

Hello!

For this week: 3/23 - 3/27/20

- Read the text and answer the questions (one grade)
- Respond to the writing prompt (another grade)
- Make sure your name is on all your work! I can't give you a grade if I don't know who you are. Remember that you are responsible for turning everything in. Mr Aguero has given instructions that this work counts for grades.

If you have any questions you can email me at jfoster@marfaisd.com.

I hope you are doing well, safe, and healthy.

See you soon!

Ms. Foster



Name: _____ Class: _____

The Landlady

By Roald Dahl
1959

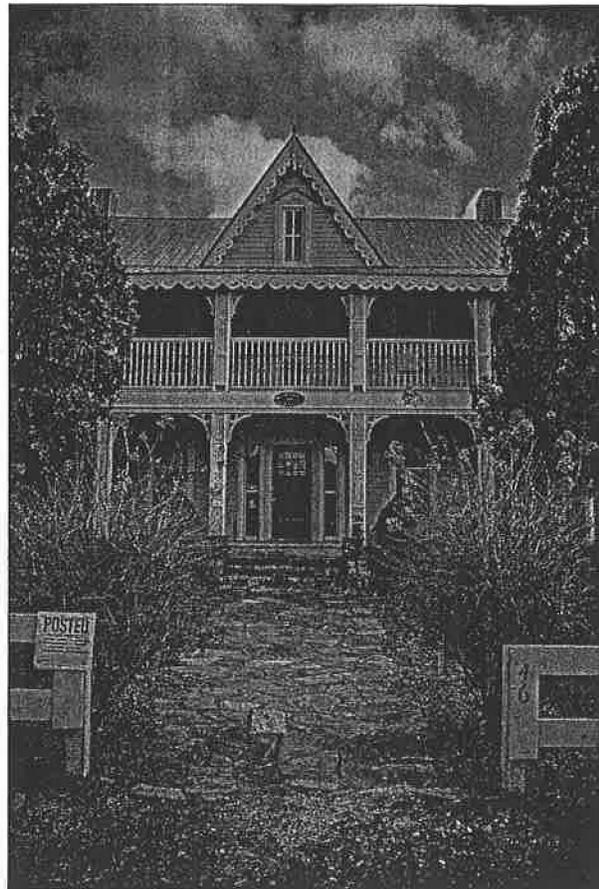
Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British novelist, short story writer, and poet. Dahl's stories are known for having darkly comic or unexpected endings. In this short story, a young man in search of lodgings is taken in by a seemingly kind and gentle landlady. As you read, take notes on how the author characterizes the landlady.

- [1] Billy Weaver had travelled down from London on the slow afternoon train, with a change at Swindon¹ on the way, and by the time he got to Bath² it was about nine o'clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance. But the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks.

"Excuse me," he said, "but is there a fairly cheap hotel not too far away from here?"

"Try The Bell and Dragon," the porter³ answered, pointing down the road. "They might take you in. It's about a quarter of a mile along on the other side."

Billy thanked him and picked up his suitcase and set out to walk the quarter-mile to The Bell and Dragon. He had never been to Bath before. He didn't know anyone who lived there. But Mr Greenslade at the Head Office in London had told him it was a splendid city. "Find your own lodgings," he had said, "and then go along and report to the Branch Manager as soon as you've got yourself settled."



"The Linville River Farm bed and breakfast, no longer in operation" by Lindley Ashline is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- [5] Billy was seventeen years old. He was wearing a new navy-blue overcoat, a new brown trilby hat,⁴ and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. He walked briskly⁵ down the street. He was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided, was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen. The big shots up at Head Office were absolutely fantastically brisk all the time. They were amazing.

1. a large town in South West England
2. a region in the countryside in South West England
3. A "porter" is a person employed to carry luggage.
4. a soft felt hat with a narrow brim
5. **Briskly** (*adverb*): quick and active

There were no shops on this wide street that he was walking along, only a line of tall houses on each side, all them identical. They had porches and pillars and four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was obvious that once upon a time they had been very swanky⁶ residences. But now, even in the darkness, he could see that the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and that the handsome white façades⁷ were cracked and blotchy from neglect.

