

THE
GHOST HUNTER
CHRONICLES



THE
WITCHES
OF PENDLE

YVETTE FIELDING

Look out for more in
The Ghost Hunter Chronicles series

The House in the Woods
The Ripper of Whitechapel

THE
WITCHES
OF PENDLE

YVETTE FIELDING



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For all the *Most Haunted* fans who have loved and supported the show for over twenty years. You're amazing!

CHAPTER 1



A Haunted House and an Eerie Song

The little farmhouse stood abandoned in the middle of the countryside. It was obvious that no one had lived there for some time. The windows were grimy and cracked, and a square piece of splintered wood lay on the ground near the weathered front door. It was a sign, its black letters faded and the words *Malkins Cottage* just visible. An ancient, twisted oak tree tapped its long, bony fingers against the dark glass, *tap . . . tap . . . tap*. The sound was ominous in the December bleakness.

It was a small house, one storey. Originally the building had been just one room, the occupants of old sleeping and eating together. Over the years, people had come and gone, building in an extra room here and there, trying to live a happy existence in the place. But for some strange reason, no one had ever managed to stay for very long. The locals said the place was cursed, haunted even, by the ghosts of a family.

Now the snow was coming down thick and fast; big powdery blobs slowly twisted and tumbled towards the muddy ground. The little cottage and the land it sat on were starting to look pretty.

Along the dirt track leading up to the cottage, a four-wheel

drive rumbled slowly to a stop. Its doors opened and excited voices broke the wintery silence.

‘Oh, look, Steve, doesn’t it look perfect?’ A woman with blonde hair pulled back into a ponytail clapped her hands together, her face lighting up like a Christmas tree.

She opened the back door of the car and helped a young boy climb out. He was about seven years old and looked just like his mum. He’d obviously been asleep in the car, as his hair stuck up at odd angles; he rubbed his eyes and stared at the house, his new home.

‘Well, we knew it needed some work. But d’you know what, Moll? I reckon we’ll have it looking lovely for Christmas.’ Steve was a big man, tall and muscular. He smiled over at his wife and son. ‘What do you think, Jamie? Just look at the size of your new garden! C’mon, let’s go and explore.’

Steve and Jamie ran together towards the cottage while Molly brought some bags and a box with food provisions inside.

The rest of the day was spent cleaning and unpacking. The removal van arrived some hours later, bringing the furniture and the young family’s treasured possessions. And at the end of a long, exhausting day, the family settled down for their first night’s sleep in their new home.



Jamie woke with a start; the lightning cracked loudly above the house. The noise was so deafening, he thought the roof was about to split open. Thunder rumbled around like an

angry giant, crashing and stomping about. Lightning splintered above again, and Jamie screeched, throwing himself under the duvet.

Slowly, he counted to three, then whipped the cover back, hurtled out of the dark room and crashed into his parents' bed.

'I'm scared,' he announced.

His mum cradled him to her and kissed the top of his head. 'It's all right, it'll be over soon. It's just a storm. *Shhh, shhh.*' Jamie relaxed in the comfort of his parents' bed and fell back to sleep.

The storm raged all night. The thunder and lightning died down eventually, but were followed by an angry wind that whipped and bellowed through the countryside. The following morning, Jamie crept out of bed, trying not to disturb his sleeping parents. Still in his pyjamas, he slipped on his boots and ran outside to the back garden.

Everywhere was a mess. Trees, branches, bricks and slates scattered the slushed-up lawn. The ancient tree, which had reminded Jamie of an old, twisted woman, had fallen over. Its branches lay crumpled and broken on the wet ground. The tree's trunk and roots seemed so vulnerable lying there.

Jamie picked up a stick and began to whack it against the trunk, and as he did so, he started to sing out loud:

*'Witches in the garden,
Witches in the tree,
Turn around, turn around, one, two, three.
Look inside the bottle,*

*You will see,
Five witches in the garden,
Will come to you and me.'*

Jamie didn't know why he had just sung that strange song; he'd never heard it before. He began to spin around, slowly at first, but then faster and faster, and as he went, he sang louder and louder.

