

And Have Yourself a Merry Little...

24 December, 1931

A full moon on Christmas Eve might manifest itself as a welcome blessing should the night sky be unclouded to permit down the light it emits. However, I wish I could have shunned that pale shimmer of moonlight today, for to our family it merely delivered an abhorrent darkness in its train. For whoever comes across this letter, let it be known that my heart is far from being light. Let it also be known that I am as lucid now as I was prior to this dark shadow forcing itself upon me this calamitous evening. I feel compelled to enclose my final reasoning before departing this mortal coil, for the atrocious sight you encountered upon entering must have filled you with bewilderment and terror. At first glance, you might fear that this house was a site of a domestic dispute gone terribly awry and that madness had struck us all on the eve of our religion's most celebrated holiday. With a heavy heart I frankly dispute that notion with a reality that is considerably worse. A closer inspection must ascertain you that this could not be the handiwork of any man. Truly, only now I fully comprehend why my father was always so adamant about the reasons for not fearing in the Great War as much as his companions. I recall him, petrified with terror, reminiscing his encounter two years before the war with this ancient horror. It escapes our family's memory when it was first bestowed upon us as do the reasons for building those monumental statues on Easter island escape the memory of their builders' descendants. However, this dreadful night affirmed how this evil is as contemporary as it is primordial and would prevail if pre-emptive measures were not taken. Please do appreciate that I am without guile and thus bore no ill will towards those who initially survived. Hopefully, after reading this, you will perceive why this was the only path to tread in obtaining deliverance from this curse.

Should you dare to venture up in the attic, you will come upon an old scuffed chest. That chest holds my great-great-great-aunt Elisabeth's well time-consumed journal in leather binding. It encompasses all the tales of our forefathers that date back over 300 years. For centuries, each person in our family grew up hearing the stories of old through those who survived the unearthly manifestation when it called on our family. On every horrid occasion, others were less fortunate and someone was always taken by the creature to have its ghastly way in a longer and more awful a manner than others. Elisabeth saw it appropriate to document those oral traditions in writing in 1838 as meticulously as the elders still remembered them. Bless our soul, the unholy abomination has accompanied our family for, only God knows, how long.

It was not until after 1844 that Elisabeth revealed in her journal of their realisation for the probable connection with a full moon and Christmas Eve. Owing to the Christian Puritans' suppression of Christmas celebrations from the middle of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th century my forefathers were not aware of the connection. Since 1844, every full moon still gave a fright to our family but 1882 proved that it was indeed on Christmas Eve when the horror made its abysmal calling. My father was able to compare moon calendars to Elisabeth's journal and disclosed that the

terror had probably always occurred on 24 December. Incontrovertible evidence this is not since the ancient stories merely recalled the time to be in the winter and the years were not always recalled. Should you feel the requirement for a supplementary proof of this pernicious terror's existence in addition to this letter, I propose a reading of the journal.

However, it is imperative that the journal shall not reach the hands of the faint-hearted for the tales of our forefathers, in their brutality and horridness, entail insanity's causative factors more than the abhorrence introduced by this letter. Not everyone in our family has endured those horrendous stories without madness or darkness-filled dreams. It appears the malignity that has hunted our family for centuries now occupies those pages as well. It possibly caused Elisabeth to succumb to psychosis after writing the stories in the journal. She never uttered a word since, except in her dreams, until suffering her demise in a strange shock-induced death a few months later. Her brother Eric told that the incomprehensible utterances of her nightmares vaguely resembled a language and the only English words that were understandable were always "The faces". In addition, she wrote merely laconic and indecipherable passages of sheer lunacy in her journal. Most of it was in an obscure language that no scholars have yet been able to decipher.

In 1883 our family left the old family house in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and resided here. It was thought, by some at the time, that the evil might be bound to the house and could not follow us elsewhere. A truly relishable thought it was but so futile nonetheless. Our current house was modified in 1921 by leaving one side without windows and doors. This prohibited anything to enter the house through that wall, for it is fortified with thick and heavy balks. In 1912 my father and his brothers were unable to stand guard on all sides of the house and it proved to be hazardous since they could not see each other and were incapable to offer assistance when the unearthly daemon assailed. That year left my father wounded and his two brothers and their father dead, although they were expecting the encounter with weapons. My father always told me that the wound in his chest from the hellish ghoul in 1912 has a memory more horrific than his wound of 1917 that resulted in the amputation of his left leg.

Tonight, having learned from the past, we were ready to confront the malevolent being with different preparations. One side being guarded by the thick wall permitted us to wait together, leaving the front porch in our rear. We guarded the house on all three windowed sides but still retained eye contact with each other. This was our decision due to the foolishness of the previous occasion which allowed the abnormal fiend to devour the guards one by one since they watched the perimeter alone. My brother Gary and my uncle Dean were both carrying shotguns and I tried to hold on to the revolver my father had carried in the Great War. It was our decision to leave my wife Norah with our infant son, our mother Mary, our sister Christine, our father Jim, Dean's wife Sophie and their little Meredith wait inside. I guess we were all trembling with fear, internally and externally, but were congruent with the silent pact of not letting others see it in order to maintain unity and succession in this effort.