Suddenly, in a downstairs window that was brilliantly illuminated by a street-lamp not six yards away, Billy caught sight of a printed notice propped up against the glass in one of the upper panes. It said BED AND BREAKFAST. There was a vase of yellow chrysanthemums, tall and beautiful, standing just underneath the notice.

He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer.

Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either side of the window. The chrysanthemums looked wonderful beside them. He went right up and peered through the glass into the room, and the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth. On the carpet in front of the fire, a pretty little dachshund⁸ was curled up asleep with its nose tucked into its belly.

- [10] The room itself, so far as he could see in the half-darkness, was filled with pleasant furniture. There was a baby-grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs; and in one corner he spotted a large parrot in a cage. Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself; and all in all, it looked to him as though it would be a pretty decent house to stay in. Certainly it would be more comfortable than The Bell and Dragon.

On the other hand, a pub would be more congenial⁹ than a boarding-house. There would be beer and darts in the evenings, and lots of people to talk to, and it would probably be a good bit cheaper, too. He had stayed a couple of nights in a pub once before and he had liked it. He had never stayed in any boarding-houses, and, to be perfectly honest, he was a tiny bit frightened of them. The name itself conjured¹⁰ up images of watery cabbage, rapacious¹¹ landladies, and a powerful smell of kippers¹² in the living-room.

After dithering¹³ about like this in the cold for two or three minutes, Billy decided that he would walk on and take a look at The Bell and Dragon before making up his mind. He turned to go. And now a queer¹⁴ thing happened to him. He was in the act of stepping back and turning away from the window when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar¹⁵ manner by the small notice that was there. BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST. Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell.

6. **Swanky** (*adjective*): stylish and expensive
7. A "façade" is the face of a building, especially the front that looks on a street.
8. a type of dog with short legs and a long body
9. **Congenial** (*adjective*): pleasant and enjoyable
10. **Conjure** (*verb*): to produce or cause something to appear
11. **Rapacious** (*adjective*): aggressively greedy
12. a type of fish
13. to be indecisive
14. strange or odd
15. **Peculiar** (*adjective*): strange or odd; unusual

He pressed the bell. Far away in a back room he heard it ringing, and then at once — it must have been at once because he hadn't even had time to take his finger from the bell-button — the door swung open and a woman was standing there.

Normally you ring the bell and you have at least a half-minute's wait before the door opens. But this dame¹⁶ was a like a jack-in-the-box. He pressed the bell — and out she popped! It made him jump.

- [15] She was about forty-five or fifty years old, and the moment she saw him, she gave him a warm welcoming smile.

"Please come in," she said pleasantly. She stepped aside, holding the door wide open, and Billy found himself automatically starting forward into the house. The compulsion¹⁷ or, more accurately, the desire to follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong.

"I saw the notice in the window," he said, holding himself back.

"Yes, I know."

"I was wondering about a room."

- [20] "It's all ready for you, my dear," she said. She had a round pink face and very gentle blue eyes.

"I was on my way to The Bell and Dragon," Billy told her. "But the notice in your window just happened to catch my eye."

"My dear boy," she said, "why don't you come in out of the cold?"

"How much do you charge?"

"Five and sixpence a night, including breakfast."

- [25] It was fantastically cheap. It was less than half of what he had been willing to pay.

"If that is too much," she added, "then perhaps I can reduce it just a tiny bit. Do you desire an egg for breakfast? Eggs are expensive at the moment. It would be sixpence less without the egg."

"Five and sixpence is fine," he answered. "I should like very much to stay here."

"I knew you would. Do come in."

She seemed terribly nice. She looked exactly like the mother of one's best school-friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays. Billy took off his hat, and stepped over the threshold.¹⁸

- [30] "Just hang it there," she said, "and let me help you with your coat."

16. "Dame" is another term for a woman.

17. **Compulsion** (*noun*): an irresistible urge to behave in a certain way

18. a point of entering

There were no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking-sticks — nothing.

"We have it all to ourselves," she said, smiling at him over her shoulder as she led the way upstairs.

"You see, it isn't very often I have the pleasure of taking a visitor into my little nest."

The old girl is slightly dotty,¹⁹ Billy told himself. But at five and sixpence a night, who gives a damn about that? — "I should've thought you'd be simply swamped²⁰ with applicants," he said politely.

- [35] "Oh, I am, my dear, I am, of course I am. But the trouble is that I'm inclined to be just a teeny weeny bit choosy and particular — if you see what I mean."