Suddenly he stopped and, after the dizziness had subsided, he walked over to the bottom of the fallen tree. The roots sticking out reminded him of his gran's knitting, all messy and knotted. Gnarled claws of twigs entwined each other, like hair that had never been brushed.

Jamie felt an urge to touch the roots; they were wet and slimy. He pushed his hands in between the stringy threads and plunged his fingers deeper and deeper down into the cold. He wasn't sure why he was doing this, but he found he couldn't stop himself. Suddenly his little fingers recoiled as he touched something cold and hard. Feeling curious, he took a breath and pushed his hands back in again. His fingers touched something, something that seemed out of place in a tree. It felt like glass. He pulled at the object, scratching his hands as he yanked them backwards. Placing one foot on the trunk of the tree, he leaned back and pulled as hard as he could.

Unexpectedly he felt himself falling backwards, landing with a gentle thud on the cold, wet ground, and to his delight the object he had pulled from the tree's roots lay on his chest.

Wiping away the mud and slime he could see he had found an old glass bottle. Around the neck, wound tightly several times, was an old cord of some sort, and hanging from the material were little white figures that jangled and danced about. At first Jamie thought they were teeth but upon closer inspection he could see that they were miniature carvings of men and women.

The boy was excited to have found some treasure. Just wait till he showed his dad! He ran inside, his cheeks rosy, his head brimming with mysteries and magic.

His parents were making coffee in the kitchen. Jamie plonked the bottle on the table and grinned.

After his mum had cleaned it up as best she could, they all sat around the table staring at the strange object.

‘What do you think it is?’ asked Jamie.

‘I’ve no idea,’ answered his dad. He picked the bottle up and turned it slowly one way then the other. ‘It’s sealed at the top with black wax. Very odd.’

‘Well, I think it’s weird. I don’t like it,’ said his mum. ‘It gives me the creeps, all those little figures. What on earth is that all about?’ She shivered and rubbed her arms as if someone had suddenly opened a door and let in a cold draught.

‘Can I have it in my room?’ asked Jamie.

‘Let’s just keep it here in the kitchen for now. When we’ve got the place straight, I’ll do some research and see if we can find out what it is. OK?’ Molly smiled at her son.

‘Who knows, it could be worth millions,’ laughed Steve.

The rest of the day was spent unpacking and then clearing

up the debris the storm had left outside. Molly and Jamie raked up all the broken twigs and branches, and Steve began to chop up the fallen tree for firewood. They worked happily together in their new garden, little knowing that in a few hours their lives would take a dramatic and terrible twist.

CHAPTER 2



The Possessed Child and a Ghost

As darkness fell across the Lancashire countryside, the lights in the little cottage were turned off one by one, and the family settled down for a well-deserved sleep.

At about 2 a.m. Molly thought she was dreaming. She could hear Jamie singing. The tune was lovely but, in the dream, Molly was scared, she didn't like the words. She snapped her eyes open, only to realise that she wasn't dreaming at all and that the singing was coming from the kitchen.

Confused, she got out of bed and padded down the hallway, following her son's voice. She stopped short when she saw Jamie sitting with his back to her in the middle of the floor.

He swung from side to side as he sang. Molly had never heard the song before.

*'Witches in the garden,
Witches in the tree,
Turn around, turn around, one, two, three.
Look inside the bottle,
You will see,*

*Five witches in the garden,
Will come to you and me.'*

'Jamie?' She placed her hand on his little shoulder.

He stopped instantly but didn't turn or respond.

Molly walked around to face him and as soon as she looked at him, she recoiled in horror. His eyes were marble white, and his face had a sickly greenish tinge to it. She tried to pick him up, but he viciously slapped her away with one hand while clutching the strange glass bottle to his chest with the other.

Then, in an eerie woman's voice she didn't recognise, Jamie spoke: *'We are coming, we will have our revenge.'*

In that terrifying moment, Molly knew they needed help. She screamed for Steve. As she called his name over and over, she noticed that the strange blue bottle had been opened, the wax seal snapped off.

Steve ran into the kitchen and instantly saw what the matter was. To his horror he saw that Jamie's face, body and whole demeanour had changed. 'What the hell?' he whispered.

