's night, when bitter wind and snow beat against the saloon, the customers took up the familiar mockery.

Ivan's sickly protest only fed their taunts, and they jeered cruelly when the young Cossack Lieutenant flung his horrid challenge at him.

You are a pigeon, Ivan. You'll walk all around the cemetery in this cold--but you dare not cross the cemetery.

Ivan murmured, "The cemetery is nothing to cross, Lieutenant. It is nothing but earth, like all the other earth."

The lieutenant cried. "A challenge then: Cross the cemetery tonight, Ivan, and I'll give you five rubles--five gold rubles!"

Perhaps it was the vodka. Perhaps it was the temptation of the five gold rubles. No one ever knew why Ivan, moistening his lips, said suddenly, "Yes, lieutenant, I'll cross the cemetery."

The saloon echoed with their disbelief. The lieutenant winked to the men and unbuckled his sword. "Here, Ivan. When you get to the center of the cemetery, in front of the biggest tomb, stick the sword into the ground. In the morning we shall go there. And if the sword is in the ground--five rubles to you!"

Ivan took the sword. The men drank a toast: "To Ivan the Terrible!" They roared with laughter.

The wind howled around Ivan as he closed the door of the saloon behind him. The cold was knife-sharp. He buttoned his long coat and crossed the dirt road. He could hear the lieutenant's voice, louder than the rest, yelling after him, "Five rubles, pigeon: If you live!"

Ivan pushed the cemetery gate open. He walked fast. "Earth, just earth... like any other earth." But the darkness was a massive dread. "Five gold rubles...." The wind was cruel, and the sword was like ice in his hands. Ivan shivered under the long, thick coat and broke into a limping run.

He recognized the large tomb. He must have sobbed--that was drowned in the wind. And he kneeled, cold and terrified, and drove the sword into the hard ground. With his fist, he beat it down to the hilt. It was done. The cemetery--the challenge... five gold rubles.

Ivan started to rise from his knees. But he could not move. Something held him. Something gripped him in an unyielding hold. Ivan tugged and lurched and pulled--gasping in his panic, shaken by a monstrous fear. But something held Ivan. He cried out in terror, then made senseless gurgling noises.

They found Ivan, next morning, on the ground in front of the tomb that was in the center of the cemetery. His face was not that of a frozen man's, but of a man killed by some nameless horror. And the lieutenant's sword was in the ground where Ivan had pounded it-- through the dragging folds of his long coat.

*What happened?*

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## An Interview With Dr. Frankenstein

"Dr. Frankenstein, you've led such an interesting life. I hardly know where to begin. Suppose you tell us how you became interested in science?"

"Well, I was born to a mortician. As a young boy, I used to prepare mutilated bodies for burial. Father always encouraged me to continue the family business."

"Goodness. You really had unusual encouragement in your youth!"

"Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, Father and Mother sent me to school at the University of Transylvania. I met the esteemed Count Dracula there. He was in my anatomy class."

"And what gave you the idea for your creation, The Monster?"