"Ah, yes."

"But I'm always ready. Everything is always ready day and night in this house just on the off-chance that an acceptable young gentleman will come along. And it is such a pleasure, my dear, such a very great pleasure when now and again I open the door and I see someone standing there who is just exactly right." She was half-way up the stairs, and she paused with one hand on the stair-rail, turning her head and smiling down at him with pale lips. "Like you," she added, and her blue eyes travelled slowly all the way down the length of Billy's body, to his feet, and then up again.

On the first-floor landing she said to him, "This floor is mine."

They climbed up a second flight. "And this one is all yours," she said. "Here's your room. I do hope you'll like it." She took him into a small but charming front bedroom, switching on the light as she went in.

- [40] "The morning sun comes right in the window, Mr Perkins. It is Mr Perkins, isn't it?"

"No," he said. "It's Weaver."

"Mr Weaver. How nice. I've put a water-bottle between the sheets to air them out, Mr Weaver. It's such a comfort to have a hot water-bottle in a strange bed with clean sheets, don't you agree? And you may light the gas fire at any time if you feel chilly."

"Thank you," Billy said. "Thank you ever so much." He noticed that the bedspread had been taken off the bed, and that the bedclothes had been neatly turned back on one side, all ready for someone to get in.

"I'm so glad you appeared," she said, looking earnestly²¹ into his face. "I was beginning to get worried."

- [45] "That's all right," Billy answered brightly. "You mustn't worry about me." He put his suitcase on the chair and started to open it.

"And what about supper, my dear? Did you manage to get anything to eat before you came here?"

19. "Dotty" means somewhat mad.

20. **Swamp (verb):** to overwhelm with an excessive amount of something

21. **Earnest (adjective):** serious and sincere

"I'm not a bit hungry, thank you," he said. "I think I'll just go to bed as soon as possible because tomorrow I've got to get up rather early and report to the office."

"Very well, then. I'll leave you now so that you can unpack. But before you go to bed, would you be kind enough to pop into the sitting-room on the ground floor and sign the book? Everyone has to do that because it's the law of the land, and we don't want to go breaking any laws at this stage in the proceedings, do we?" She gave him a little wave of the hand and went quickly out of the room and closed the door.

Now, the fact that his landlady appeared to be slightly off her rocker²² didn't worry Billy in the least. After all, she was not only harmless — there was no question about that — but she was also quite obviously a kind and generous soul. He guessed that she had probably lost a son in the war, or something like that, and had never got over it.

[50] So a few minutes later, after unpacking his suitcase and washing his hands, he trotted downstairs to the ground floor and entered the living-room. His landlady wasn't there, but the fire was glowing in the hearth, and the little dachshund was still sleeping in front of it. The room was wonderfully warm and cosy. I'm a lucky fellow, he thought, rubbing his hands. This is a bit of all right.

He found the guest-book lying open on the piano, so he took out his pen and wrote down his name and address. There were only two other entries above his on the page, and, as one always does with guest-books, he started to read them. One was a Christopher Mulholland from Cardiff. The other was Gregory W. Temple from Bristol. That's funny, he thought suddenly. Christopher Mulholland. It rings a bell. Now where on earth had he heard that rather unusual name before?

Was he a boy at school? No. Was it one of his sister's numerous young men, perhaps, or a friend of his father's? No, no, it wasn't any of those. He glanced down again at the book. Christopher Mulholland, 231 Cathedral Road, Cardiff. Gregory W. Temple, 27 Sycamore Drive, Bristol. As a matter of fact, now he came to think of it, he wasn't at all sure that the second name didn't have almost as much of a familiar ring about it as the first.

"Gregory Temple?" he said aloud, searching his memory. "Christopher Mulholland?..."

"Such charming boys," a voice behind him answered, and he turned and saw his landlady sailing into the room with a large silver tea-tray in her hands. She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky²³ horse.

[55] "They sound somehow familiar," he said.

"They do? How interesting."

"I'm almost positive I've heard those names before somewhere. Isn't that queer? Maybe it was in the newspapers. They weren't famous in any way, were they? I mean famous cricketers or footballers or something like that?"