Molly had begun to cry. 'I don't know what's happened to him, but he's not right, Steve. We have to get him to the hospital or something.'



'It's all right, Moll, it'll be all right.' Steve went to pick Jamie up but was met with punches and kicks. The strange bottle fell from the boy's protective grip and landed on the floor. The little figures danced up and down as they clattered and banged

against the coloured glass. It rolled across the wooden floor, disappearing into the dark shadows.

‘No! Leave me!’ screeched Jamie. His voice was low and guttural. Steve recoiled in shock.

Then loud menacing banging noises began to vibrate throughout the house.

‘What’s that?’ screamed Molly.

‘I don’t know! C’mon, let’s get Jamie and get out of here.’ Steve and Molly both made a grab for their son. The little boy screamed, kicked, bit and scratched. Terrified, his parents eventually managed to get him to the front door, but he kicked and screamed the whole way.

‘It won’t open, Steve!’

‘Here, let me. Keep hold of Jamie though. Hold him tight.’

Steve pulled at the door, but nothing happened. The knocking noises were getting louder and louder, and suddenly Jamie stopped fighting.

‘It’s here!’ he growled in his new sinister voice.

Jamie slipped through his mother’s grasp and fell to the floor, his breathing coming in rasping waves. The knocking was now happening at a terrific pace, so much so that Molly could feel the walls beginning to vibrate — and then she saw it!

Steve followed his wife’s shaking finger. A dark shadowy figure had come silently towards them. This thing, whatever it was, loomed over them all. It looked like an old woman, but Steve couldn’t be too sure. He suddenly felt a pressure on his throat, it felt like someone was crushing his Adam’s apple.

He stood up, choking, and grasped at his throat, trying desperately to breathe. He managed to pull in some air and staggered his way to the window. Taking a lamp, he threw it with as much force as he could muster and the window splintered into a thousand pieces.

‘This way!’ he gasped to Molly.

She picked up their son, and after Steve had climbed out first, Molly passed the boy to him. She took one look back and saw that the shadowy figure had disappeared. The family left the little cottage for the last time that night. They all knew they would never be coming back.

CHAPTER 3



Something Wicked This Way Comes

‘Take the prisoner down.’

The judge took a sip of water and watched over the top of his half-moon spectacles as the convicted criminal was led, handcuffed, down the steps from the court into the cells.

It had been a long trial and Judge Bromley couldn’t wait to take off his itchy wig and give his balding head a good old scratch. He was looking forward to getting home and taking his wife out to the golf club for a Christmas drink. Now that this case was over, and another useless waste of space was off the streets, he could look forward to a relaxing weekend. He picked up his paperwork, nodded to the court and went through the door into his private chambers. Once inside, he sighed with satisfaction as he scratched away at his shiny pate and hung up his black gown on the back of the door.

Suddenly, a drinking glass from his desk whizzed through the air and smashed against the closed door, narrowly missing his head.

‘Good God!’ He jumped with shock and whipped round, confused as to what had just happened.

His eyes stared in absolute disbelief as his chair now moved

from his desk, seemingly unaided, and slid sideways across the floor, stopping directly in front of him. He was aware of a knocking noise and realised it was his personal assistant trying to get into the room.

‘Your honour, is everything all right?’

‘Come in, Sylvia,’ he shouted, never taking his eyes off the chair. He hadn’t imagined it, had he? And the glass? His shoes crunched over the broken crystal. No, it had definitely smashed.

Then the eeriest of voices whispered in his ear, a woman’s voice. ‘Guilty!’

The word was said slowly, and the judge could hear the malevolent tone behind it. His blood ran cold.

The door handle turned erratically, this way and that, the personal assistant’s concerned voice could be heard from the other side.

‘Your honour? . . . Hello? I can’t seem to get in, is the door locked? . . . Are you all right?’

Judge Bromley spun around, desperately trying to find where the vile whispering was coming from. The more he turned, the more confused he became, and now the woman’s frightful murmurs had multiplied, more voices ringing in his head. The noise was getting louder and louder. He shouted out, ‘Stop it!’