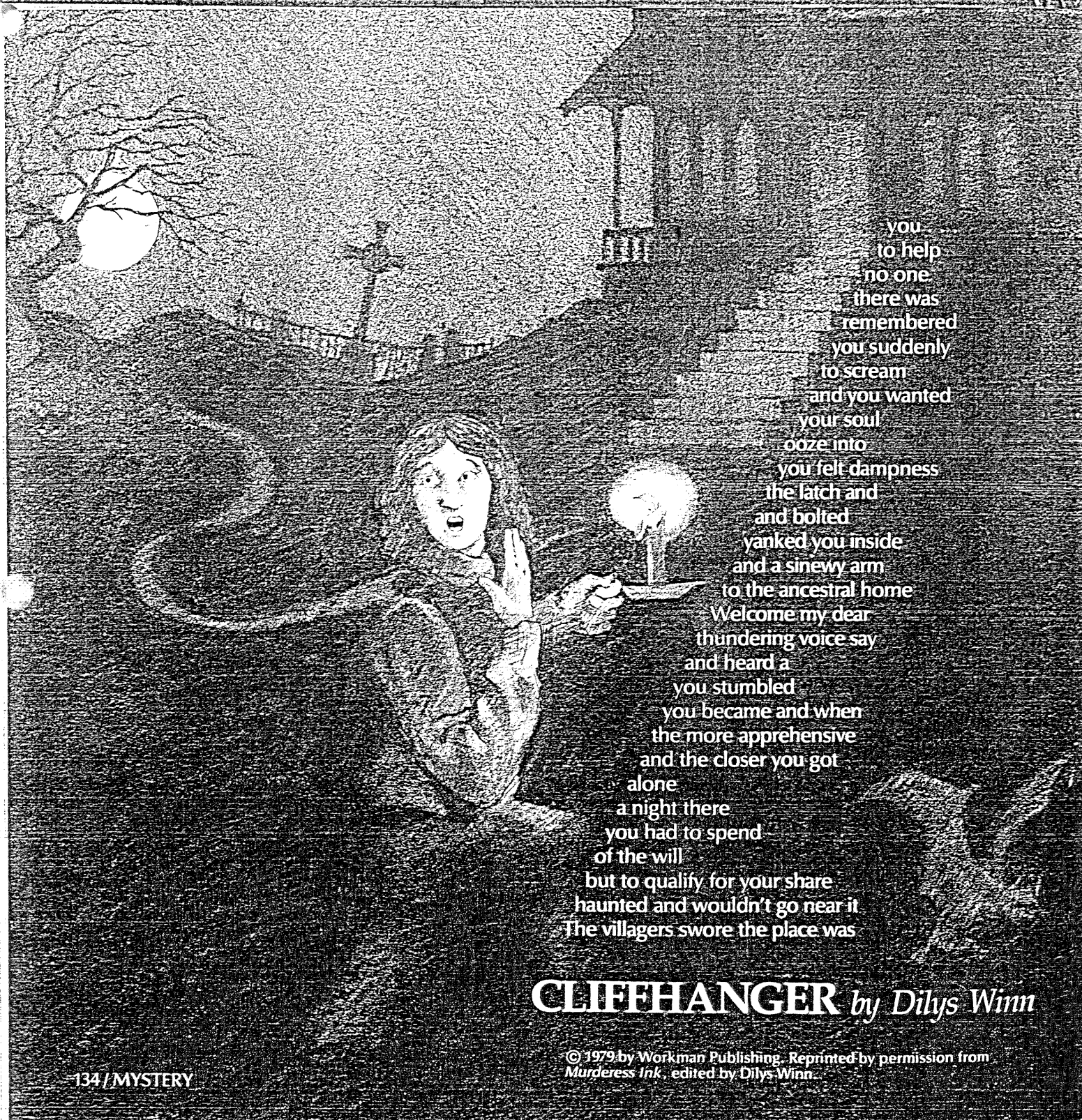
"He isn't a monster! He's a human being with feelings and emotions. After all, he's made up of human parts. Doesn't that make him human?"

"I'm sorry. Yes, I guess you are right. Please tell us why you created this . . . this human."

"I got the idea some years ago. I often wondered if I could build a perfect human being using the perfect parts from those who had died. It wasn't easy finding the parts. That is why I hired Igor."

"But now that you have lost your Frankenstein, what are your plans for the future?"

"I plan to continue my work as soon as I am released from prison. I also think I will go on the lecture circuit and then write my memoirs. I understand that I am very popular with students."



you  
to help  
no one  
there was  
remembered  
you suddenly  
to scream  
and you wanted  
your soul  
ooze into  
you felt dampness  
the latch and  
and bolted  
yanked you inside  
and a sinewy arm  
to the ancestral home  
Welcome my dear  
thundering voice say  
and heard a  
you stumbled  
you became and when  
the more apprehensive  
and the closer you got  
alone  
a night there  
you had to spend  
of the will  
but to qualify for your share  
haunted and wouldn't go near it  
The villagers swore the place was

## CLIFFHANGER *by Dilys Winn*

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# The Making of a Haunted House



Directions: If you were designing a very scary haunted house, list the contents you would include. Use descriptive words to describe contents. Then using a thesaurus, find more vivid words to give the reader a clearer, more precise picture of your haunted house. Criteria of this assignment: include at least ten items, twenty descriptive words and ten vivid words found in your thesaurus. Create a story or a poem from your list when you are finished.

Items	More Vivid Description
1. smelly, bubbling witch's brew	pungent, gurgling witch's brew
2. noisy, broken steps	creaking, rotting steps
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
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14.	
15.	

## WRITING IN SLOW MOTION

If you were a movie director making a movie of your life, where would you use slow motion?

Think of happy moments, sad moments, scary moments.

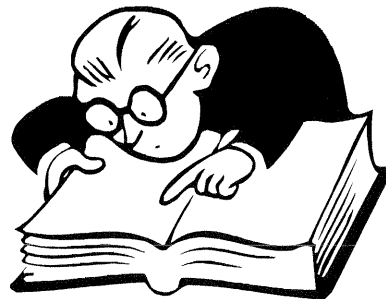
When you have a moment in mind, fill a piece of paper with that one moment. Don't go to the next day or even later that same day. Stay inside that moment.