22. a phrase that means insane

23. **Frisky** (*adjective*): playful and full of energy

"Famous," she said, setting the tea-tray down on the low table in front of the sofa. "Oh no, I don't think they were famous. But they were extraordinarily handsome, both of them, I can promise you that. They were tall and young and handsome, my dear, just exactly like you."

Once more, Billy glanced down at the book.

[60] "Look here," he said, noticing the dates. "This last entry is over two years old."

"It is?"

"Yes, indeed. And Christopher Mulholland's is nearly a year before that — more than three years ago."

"Dear me," she said, shaking her head and heaving a dainty²⁴ little sigh. "I would never have thought it. How time does fly away from us all, doesn't it, Mr Wilkins?"

"It's Weaver," Billy said. "W-e-a-v-e-r."

[65] "Oh, of course it is!" she cried, sitting down on the sofa. "How silly of me. I do apologise. In one ear and out the other, that's me, Mr Weaver."

"You know something?" Billy said. "Something that's really quite extraordinary about all this?"

"No, dear, I don't."

"Well, you see — both of these names, Mulholland and Temple, I not only seem to remember each one of them separately, so to speak, but somehow or other, in some peculiar way, they both appear to be sort of connected together as well. As though they were both famous for the same sort of thing, if you see what I mean — like ... like Dempsey and Tunney, for example, or Churchill and Roosevelt."

"How amusing," she said. "But come over here now, dear, and sit down beside me on the sofa and I'll give you a nice cup of tea and a ginger biscuit before you go to bed."

[70] "You really shouldn't bother," Billy said. "I didn't mean you to do anything like that." He stood by the piano, watching her as she fussed about with the cups and saucers. He noticed that she had small, white, quickly moving hands, and red finger-nails.

"I'm almost positive it was in the newspapers I saw them," Billy said. "I'll think of it in a second. I'm sure I will."

There is nothing more tantalising²⁵ than a thing like this which lingers just outside the borders of one's memory. He hated to give up.

"Now wait a minute," he said. "Wait just a minute. Mulholland... Christopher Mulholland... wasn't that the name of the Eton schoolboy who was on a walking-tour through the West Country, and then all of a sudden..."

24. **Dainty** (*adjective*): delicately small

25. **Tantalize** (*verb*): to torment or tease someone with something that is unobtainable

"Milk?" she said. "And sugar?"

[75] "Yes, please. And then all of a sudden..."

"Eton schoolboy?" she said. "Oh no, my dear, that can't possibly be right because my Mr Mulholland was certainly not an Eton schoolboy when he came to me. He was a Cambridge undergraduate. Come over here now and sit next to me and warm yourself in front of this lovely fire. Come on. Your tea's all ready for you." She patted the empty place beside her on the sofa, and she sat there smiling at Billy and waiting for him to come over. He crossed the room slowly, and sat down on the edge of the sofa. She placed his teacup on the table in front of him.

"There we are," she said. "How nice and cosy this is, isn't it?"

Billy started sipping his tea. She did the same. For half a minute or so, neither of them spoke. But Billy knew that she was looking at him. Her body was half-turned towards him, and he could feel her eyes resting on his face, watching him over the rim of her teacup. Now and again, he caught a whiff of a peculiar smell that seemed to emanate²⁶ directly from her person. It was not in the least unpleasant, and it reminded him — well, he wasn't quite sure what it reminded him of. Pickled walnuts? New leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital?

"Mr Mulholland was a great one for his tea," she said at length. "Never in my life have I seen anyone drink as much tea as dear, sweet Mr Mulholland."

[80] "I suppose he left fairly recently," Billy said. He was still puzzling his head about the two names.

He was positive now that he had seen them in the newspapers — in the headlines.

"Left?" she said, arching her brows. "But my dear boy, he never left. He's still here. Mr Temple is also here. They're on the third floor, both of them together."

Billy set down his cup slowly on the table, and stared at his landlady. She smiled back at him, and then she put out one of her white hands and patted him comfortingly on the knee. "How old are you, my dear?" she asked.

"Seventeen."

[85] "Seventeen!" she cried. "Oh, it's the perfect age! Mr Mulholland was also seventeen. But I think he was a trifle²⁷ shorter than you are, in fact I'm sure he was, and his teeth weren't quite so white. You have the most beautiful teeth, Mr Weaver, did you know that?"

"They're not as good as they look," Billy said.