A pain shot through his head, like a red-hot knife searing into his brain. Then a terrible sizzling, burning sensation exploded within his stomach. The judge screamed out in terror. He couldn’t stand the noise inside his mind, nor the pain, and

his whole body buckled and fell to the floor. Suddenly a feeling of being squeezed took over him, everything began to feel tight inside him. All his muscles began to constrict and throb and the sensation rose to his throat. It felt as if it were tightening. He began to kick out, struggling to get air into his body. He grappled with his throat, something was still there, tightening, squeezing, crushing his windpipe.

Without any warning the door splintered open, the personal assistant and two security guards discovered the judge, clawing at his throat, gulping for air like a stranded fish out of water. He was surrounded by shattered glass and his shirt was torn open to reveal the most horrific-looking burn. The judge's eyes rolled around in his head as he managed to gasp two words to his appalled onlookers: 'I'm guilty!'



The police constable was having a good day, she had made two arrests so far. Her sergeant would certainly be pleased with her progress.

The odious toad she had pinned to the bonnet of a parked car had managed to evade her for a few months, but thanks to a sly tip-off she'd been able to, at last, apprehend the creep. His sole occupation seemed to be to break into pensioners' homes and steal their life savings. She'd had to chase the scumbag on foot for a mile but her visits to the gym had paid off. She patted down the apprehended young villain, brought his wrists together and clicked on the restraints.

But as she began to read the prisoner his rights, she stopped

suddenly when she heard a woman's voice whisper in her right ear.

'Guilty!'

'Did you say something?' she asked the young offender.

'Me . . . ? Nothing, not a word.'

'Right,' she continued, shaking her head, pulling herself together, 'you have the right to remain silent . . .'

There it was again! . . . 'Guilty!'

This time it was louder, and it was definitely a woman's voice. Immediately she grabbed the back of her head as she felt what could only be described as a terrible burning sensation, sizzling through her skull.

'Arghh!' The police officer turned around, expecting to see someone else standing behind her, but to her surprise no one was there, just a few curious onlookers on the other side of the road.

'Hey, what's going on with you, yeah? You ain't right!' The young burglar watched open-mouthed as the policewoman clawed at her neck with her nails before her eyes bulged and rolled back in her head.

'Oh, my God!' The burglar looked about him, panic rising. 'I didn't touch you,' he shouted at the police officer, who was now kneeling on the floor, desperately clutching at her throat. 'I never touched her,' he shouted, so the onlookers could hear. But he didn't stay to help; he ran off as quickly as his stolen Nikes would carry him.

The PC was taken by ambulance to the hospital, fighting for breath. The paramedic noticed deep red marks around her

neck and also a peculiar pattern that had been branded onto her stomach.



‘Come and get your lovely fresh veg, look at these potatoes. Dug up first thing this morning, they were. Perfect for Christmas dinner.’

Dave had always been a market trader and his family had owned a market stall as far back as he could remember. He was one of life’s happy people: content with his lot. His stall was his pride and joy, although this morning had proven a little difficult. His bed had been so cosy and warm, his wife’s full figure especially lovely to cuddle up to on a winter’s morning. As soon as his big toe had touched the floor he had shuddered and shot straight back under the covers until his wife had pushed him off to work.

A few hours later, here he was, where he loved to be, standing behind his stall, chatting away to his customers. He stomped his feet to get the blood pumping and hopefully radiate a little heat. He blew into his hands, which were layered with the fingerless gloves his wife had knitted for him.

He called out to people passing by: ‘Get your lovely fresh vegetables, I got spuds, carrots, parsnips. How about some grapes, love?’ Dave laughed and winked at an old lady, who shook her head and waddled by. He looked up at the pink clouds in the sky and his eyes followed the light flakes of snow that had begun to tumble down.

‘*Guilty!*’ The word spat in his ear.

‘What?’ Dave spun round, expecting to see one of his mates standing behind him, but there was no one nearby.

‘Guilty!’

There it was again. This time said with even more venom. He could feel the icy breath on his neck.

Suddenly he grabbed at his throat, as he felt a pressing sensation.

‘*Guilty!*’ The word was now being screamed at him, not by one voice, but many.