While you are writing, focus on sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. Description is always the basis for slow motion moments. Be very detailed.

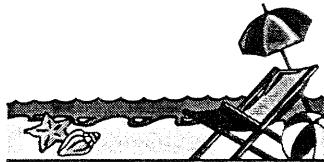
To help you describe the moment, draw a picture, or close your eyes and re-live that moment.

Here are some suggestions to help you think of a moment you want to put into slow motion:

- ❖ A time you got lost
- ❖ A time you lost something
- ❖ Something painful happened
- ❖ Something happy happened
- ❖ The big moment in the game
- ❖ A moment that is funny now, but not then
- ❖ A moment involving a family member



## The Beach



I was in a daze as I stared out over the vast amount of water. The salty air surrounded my tense body and seemed to be pushing me towards the big blue ocean. I breathed in deeply, trying to get myself together before I attempted the long journey from the beach to the ocean. The wind picked up slightly, and the sand began whirling around my legs, stinging them. I closed my eyes and began walking forward. Images of sharks and whales began swimming through my mind. I could see their large canine teeth tearing me apart piece by piece. I came to a sudden stop as my bare feet came in contact with the cold, salty water. Chills were racing up my back, and I felt the need to turn and run back toward the safety of the beach towel. For some reason I took another unsure step. The water raced around my ankles now and waves kept rushing toward me. I started walking at a steady pace now. The water was up to my knees then my waist. The water felt so good, so refreshing. I soon forgot my fears and began enjoying my first trip to the ocean.

8<sup>th</sup> grade

## Suspenseful Moments

One reason to write in slow motion is to build suspense. Read the following piece by 9<sup>th</sup> grader Luis Dechtiar and try writing about your own suspenseful moment.



### The Animal

Sara stepped into the empty living room of the old house. The boards creaked under her feet. Dust covered the walls, the floor, the ceiling, everything. There was a window with pieces of broken glass sticking out. The fireplace was made of red bricks, which were black from years of use.

She walked down a dark hall. paint peeling off the walls, exposing the decaying wood boards. She came up to a heavy wooden door and reached down to the knob, but grabbed air. She looked down and saw only a hole where the door knob used to be. The door only needed a little push. It swung open with a squeaky sound, and banged against the wall. Sara stared into the bedroom. Dried leaves flew around the floor. Wood from the ceiling lay in pieces on the floor. She walked in and looked up at the dark hole. Hundreds of spider webs hung down from the inside. This room had a balcony instead of a window, with a beautiful view of the church and hills behind it. Sara imagined herself as an old woman, sitting in a rocking chair, admiring nature and letting time go by.

Walking out of that room, she headed down the stairs towards the basement. The stairway was dark, and she could barely see the steps, but there was sunlight in the basement. The more she went down, the colder it was getting. As she reached the bottom, she saw there was a small window on the wall, close to the ceiling, where the light came through. Sara stood for a few seconds on the cold cement floor, staring at the huge mess.

Then the smell caught her nose and mouth and she felt her stomach tighten and the sensation of nausea fill her chest. The smell was so strong she could taste it in her mouth. Sara looked around, looking for the source of the strange odor. She saw pieces of cracked wood and crumbling bricks spread all over. Ripped paper and cardboard boxes lay wet all around. Metal parts of machines or motors twisted awkwardly and covered with oily substance. There was a big puddle of dirty brown water in the middle of the basement room. A long crack on the ceiling was letting water drip in. Sara could see one spot on the floor that wasn't covered.

Suddenly, in the middle of the trash, she saw something moving. She backed up and picked up a piece of wood from the floor. There was a low scratching sound coming from under the wet cardboard. Sara tried to guess what was underneath. *If that's a rat, I'm outa here!* she thought. She hated disease-transmitting rodents, garbage-eating insects and fast crawling reptiles of any sort. She didn't just hate them, she feared them.

She was terrified of them.

She noticed then that she had been holding her breath for a while now. She let it all out with a whoosh, then covered her mouth and nose with her shirt. Using it as a kind of smell filter, she took another long breath and held it.

And then she heard another noise. Squeaking. It sounded like a hurt animal. Now Sara started to wonder if it was a rat. Could it be what it was sounding like? A cat?

Sara took a step closer and listened harder. Yes, it sounded like a cat. Was it stuck underneath the trash covering or suffering wet and cold? Sara couldn't bare seeing a cat suffer. She took another step closer and reached the stick up to the cardboard. She slid the stick under it and slowly pushed it to the side...

With a violent movement the cardboard flew in her direction, and a deafening scream echoed through the basement. Sara jumped back and screamed as she saw the furry black animal leap up and grab the ceiling. It slid into the crack and was gone in a fraction of a second.