"They've got simply masses of fillings²⁸ in them at the back."

26. **Emanate (verb):** to issue or spread out from a source

27. to some small degree

28. something used to fill a cavity

"Mr Temple, of course, was a little older," she said, ignoring his remark. "He was actually twenty eight. And yet I never would have guessed it if he hadn't told me, never in my whole life. There wasn't a blemish on his body."

"A what?" Billy said.

[90] "His skin was just like a baby's."

There was a pause. Billy picked up his teacup and took another sip of his tea, then he set it down again gently in its saucer. He waited for her to say something else, but she seemed to have lapsed²⁹ into another of her silences. He sat there staring straight ahead of him into the far corner of the room, biting his lower lip.

"That parrot," he said at last. "You know something? It had me completely fooled when I first saw it through the window from the street. I could have sworn it was alive."

"Alas,³⁰ no longer."

"It's most terribly clever the way it's been done," he said. "It doesn't look in the least bit dead. Who did it?"

[95] "I did."

"You did?"

"Of course," she said. "And have you met my little Basil as well?" She nodded towards the dachshund curled up so comfortably in front of the fire. Billy looked at it. And suddenly, he realised that this animal had all the time been just as silent and motionless as the parrot. He put out a hand and touched it gently on the top of its back. The back was hard and cold, and when he pushed the hair to one side with his fingers, he could see the skin underneath, greyish-black and dry and perfectly preserved.

"Good gracious me," he said. "How absolutely fascinating." He turned away from the dog and stared with deep admiration at the little woman beside him on the sofa. "It must be most awfully difficult to do a thing like that."

"Not in the least," she said. "I stuff all my little pets myself when they pass away. Will you have another cup of tea?"

[100] "No, thank you," Billy said. The tea tasted faintly of bitter almonds,³¹ and he didn't much care for it.

"You did sign the book, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes."

29. **Lapse (verb):** to revert to a previous state or behavior

30. an expression of grief or pity

31. The taste or smell of bitter almonds is an indication that something contains a deadly poison called cyanide.

"That's good. Because later on, if I happen to forget what you were called, then I can always come down here and look it up. I still do that almost every day with Mr Mulholland and Mr... Mr..."

"Temple," Billy said. "Gregory Temple. Excuse my asking, but haven't there been any other guests here except them in the last two or three years?"

[105] Holding her teacup high in one hand, inclining her head slightly to the left, she looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes and gave him another gentle little smile.

"No, my dear," she said. "Only you."

"The Landlady" from The Best of Roald Dahl by Roald Dahl. Copyright © 1959 by David Hingham Associates Limited. Used by permission of Vintage. All rights reserved.

1. What type of lodging is Billy looking for?

- A. luxurious lodging
- B. lodging with animals
- C. lodging with a garden
- D. inexpensive lodging

2. Why does Billy think that the bed and breakfast looks promising?

- A. There are animals.
- B. There are flowers.
- C. It is brightly colored.
- D. It is crowded.

3. What is Billy's initial reaction to the landlady?

- A. He is afraid of her.
- B. He is suspicious of her.
- C. He finds her kind.
- D. He finds her too pushy.

4. Why don't many people stay at the bed and breakfast?

- A. The landlady is unwelcoming to guests.
- B. The bed and breakfast is run down.
- C. The landlady is very particular about guests.
- D. Not many people visit Bath.

5. Why does Billy think the landlady is a little odd?

- A. She calls him by the wrong name.
- B. She is too generous.
- C. She will not let Billy leave.
- D. She refuses to leave him alone.

6. What is abnormal about the boys in the guest-book?

- A. Billy went to school with them.
- B. They have uncommon names.
- C. They are celebrities.
- D. They sound familiar to Billy.

7. Why is Billy fixated on the names of the two other guests?

- A. He starts to remember something that happened to them.
 - B. He saw them not long ago.
 - C. He knows that the landlady is lying about their whereabouts.
 - D. The landlady keeps calling Billy by their names.
-

8. What does the landlady insist Billy do?

- A. stay for a few more days
- B. drink his tea
- C. have dinner with her
- D. meet Mr. Mulholland and Mr. Temple

9. What does this scene suggest about Mr. Temple and Mr. Mulholland?

- A. that they were so happy at the bed and breakfast that they chose never to leave
- B. that the landlady was in love with them, which chased them away
- C. that they were better and friendlier guests than Billy
- D. that something strange happened to them while staying with the landlady

10. What is unusual about the animals?

- A. They are stuffed.
- B. They are sick.
- C. They are mistreated.
- D. They are abnormally well behaved.