He tried to breathe, tried desperately to get some air as the realisation hit him: he was being strangled! But by what?

He grabbed hold of the edge of his stall, trying to steady himself, but instead he brought the whole table of fruit and veg crashing down. Fellow stallholders ran to help, calling out his name.

‘Quick, someone call an ambulance, I think he’s having a heart attack!’

But Dave wasn’t having a heart attack. He was, however, under attack from an invisible power.

Dave was admitted to hospital with a strange burn and strangulation lesions.

CHAPTER 4



The Falling Woman

Being the week before Christmas, Lancaster was as busy as any other town at this time of year. The snow was falling on an already blanketed white city. The busy roads had turned the snowy powder to a dirty brown sludge. Cars drove slowly through the streets, their red brake lights flashing on and off as Christmas shoppers dodged and weaved their way from shop to shop.

Maisie Shaw was one of these shoppers, a young mum who pushed her sleeping baby Alex through the throngs of carol singers and Santas jangling their charity buckets for change.

Her bags swung from the handles of her pram as she made her way through the crowds. Maisie had spent the morning buying presents and had just finished a quick coffee with her friend in the Castle Café.

She began the walk back home and sighed inwardly at the thought of a hot luxurious bath. She hoped Alex would stay asleep long enough for her to enjoy a little ‘me’ time. She pushed on up the road, which was proving to be more difficult with every passing second.

Lancaster Castle loomed ahead. Maisie had grown up in

Lancaster, it was a place she loved, but whenever she passed the castle, she always had to squeeze her eyes shut tight and count to ten slowly, breathing deeply as she went by. She'd never known why she behaved this way. It was just a feeling she'd always had; a sensation of absolute dread and fear. So deep was this emotion, she'd never been able to go anywhere near the building.

She remembered a school trip to the castle when she was fourteen. Maisie had tried desperately to get out of it, but to no avail. Taking a brave stance, she'd decided to confront her demons and go. That day she had stood shaking with abject fear, no reasonable or logical explanation for her bizarre reaction. She had only managed to walk up to the main entrance. When the rest of her friends had gone inside the building, Maisie had rushed off and thrown up in the bushes. The teachers, much to Maisie's relief, sent her back to the bus, where she'd remained for the rest of the morning.

What was it about the castle that affected her so much? Maybe because she knew it had been a place where many men, women and children had met a grisly fate? Possibly the tales of such atrocities had subconsciously impacted upon her over the years. Of course, there were all the stories of the Pendle witches too. Living in Lancaster, it was hard not to know all about their story and their sad demise. Wrongly accused and imprisoned at the castle before being hanged over four hundred years ago. Whenever they were mentioned, Maisie felt so emotional. She didn't tell people about her fears of the castle, she kept that to herself, not wanting people to think she was strange. Only her

mum knew of her adverse reaction to the foreboding place, and she had never understood her daughter's odd behaviour either.

As Maisie pushed on, for some odd reason, and for the first time, she felt her face being pulled towards the castle. Almost against her will, her eyes robotically looked at the big stone structure. She didn't know why, and she wished to God she hadn't. Fear rushed through her body like a train whistling through a dark tunnel. Her hands shot with the sharp sensations of pins and needles. Her throat went dry, eyes wide with terror: because, standing on one of the turrets, was a woman. As her long dark hair whipped about her face, she appeared to be wearing a long, dirty tattered dress and a trailing black cloak that buffeted backwards in the wind.

Maisie threw her hand to her mouth as she watched the poor woman fall forwards, arms outstretched at her side, her cloak billowing above her. Maisie screamed so loud, poor baby Alex woke with a start and screamed too.

'Oh my God!' Maisie began to run towards the castle, stopping other pedestrians as she went. 'Did you just see that?' she shrieked.

'See what, dear?' asked an old woman. Maisie shook her head in confusion and ran up to a group of young lads laughing together.

'Did you see that woman, up there?' Maisie pointed to the castle, aware her voice was shrill and shaking.

'No, love, didn't see no woman. Here, you all right?'

Maisie yelled out in frustration and tears streamed down her face as she pushed the pram through the slippery snow.