The wait was not prolonged but our preparation was in vain, although I never ceased to pray that it

would not have been. When darkness falls, the creatures of the night begin to stir and thus, we heard the unearthly roar. A chill went through me as I felt the daemonic nature of that sound inside me. It did not come from any of God's creations for it resembled nothing I had encountered before. Actually, it was neither a roar nor a scream but a combination of various, horrible and unholy sounds coming out all at once. My uncle turned white instantaneously and lost hold of his shotgun for he had heard that sound before - 19 years ago. Gary and I, shivering aside, were as ready as we could be and observed the terrain in front of us to locate what released such a ghastly noise. That terrible mixture of howls anew. Dean had picked up his shotgun but remained white. Gary was still and as pale as a sheet and I wondered if at this point my complexion was also comparable to the snow-filled ground. We were not prepared for this. We were so concentrated on finding the daemon from outside the house that the thought never occurred to us. The daemonic clamour did not come from our front as we initially thought. It came from behind. It came from within the house.

As we scurried inside, we encountered a chaos that can merely be described as hell on earth. All the howls and wails of despair around that darkened surrounding previously a normal room were absorbed by the ear-splitting, morbid noise that resembled me how it must sound when the gates of Hell open. It made my insides scream and there was a taste of bile in my mouth. The chandelier was on the floor and, as a result, the remaining light was that of the flickering flames from the burning human body in the fireplace. I could neither see who it was nor make sense of who was moaning in the far-left corner for someone was groveling in front of the fireplace, making the light shine mostly upwards. The only clear sight was what I would have never wanted to see. It was little Meredith in the ceiling, shy of her bottom half. Something reaching from the darkness was holding her. Then she fell down on a mutilated mass on the floor that probably used to be a human. At that point, it arose from the shadows.

The dimness prohibited to see clearly but an added brightness would have proved itself fruitless to acquire a more accurate description. Inhuman it was, of that I am certain. It did not appear to have a recognisable form of any animal I knew and I could not ascertain the texture of its skin if it even had any. Its height was much more than that of a grown man and all the features were unnatural. It appeared to be standing, but with what, I cannot explain. There were no legs, merely a mass of some sort that kept moving around itself and pulping with hideous sounds as if they were the war-cries of all the daemons in the Devil's army. For a moment it appeared as the form of this monstrous blight wavered in and out of the stable actuality of the room itself but the sheer horror must have deluded my senses. The whole abomination seemed to evolve into various shapes during the few seconds my eyes were glancing it through. A head seemed to appear at first but the way it continued to rise and fall and obtain at times the form of nightmarish tree branches, I am no longer certain in any way of what I actually saw. What made me lose my perception of reality was the last thing I witnessed. In that pulping mass, screaming and convulsing in agony, were shapes that bore a resemblance to human faces. Why I screamed aloud was due to the impossible sight of my grandfather's twisted face in sheer agony and terror inside that transient lump on the floor.

Gary may have witnessed it as well since at that point he plummeted screaming through the nearest

window. For a moment I felt the urge to follow him but that thought gave away when I was startled by the sound of shotgun fire. Dean was able to hit his target but it was as worthless an attempt of destruction as a drop of water colliding with a skyscraper. The entity transformed into what can only be described as water rising from a geyser, only sideways. It reached Dean in a fraction of a second and lacerated my left arm in the process. For an instant the horrid screams were silent and I only heard the natural moaning of humans and the blast of the front door as Dean and the cause of tonight's extreme havoc went through it. Then the hellish wails continued as I pursued the unholy abomination. I found Dean's mangled corpse on the front steps and a trail of blood in the snow, leading to the direction of the disappearing daemonic screams.

After following the bloodline into the woods and coming across the disfigured body of my father at the end of the gory trail, I fell down to my knees as the realisation of understanding penetrated through the shock. I cannot be certain of how much time elapsed when I was on my knees in an almost comatose state. The faces. All those faces and all their disturbing wails of hellish torment. All those nightmares that my great-great-great-aunt Elisabeth saw. I dare not begin to wonder what horrendous act a distant forefather did to lay this curse upon our family but I realised what was required. Gary was wriggling not too far away and I liberated him from his madness similarly as I did the rest of the wailing shells of formerly whole persons inside this room. I will never know why I was not granted the blissful ignorance of madness. For a moment I cherished the thought of actually being mad. However, the out-of-body experience while emancipating my surviving family members of their suffering was quite surely there only to distance me from that act, enabling me to carry it out. Now I know what I saw in the darkness. Now I know why Elisabeth spoke of the faces. You might think that this is the rant of an insane individual but undoubtedly you can accept the fact that I was not the sole bearer of death here tonight. Were I not in touch with reality, I would not have reacted to the crying of my infant son in the next room.

One should not digest this terror of our family as fate but as a curse. And curses can occasionally be conquered. Whoever might be reading this, I hope this is not too much to bear and you may understand that death alone can bring forth an absolution from this horrendous curse and be the sole salvation of our damned family line. I did not come to this decision lightly but I do genuinely believe that another solution would have been insufficient. I pray to God and hope that my last action will not prevent me passage into Heaven. I sincerely hope that my deed is justified by our Lord as it was justified by myself. My infant son is sound asleep now, laying in my arms. Sound asleep in the same oblivion I am about to embrace. Please, forgive me. Please, dear Lord, forgive me and deliver us from this evil!

Homework

Answer the following questions:

(some of the answers are in the text, others you just need to think about)

- What happened in the story? What was it about?
- Who were the characters and what happened to each of them?
- Who was the killer?
What was it?
- What were the reasons why the main character thought what happened was a curse?
What were you able to figure out of the family's past?
What do **you** think are the reasons for all of it being a curse?
- How is *Christmas Wolf* a suitable name for this as well?