11. What is wrong with Billy's tea?

- A. The cream is bad.
- B. The tea is bitter.
- C. The tea is poisoned.
- D. Billy doesn't like almonds.

12. Which of the following statements best identifies a theme of the text?

- A. People should get to know each other first before resorting to judgment.
- B. Strangers can be more dangerous than they initially appear.
- C. Loneliness can drive people to behave strangely towards others.
- D. Kindness and hospitality are difficult to find among strangers.

13. What does the word “compelling” mean as used in paragraph 12?

- A. to urge someone to do something
- B. to think deeply about something
- C. to become slightly interested in something
- D. to scare someone into doing something

14. What can the reader infer about the landlady from her conversation with Billy in the sitting room?

- A. She was a doctor or likely had some medical training, as evidenced by her ability to stuff her pets.
- B. She is a lonely old woman who lost her son in the war and tries to replace him with her particular tenants.
- C. She may have witnessed something terrible and suffers memory problems because she cannot recall Billy's name correctly.
- D. She may be more threatening than she appears because her words suggest she was involved in the two men's disappearances.

Noah Aguilar

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I hope you are doing well, safe, and healthy.

See you soon!

Ms. Foster



Name: _____ Class: _____

The Night the Ghost Got In

By James Thurber
1933

James Thurber (1894-1961) was an American cartoonist, author, and humorist. In this amusing short story, a boy believes he hears a ghost in his house. As you read, take notes on how the author develops the humor in this short story.

- [1] The ghost that got into our house on the night of November 17, 1915, raised such a hullabaloo¹ of misunderstandings that I am sorry I didn't just let it keep on walking, and go to bed. Its advent² caused my mother to throw a shoe through a window of the house next door and ended up with my grandfather shooting a patrolman. I am sorry, therefore, as I have said, that I ever paid any attention to the footsteps.

They began about a quarter past one o'clock in the morning, a rhythmic, quick-cadenced³ walking around the dining-room table. My mother was asleep in one room upstairs, my brother Herman in another; grandfather was in the attic, in the old walnut bed which, as you will remember, once fell on my father. I had just stepped out of the bathtub and was busily rubbing myself with a towel when I heard the steps. They were the steps of a man walking rapidly around the dining-room table downstairs. The light from the bathroom shone down the back steps, which dropped directly into the dining-room; I could see the faint shine of plates on the plate-rail; I couldn't see the table. The steps kept going round and round the table; at regular intervals a board creaked, when it was trod upon. I supposed at first that it was my father or my brother Roy, who had gone to Indianapolis but were expected home at any time. I suspected next that it was a burglar. It did not enter my mind until later that it was a ghost.



"Ghost" by Axel Rouvin is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

1. a commotion; a fuss
2. arrival
3. a rhythmic sequence

After the walking had gone on for perhaps three minutes, I tiptoed to Herman's room. "Psst!" I hissed, in the dark, shaking him. "Awp," he said, in the low, hopeless tone of a despondent⁴ beagle — he always half suspected that something would "get him" in the night. I told him who I was. "There's something downstairs!" I said. He got up and followed me to the head of the back staircase. We listened together. There was no sound. The steps had ceased. Herman looked at me in some alarm: I had only the bath towel around my waist. He wanted to go back to bed, but I gripped his arm. "There's something down there!" I said. Instantly the steps began again, circled the dining-room table like a man running, and started up the stairs toward us, heavily, two at a time. The light still shone palely down the stairs; we saw nothing coming; we only heard the steps. Herman rushed to his room and slammed the door. I slammed shut the door at the stairs top and held my knee against it. After a long minute, I slowly opened it again. There was nothing there. There was no sound. None of us ever heard the ghost again.

The slamming of the doors had aroused mother: she peered out of her room. "What on earth are you boys doing?" she demanded. Herman ventured out of his room. "Nothing," he said, gruffly, but he was, in color, a light green. "What was all that running around downstairs?" said mother. So she had heard the steps, too! We just looked at her. "Burglars!" she shouted intuitively.⁵ I tried to quiet her by starting lightly downstairs.

