

The House of Horrors, by Olivia Ramanna

It was a cold and windy winter's evening as Wilhelmina and her older brother, Winston, slowly sauntered through the soft, damp air. Wilbur, the family's energetic and inquisitive Yorkshire Terrier dog, eagerly bound through crisp blankets of frost-covered, fallen leaves, shades of rusty red, burnt brown and gleaming gold.

"I dare you to go inside the abandoned house at the corner of the alleyway, or are you too frightened?" Winston mockingly asked, expecting his scaredy-cat little sister to abruptly refuse.

"Why would I want to do such a reckless thing, unless you give me all your advent chocolates," Wilhelmina pleadingly replied.

Pausing for a second thought, Winston questioningly began to debate this important decision, "Fine then, deal," he eventually responded, knowing his sister would never be able to even go near the derelict house.

As they neared the decaying and deserted house, a ghoulishly cool breeze swept through the narrow alleyway like a menacing ocean wave, sending a chill through Wilhelmina's shivering body. Out of nowhere, perched on a weathered gatepost, was a raven, whose blood-curdling shrieks and cries resounded through the strangely quiet sky. Agitatedly, Wilbur began to violently wrestle with his fraying lead which buckled under the immense pressure, and he frantically began to dart past the gateposts towards the neglected house and garden.

Without hesitation, Wilhelmina sprinted towards the large, macabre Tudor style of architecture, carefully meandering around the dense, eerie undergrowth until she reached the majestic ancient oak archway, with intricate carvings along the timber-framed beams. The door was slightly ajar, the perfect size for a small dog to have accidentally slipped through to find safety. Placing her trembling hand onto the smooth, round doorknob, it unwillingly opened releasing a loud supernatural creak as she bravely stepped forward.

Hundred-year-old cobwebs littered the never-ending hallway and a black rat scuttled across the dusty floorboards. As Wilhelmina explored further into the depths of the ominous house, desperately searching for her beloved dog, she came across a wall lathered with posters of missing children, dating back to 20 years ago. Anxiously, she began reading poster after poster; children of all different names and ages had gone missing in this area. Then she reached the most recent one. Confusedly, she realised it was dated that very day and the child missing was called Wilhelmina, with her photograph at the bottom...

Desperately, Wilhelmina began to sprint to the exit of the petrifying house, but the rotten floorboards beneath her gave way and she plummeted into the pitch-black shadows below. Then, a horrifying cackle echoed through the house as the front door violently banged shut and the keys turned and locked.

Wilhelmina was never to be seen again.

Rumours say you can still hear the screaming of a child and the whining of a distressed dog on those fearful winter nights. No one has ever ventured into the dreadful house since Wilhelmina disappeared – if you do, it is almost certain that you would never come out. At least, not alive...