

MACMILLAN READERS  
ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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BRAM STOKER

# Tales of Horror

Retold by John Davey



MACMILLAN

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# THE JUDGE'S HOUSE

Malcolm Malcolmson was a student at college. Malcolm was twenty-one and he was in his final year. Classes had finished and Malcolm was studying hard for his examinations. But Malcolm was unable to study at home. He lived with his family and the large house was always noisy.

'I can't study here at home,' Malcolm told his father. 'It's far too noisy. I'm going to find a quiet house in a small country town. I'll be alone there and I'll be able to work hard.'

His father agreed and Malcolm packed all his books and papers into a suitcase. He took a train to a small quiet town called Benchurch. Benchurch is in the country. Malcolm had never been there before.

Malcolm stayed the first night in a small hotel. The next morning, after breakfast, he walked round the town. In the quietest part of the town, Malcolm found a large, old house. The garden in front of the house was very untidy and the house looked empty. There was a shop not very far from the house. Malcolm went into the shop and asked about the old house.

'Does anyone live in that old house down the street?' Malcolm asked the man in the shop.

'The house is empty,' replied the man. 'No one has lived there for many years. Go to the lawyer in the High Street. He knows about the house. He'll be able to help you.'

Malcolm walked back to the High Street. The lawyer's

office was near the hotel. Malcolm went into the office and met the lawyer.

‘That house has been empty for many, many years,’ the lawyer told him. ‘There is a story about the house. People say strange things about it. No one wants to live there.’

‘I am a student,’ Malcolm replied. ‘I want to study hard and I’m not worried about stories. I like that old house and I want to live there. It’s very quiet and I’ll be able to work hard at my studies.’

Malcolm gave the lawyer enough money to rent the house for a month. The lawyer handed him the keys to the house. Malcolm took the keys and walked back to the hotel. He packed his suitcase and got ready to leave.

‘I’m leaving now,’ he told the woman who owned the hotel.

‘Are you leaving the town?’ the woman asked him.

‘No,’ replied Malcolm, ‘I’m going to stay here, in Benchurch. I have found an old house. It’s very quiet and I’ll be able to work hard there.’

The woman asked him about the house. When Malcolm told her, she looked frightened.

‘You can’t live there,’ she said. ‘You can’t live in that house. That’s the Judge’s House.’

‘Why are you so afraid?’ Malcolm asked her. ‘What is wrong with the Judge’s House? Tell me about it.’

‘A famous judge lived there a long time ago,’ the woman explained. ‘He was a very cruel man. He had no mercy on any criminal. He ordered the criminals to be hanged. Many people died because he showed them no mercy.’

The woman’s face was white. She was very, very afraid. But Malcolm was busy thinking about his examinations. He did not notice the woman’s fear.

‘Don’t worry about me,’ he told her. ‘I have my work to do. I’ll be very busy. I have a lot of studying to do and many books to read. I won’t have any time to be afraid of stories.’

Malcolm said goodbye to the owner of the hotel. She looked very unhappy, but she did not say any more. Malcolm picked up his suitcase and walked from the hotel to the Judge’s House.



Malcolm unlocked the door and went inside. The rooms were very dark. Malcolm pulled aside the dark, heavy curtains. The furniture in the rooms was old. It was all covered with sheets. The dining room was big and there was a large table in the centre. Malcolm decided to live in that one room.

I’ll work in this room and I’ll eat and sleep here, he said to himself. I do not need any of the other rooms.

He moved the chairs in the dining-room to one side. He

carried a bed from a bedroom and put it beside a wall. He lit a fire and put his books on the big table. He started studying and worked until the evening. In the evening, he prepared some supper. After supper, it was beginning to get dark. The daylight was fading. Malcolm lit a lamp and put some more wood on the fire. Then he sat down again at the table and continued studying.

He worked until eleven o'clock. Then he stopped and made a pot of tea. He put some more wood on the fire. Outside the light of the lamp and the light of the fire, the room was very dark. There were dark shadows on the walls and behind the chairs. But Malcolm was happy. He was working hard.

I can work really hard here, he said to himself. I'll do well in the examinations.

There was an old wooden chair beside the fire. The chair had a high back and it looked comfortable. Malcolm sat down in this chair and drank his tea. At first, the house was very quiet. There was no noise in the room at all. But then Malcolm heard a noise. He listened carefully. The noise was getting louder.

Rats, said Malcolm to himself. The light from the fire and from my lamp frightened them away at first. Now they have become used to the light. They are no longer afraid. They have come to look at me. They want to know who I am.

The rats were everywhere. They were running across the floor and over the furniture. Malcolm heard them running under the wooden floor beneath his feet. They ran in and out of holes in the walls. They squeaked and they scratched.

Malcolm was not afraid. Rats did not frighten him. He finished drinking his tea. Then he got up and picked up the