

“Boo!”

“Boo!” Daisy shouted without conviction into the face of the oncoming woman. As usual, and like the other 2762 people before her, the woman heard nothing and simply walked straight through her. Despondently the girl turned and watched the woman continue her shortcut through the churchyard.

Daisy folded her arms in annoyance and slumped down upon one of the graves lining the path. Not that this was just any old grave-oh no, this one was her very own.

“I spy with my little eye something beginning with G,” she said to herself.

“Gate.”

“No.”

“Grave.”

“No.”

“Ghost.”

“Yes!”

“But I can’t see a ghost,” complained Daisy.

“Who can?” She replied, “I mean what is the point of haunting the church if no one even knows that you’re there. Waste of time if you ask me.”

“And me.”

“I must stop talking to myself, people will think I’m mad.”

“No they won’t, they can’t hear you.”

“Oh shut up!” She shot to her feet and began to pace around the graveyard. “Bored, bored, bored, bored. I wish something would happen, please God let something happen!”

The afternoon silence was broken by a familiar sound. Instantly Daisy’s eyes snapped towards the lychgate as the creaking of its rusty hinges travelled across the church grounds. In a flash she was running between moss covered stones, her long legs skipping tombs that lay in her way.

“Who is it?” She called out with glee, training her neck as she ran to catch a glimpse of victim number 2763, all memory of previous failures dissolved in an instant. “Who is it? Mrs Mogwitch returning for number 74 or Mister Longley making a late run up the leaderboard on 42? Who is it? I hope it’s not the vicar, oh please don’t let it be the vicar because he doesn’t count.”

Daisy reached the gate as the elderly man turned and fastened the latch behind him. ‘Show your face’ Daisy thought to herself. ‘No I don’t recognize’ you she pondered as he finally turned to reveal his features. Creeping silently beside him, she followed him up the gravel pathway. ‘Looks like your first time, I hope you are ready for this’. Running ahead she positioned herself in the centre of the walkway, it seemed to take an age for him to reach her. ‘10 feet, 8 feet, 6 feet, 4 feet, 2 feet. Here we go...’

“Boo!”

“Aaaarrgghh,” screamed the old man as an invisible voice scared the living daylights out of him.

“Aaaarrgghh,” squealed Daisy as the old man’s screams scared the deadly nightdarks from her. One of them went shuffling one way, and one went running the other.

“Aarrarrgghh.”

“Aaaarrgghh.”

“Who are you? What do you want?” He called. Daisy couldn’t hear these words, she was currently on the other side of the churchyard yelling her head off. Suddenly she stopped in her tracks.

‘What am I running away for, 40 years I’ve waited for this and what do I do? Panic.’ She turned in time to see the old man disappear behind the walls of the church, composure regained she set off after him.

The old man kept on running until he couldn’t move another inch, glancing up he was horrified to see a dead end ahead as the far corner of the walled grounds loomed before him.

“What do you want?” he repeated.

“Can you hear me, I mean really hear me?” She asked. The man stood rooted to the floor, barely managing to nod his reply.

“Yes! At last I’m a real ghost,” Daisy cried ecstatically as she ran in circles around the old man. When finally she calmed down she found him still glued to the same spot. Cold guilt ran down the length of her spine. “Oh I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to frighten you. No one’s ever heard me before.”

“Who are you?”

“Daisy, who are you?”

“Fred. Oh what am I doing, I can’t believe I’m standing here talking to imaginary voices,” he chuckled. “Oh well, looks like old age has finally caught up with me,” and with that he made to leave.

“No don’t go, you’re not imagining it I’m real, honestly. Please don’t leave,” pleaded the girl. Hardly believing what he was doing Fred stayed put. “Here sit down, you look exhausted,” she continued. He seated himself on a tomb and looked around for the owner of the voice.

“Did you know that you’re the 2763rd person I’ve spooked?”

“Really?”

“Yes, but you’re the only one it ever worked on. Only now that it has, I wish that it hadn’t if you see what I mean, because I didn’t really mean to frighten you. I’m very sorry, forgiven?” Fred glanced around before shaking his head in disbelief.

“Forgiven,” he mumbled. Daisy cheered and clapped her hands together.

“What are you doing here?” He asked.

“I don’t know.”

“Did you do something wrong?”

“No! It just happened, one minute I was crossing the road, next minute I was here. Puff, just like that,” she said throwing her hands into the air.

“You got run over?”

“I think so but I’m not sure, I was looking the other way at the time. Can you play I Spy?”

“Of course.”

“Ah good. I Spy with my little eye something beginning with G....”

From that day on Fred made a habit of crossing through the churchyard every day. Rain or shine he turned up without fail. Daisy couldn’t see enough of him, 40 years of solitude led to a cascade of endless sentences that left his ears humming for hours.

“Daisy,” he said one day. “Why don’t you go somewhere else for a change?”

“I can’t.”

“What do you mean?”

“I can’t that’s what I mean. I can’t see anything over these walls, it’s all just blank.”

