

Moving Inn

I'd never believed in ghosts. Every time someone would tell me of a story about a haunted castle or a ghost that roams the halls of their apartment, I would always laugh and roll my eyes. Well, that was the case until last year.

Like all cliché ghost stories, it starts on a dark and stormy night. My husband Austin and I had gotten into an argument over some stupid little thing I can't remember, so I decided to ease my anger by going for a walk through the downtown harbourfront. Now, normally at that time of night, the harbourfront would be bustling with people. This night in particular though, there was no one in sight. I thought it strange, but since it was pouring rain and thunderclouds clapped every ten seconds, I didn't think much of it.

I had walked maybe a kilometer and a half along the harbourfront before I stopped and sat on a bench. My hair and clothes were drenched in rain water, but I didn't care. I was too angry with Austin to care. I was so angry, I didn't want to go back home. So, I didn't. I saw a little building at the end of the harbourfront. A little lamp was lit in one of the top windows, making it look cozy enough. I walked for a little more and stopped at the front of the building. The rain was so heavy I could barely make out the words on the sign on the side of the building. It said, 'Hogan's Inn'. *Perfect*, I had thought to myself. I walked around to the front of the inn to the front door and knocked on the dark wooden door. A little old woman greeted me there.

"Hello, dear. Oh, come in, come in. You must be freezing." She said as she wrapped her arm around my shoulders and led me to the couch in front of a fireplace. The inside of the inn was very homely. Warm brick walls decorated with handmade paintings lined the perimeter. The fireplace roared with a bright orange fire. It felt as if I was stepping back in time to the 1850's.

“Can I get you something to drink? Or perhaps something to eat?”, the little old woman said as she wrapped a knitted blanket around my shoulders.

“I’m alright, thank you. I didn’t bring my wallet with me.” I said.

“Are you sure? I have a kettle brewing if you would like some tea. No charge at all.”

“Tea would be lovely, thank you.” I answered. She smiled kindly, poured me a cup of tea, and handed it to me. I thanked her.

“Now why would a beautiful girl like yourself be walking all alone in this storm?” She asked as she sat down next to me on the couch.

“Oh, it’s nothing. I just needed to get out of the house.”

“Can I offer you a room? We’re completely empty tonight. I’m sure you’re a long way from home.”

I was confused by her statement, so I asked, “What makes you say that? Do I look that bad?”

“Oh, no dearie, not at all. Come, I’ll show you to your room.” She took the tea that I had been sipping and set it on the coffee table in front of us. She then removed the blanket from my shoulders and took me up the narrow staircase that led to the second and third floors. When we reached the second floor, she led me down a tight hallway that was lined with doors. It was a long hallway. I thought that it looked longer than the outside of the building, but I was sure I was just imagining it and so I brushed the thought aside.

We stopped in front of a door with the number 236 engraved on a tiny gold plaque that hung just above the doorknob. She took a key from the pocket of her dress, unlocked the door, and led me inside the room. It was a cozy room, yet oddly quaint. There was one bed, a small bedside table with a lit lamp, and a chair in the corner. I recognized the lamp as the one I saw

from outside. The window above the bed looked out onto the harbourfront though, which was nice. Nothing special.

“This is perfect.” I turned to her and said. “Are you sure I can’t do anything in return? I feel bad not paying.”

“No! Please, let an old woman be kind.” I nodded, thanked her again, and watched as she exited the room. I sighed and flopped down on the bed. As soon as I did, my eyes shut and I was fast asleep.

I woke up to a flash of lightning. My head was throbbing and my legs ached from all the walking I did the night before. It seems the storm was still ongoing. I sat up in the bed and ran my fingers through my hair. It was all tangled from the rain. I decided that Austin was probably worried about me and I should go home. I got up from the bed, and walked down the long and narrow hallway leading to the staircase. I thought I walked a lot farther than when the woman led me to my room, but I blamed that on my tired mind. When I reached the staircase, I walked down maybe fifteen steps before an exit appeared. But it wasn’t the exit to the main floor. Instead it was another hallway lined with doors. I was confused, but again, brushed it off as just a little trick my mind was playing on me, so I continued down stairs. The next exit was again, another hallway. This time I got even more confused because from the outside of the building, there were only three noticeable floors. Maybe I was in the basement and I missed the main floor? So I walked back up this time, but again, just a hallway.

“Hello?” I called out. No reply. I exited the staircase and headed down the hallway. It looked exactly like the one I came from, but it was somehow longer. “Hello?” I called out again. No reply. At the end of the hallway I saw another staircase, so I assumed that I went down the

wrong staircase before. I got to the second staircase and climbed up it. I passed one, two, three, four hallways. Still no exit. I went back down. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven hallways.

“Lady! Look, I don’t know if this is some sort of prank, but I would like to leave, please!” I yelled at the top of my lungs. Reply.

“No.” A voice whispered.

“Hello?” I turned around. There was no one there.

“No.” It said again.

“Lady?” I asked.

“No. Leaving.” A chill ran down my spine. A figure had appeared in the hallway before me. It was a young girl dressed in a long white dress and she had two white bows in her hair.

“Finally! Someone! Look kid, do you know the way out?” I entered the hallway with her. She ran towards me and stopped about five centimeters from me and pulled me down by the arm so that she was face to face with me.

“No way out. Stuck. Forever.”

“What?” I heard footsteps behind me and turned to have a look. Nothing. When I turned back around, the girl was gone. I started to panic. *Ghosts aren't real, ghosts aren't real.* I kept repeating to myself. Then, I heard the footsteps again. They were coming down the staircase angrily. I stared at the staircase for a second until I saw who it was.

“Come dearie, join the fun.” The little old woman said. Behind her was a massive group of people all dressed in white clothing, floating an inch above the ground. I cursed under my breath and ran down the hallway. I ran and ran but the hallway just kept getting longer, and longer. I was stuck, just like the girl said.

I heard the woman behind me running as well, and she was catching up. But I also heard chanting. “Stuck. Forever. Stuck! Forever!” I slowed and looked behind me, which was a silly thing to do. The woman pushed me to the floor and held two kitchen knives above my throat.

“Welcome, dearie,” She whispered. I shut my eyes.

When I opened them again, the people in white were standing around me. The little girl helped me up, and I realised that my clothes had now turned white.

“No way out.” She said again. I looked around at all the people and noticed that they all had wounds on their necks, just like mine.

“You’re all victims. Like me.” They nodded in unison.

I’d never believed in ghosts. But I realise you don’t need to see to believe...

You need to *be* to believe.