Within minutes she was in the castle grounds and sprinting to where she thought the woman's body should be. But there was nothing there! She looked about her in confusion. There was no body, no blood, in fact it looked as if no one had been in the area since the fresh snow had fallen. Maisie rocked the pram and shushed the baby, with the slow, dawning realisation that she was within the walls of the place that filled her with fear.

Had she imagined it? She was sure she had seen a woman falling to her death. She closed her eyes and tried to remember what she had just witnessed. The falling woman. She had definitely seen it. So where was the body? She decided to walk around the castle, just in case the woman had somehow survived the fall and was looking for help. She was just about to push the pram off again when she heard a polite cough behind her.

She spun round to find a teenage boy smiling at her.

'Erm, hello, sorry. I didn't mean to scare you, but I wanted to let you know, I saw her too.'

Maisie watched him, aware that her mouth was hanging open in astonishment.

'You won't find her,' he continued, 'but if you ever want to talk about it, please feel free to call this number.'

He handed her a card; she took it cautiously, not really knowing what to make of the whole situation. The card he'd given her was very plain, just an image of a snake in the figure of eight, eating its own tail, and under it a number to call.

‘Pleased to meet you. My name’s Tom.’

Maisie couldn’t speak, she didn’t know what to say. And yet she had so many questions. For now though, all she could do was nod and tuck the card into her coat pocket.

Tom watched the young woman push her pram away. He felt sorry for her; he knew only too well what she was feeling. It had been a frightening spectacle to witness. The poor young mother must have been terrified and confused, especially when she discovered there was no body on the ground. He kicked his boot into the thick snow in the place where the falling woman’s body should have landed. Wrapping his arms tightly around himself, needing to feel some sort of comfort, he sniffed in the chilly air and shivered. It was getting colder.

He made his way towards the main entrance of the castle. His parents were in there somewhere; they had decided to visit the famous landmark before heading back home. He had enjoyed visiting his dad’s old barracks and meeting his dad’s old army friends, but now he just couldn’t wait to get home to London and back to his friends, Clovis and Eve.

While his parents had been looking inside the castle, Tom had watched the woman falling from the turret. He had shouted out but quickly realised he was seeing an apparition, a ghost that was replaying its terrible demise. Over the last few months, Tom had encountered a few of these awful apparitions, where spirits played out their deaths in some kind of loop, too terrified to go into the light.

You see, Tom had acquired a gift, an unusual gift that he loathed and loved in equal measure. It had started during a

paranormal investigation he'd done when he and his friends had contacted the spirits of two murdered children. Tom had been terrified to discover that he could talk to dead people. Sometimes he could see them, which wasn't very nice, especially when they woke him up, sitting at the end of his bed. But most times he could just hear their voices.

The only people who knew of his secret were his best friends, Eve and Clovis, Eve's uncle — Professor Rufus Pepper — and Detective Inspector Rutherford, head of the Society of Paranormal Investigations, or SPI for short.

The professor had been delighted to find out about Tom's ability, and asked him all sorts of questions. He had really helped Tom to understand that this was a true gift and he had spent many an hour teaching him how to control it.

The apparition Tom had just witnessed falling was yet another frightful scene he was having to get used to. His mind went back to the young mum who had also witnessed the apparition. Hopefully she wouldn't have any nightmares, and with any luck would get in touch with the SPI. They would be able to help her and give her some answers.

As Tom pondered his bizarre gift, he suddenly felt a strong pulling sensation to enter the castle. Such a sensation usually meant that a spirit wanted to communicate. Was it the falling woman he had just seen?

He walked under the portcullis and across a square courtyard. The feeling of being pulled was becoming more intense, as if a rope had been wound around his waist, and someone was yanking on the other end. He didn't fight it; he knew by now

there was no point. He took a huge gulp, relaxed and went with it.

‘I’m in here, come to me.’ The voice was gentle and soft. He didn’t feel threatened. He rarely did when spirits spoke to him. Tom went through a large door and instantly found himself inside what looked like a stately home. A grand staircase wound itself around the edge of the room and disappeared up into a dark mezzanine. The voice lulled him through another door, where he found himself alone in an old courtroom. Rows of wooden benches lined the room and a huge ceiling bowed over him, its wooden beams and struts all on show like the bones of an old skeleton. The judge’s bench loomed high and threatening and Tom instantly wanted to leave. He didn’t like this place. He could feel at once all the anger, the sadness and despair of it.