“Maybe I’ve been sent here to help you, to undo some great wrong that you’ve done to enable you to rest in peace. At least that’s what happens in all the films.” The two of them sat upon Daisy’s tomb and thought deeply.

“Does your mother or father ever visit your grave?” Said Fred after a long pause.

“No, they are both dead.”

“Any relatives, surely there must be someone?”

“Only William but he never came to see me.”

“Who is William?” He asked.

“My boyfriend, for years I waited for him to come and see me but he never did full. The only reason I took to spooking was to pass the time until he came.”

“Well that’s it then!” He exclaimed jumping to his feet. “I’ve got to find William and make him visit you. That’s what’s holding you back.”

“Do you think so?”

“To tell you the truth I haven’t a clue. But it’s worth a try.”

Fred searched everywhere for William, from fingering through the phone book to scanning the electoral register. William Whyte had simply disappeared.

“He must have moved away,” he said when he next visited the churchyard.

“He would never leave Steeple Bayford,” she replied quietly. “He loved it here.”

Fred caught the hint of sadness in her voice and said in a low tone. “Don’t worry, I’ll find him if it’s the last thing I do.”

Slowly the days ticked by in the sleepy corner of East Anglia, the long hot days of summer drifted into the rusty brown haze of autumn. A carpet of leaves covered the graveyard as Daisy spooked number 2842.

“I didn’t like the look of him anyway,” she said. “I’m glad he never heard me.”

Fred waited until the man had gone beyond earshot before he spoke. “I bet you’d have said that about me if I had walked straight through you like all the others.”

“No I wouldn’t,” Daisy retorted. “You look nice, you’ve got a kind of face.” His cheeks flushed the colour of wild strawberries. “You’re blushing,” she teased.

“No I’m not.”

“Yes you are you’ve gone bright red. I Spy with my little eye something beginning with C - Cherry, ha, ha, ha,” she replied before he had a chance to answer.

“What do you look like?” he asked after she had overcome her fit of giggles.

“Why?”

“I just wondered.”

“I’m very beautiful,” she replied.

“VERY beautiful?” he enquired sarcastically.

“Yes, don’t you believe me?” He was saved by the rain as the heavens opened sending enormous drops of water crashing to the ground.

“I’d best be off or this weather will be the death of me.” Daisy followed him to the gate.

“This is one of the advantages of being a ghost,” she said. “You can’t get wet.” Fred smiled, pulled his cap down over his eyes and set off down the road.

“You will come tomorrow won’t you?” She called after him.

“Of course,” he shouted back.

Fred slowly made his way along the narrow dark road, struggling to keep his feet as the strong wind threatened to lift him from the ground. He never heard the car approaching and the driver didn’t see him until it was too late. The screeching of the brakes was lost on the noise of the gale and the sickening thud that followed sounded no louder than a door slamming to those in nearby houses.

“Fred, what are you doing here? I didn’t expect you until tomorrow. What’s wrong, is everything all right?” asked Daisy.

He looked her straight in the eye. “You are beautiful you know,” he said.

“You can see me! How come you ca - ? Oh no!” She felt the tears begin to roll down her cheek as she ran forward and threw her arms around her friend. “I’m so sorry,” she sobbed.

“Sssshhh,” said Fred as he stroked her long dark hair. “Don’t cry.” The two of them held each other in the rain, slowly he pulled her head from his shoulder and traced the line of a smile across her lips with his finger. “You know you’re right,” he said “you don’t get wet when it’s raining.” Daisy burst out laughing and dried her eyes.

“My only regret is that I never managed to help you, I felt sure that was the reason I could hear you.”

“It doesn’t matter, at least I’ve got company all the time now.”

Fred glanced up at the young girl and smiled, his gaze slowly fell to the headstone she was leaning upon. He froze. “Oh no!”

“What?” She asked immediately. “What’s up?”

“Have you ever read any of the graves in here?”

“No, I don’t like reading?” He couldn’t reply, instead he pointed limply and shut his saddened eyes. Daisy slowly read the words aloud.

“Here lies William Whyte who died at the age of 24 in a tragic accident along with his sweetheart Daisy Price (20) on the 5 August 1952.....” Her voice trailed off into silence.

“It seems I found him after all,” said Fred finally as he opened his eyes. “Daisy? Where are you?” He continued calling, scanning the empty graveyard. “Daisy?” A strange feeling gripped his stomach, it dawned on him that it was the lonely feeling of solitude. “Then I was right all along,” he said sadly. “It was William you were looking for.” He held his arms aloft and looked to the sky....
“.... Goodbye Daisy!”

The creaking of the lychgate hinges sounded clearly above the rain. A plump woman dressed in a brightly coloured mac and sou'wester was shutting the gate behind her.

“Mrs Mogwitch,” he said. The woman slowly made her way to where he was standing as a cheeky grin flashed across his face.

“Ah well, seeing as I’m stuck here for a little while I may as well have some fun,” he said softly. “On the count of three. One, two,....Boo!”



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