He looked around to make sure he was still alone and then whispered quietly, ‘I’m here. Come and speak to me, show yourself if you can.’

Instantly he felt a cold blast of air hit his neck, a tell-tale sign that a spirit was close.

‘My name’s Jennet . . . Jennet Device.’ A small voice tickled inside his head.

‘Hello, Jennet,’ replied Tom nervously. ‘Was that you I saw falling from the castle?’

‘Yes . . . it was me. I just couldn’t live with the torment any longer. She makes me so mad, she’s always there, in my head, always threatening, always wanting her revenge. She was so angry with me, you see; she won’t let me forget;

she won't forgive. You must help me. She's so angry and so are the others. They're coming . . . they are coming, rising to get their revenge. You must warn . . .'

As quickly as Jennet's voice had come, it vanished.

Tom took a deep breath to calm his nerves. He knew she was still there; would he be able to see her?

He turned around slowly and instantly felt as if he'd been winded. For there, floating a couple of feet away from him, was the ghost of a young woman. She was hovering above the seats, slightly transparent, withered, her body covered by a long dirty dress and cloak that hung about her brittle frame. Her face was emaciated and gaunt, her body stick-thin and grey. She was a pitiful sight.

Tom felt her sorrow. 'Jennet, is that you? Who is angry with you?'

Suddenly, Jennet's ghost rushed at him. He stepped backwards, terrified, misplaced his footing and fell. A terrible pummelling and pounding sensation squeezed inside his head, and voices, lots of different ones, began to scream from within.

'Guilty!'

'Witch.'

'Hang them all!'

'Guilty.'

'Witchcraft!'

'Devil.'

'Cursed.'

'Witch.'

'Show me the mark!'

'Burn in hell!'

'Eleven shall hang.'

'Curse you, Jennet!'

'Pedlar.'

'Point at the witches, Jennet!'

'Curse you, Jennet.'

'Damn you, Jennet.'

'Damn you to hell!'

Tom held his hands to his ears, the pain was so intense, the voices so loud. He could feel many awful emotions rolling around inside him. He slowed his breathing down, attempting to get the emotions under control, all the time trying to put what the professor had taught him into practice. He could see that Jennet's ghost had disappeared, but he knew she was still in the ether.

The voices were ringing in his ears, but he knew what to do to make them stop.

'I promise I'll help you, I promise, Jennet.' Straight away the noise abated, and Tom slumped back down, relieved and exhausted.

He whispered, 'I will come back and bring my friends; we will help you.'

Jennet's soft voice sighed back inside his head. 'The little boy, he's released them. You must stop them, they are so angry, they are rising for their revenge. Help me. I've waited so long to be saved.' Then just like that, she was gone.

Tom stood up and ran as fast as he could outside.

‘Tom?’ It was his mum, Ange. ‘Whatever’s happened, are you all right?’ she said, coming over and rubbing his back.

‘Sorry, Mum, I got lost. I’m all right now.’

‘You sure?’ Ange looked concerned and placed a hand on her son’s forehead. ‘Come on, we’ll get your dad and go back to the hotel for a few hours before the train home. Looks like you could do with a lie down.’



Back at the hotel, Tom grabbed his phone and sent an urgent message to Clovis, Eve and the professor. Then he went into the bathroom and called Inspector Rutherford. In hushed tones he explained what he had experienced earlier at the castle.

The inspector listened carefully. ‘Everything you have told me fits with some other cases that have come in over the last couple of days; all within that area. Mmm . . .’ Tom could almost hear the cogs in her brain turning. ‘Right, leave everything to me, young man, just stay where you are.’

‘But my mum and dad want to go back to London now. Our holiday’s over.’ Tom was a little worried.

‘As I said, leave everything to me.’ Inspector Rutherford’s voice was firm but kind. ‘Your parents will shortly get a call from the professor, and all will be well.’