- [5] "Come on, Herman," I said. "I'll stay with mother," he said. "She's all excited." I stepped back onto the landing. "Don't either of you go a step," said mother. "We'll call the police." Since the phone was downstairs, I didn't see how we were going to call the police — nor did I want the police — but mother made one of her quick, incomparable decisions. She flung up a window of her bedroom which faced the bedroom windows of the house of a neighbor, picked up a shoe, and whammed it through a pane of glass across the narrow space that separated the two houses. Glass tinkled into the bedroom occupied by a retired engraver named Bodwell and his wife. Bodwell had been for some years in rather a bad way and was subject to mild "attacks." Most everybody we knew or lived near had some kind of attacks.

It was now about two o'clock of a moonless night; clouds hung black and low. Bodwell was at the window in a minute, shouting, frothing a little, shaking his fist. "We'll sell the house and go back to Peoria," we could hear Mrs. Bodwell saying. It was some time before mother "got through" to Bodwell. "Burglars!" she shouted. "Burglars in the house!" Herman and I hadn't dared to tell her that it was not burglars but ghosts, for she was even more afraid of ghosts than of burglars. Bodwell at first thought that she meant there were burglars in his house, but finally he quieted down and called the police for us over an extension phone by his bed. After he had disappeared from the window, mother suddenly made as if to throw another shoe, not because there was further need of it but, as she later explained, because the thrill of heaving a shoe through a window glass had enormously taken her fancy. I prevented her.

4. **Despondent** (*adjective*): in low spirits

5. **Intuitive** (*adjective*): based on what one feels to be true even without evidence

The police were on hand in a commendably⁶ short time: a Ford sedan full of them, two on motorcycles, and a patrol wagon with about eight in it and a few reporters. They began banging at our front door. Flashlights shot streaks of gleam up and down the walls, across the yard, down the walk between our house and Bodwell's. "Open up!" cried a hoarse voice. "We're men from Headquarters!" I wanted to go down and let them in, since there they were, but mother wouldn't hear of it. "You haven't a stitch on," she pointed out. "You'd catch your death." I wound the towel around me again. Finally the cops put their shoulders to our big heavy front door with its thick beveled⁷ glass and broke it in: I could hear a rending⁸ of wood and a splash of glass on the floor of the hall. Their lights played all over the living-room and crisscrossed nervously in the dining-room, stabbed into hallways, shot up the front stairs and finally up the back. They caught me standing in my towel at the top. A heavy policeman bounded up the steps. "Who are you?" he demanded. "I live here," I said. "Well, whattsa matta, ya hot?" he asked. It was, as a matter of fact, cold; I went to my room and pulled on some trousers. On my way out, a cop stuck a gun into my ribs. "Whatta you doin' here?" he demanded. "I live here," I said.

The officer in charge reported to mother. "No sign of nobody, lady," he said. "Musta got away — whatt'd he look like?" "There were two or three of them," mother said, "whooping and carrying on and slamming doors." "Funny," said the cop. "All ya windows and doors was locked on the inside tight as a tick."

Downstairs, we could hear the tromping of the other police. Police were all over the place; doors were yanked open, drawers were yanked open, windows were shot up and pulled down, furniture fell with dull thumps. A half-dozen policemen emerged out of the darkness of the front hallway upstairs. They began to ransack⁹ the floor: pulled beds away from walls, tore clothes off hooks in the closets, pulled suitcases and boxes off shelves. One of them found an old zither¹⁰ that Roy had won in a pool tournament. "Looky here, Joe," he said, strumming it with a big paw. The cop named Joe took it and turned it over. "What is it?" he asked me. "It's an old zither our guinea pig used to sleep on," I said. It was true that a pet guinea pig we once had would never sleep anywhere except on the zither, but I should never have said so. Joe and the other cop looked at me a long time. They put the zither back on a shelf.

- [10] "No sign o' nuthin'," said the cop who had first spoken to mother. "This guy," he explained to the others, jerking a thumb at me, "was nekked. The lady seems historical." They all nodded, but said nothing; just looked at me. In the small silence we all heard a creaking in the attic. Grandfather was turning over in bed. "What's 'at?" snapped Joe. Five or six cops sprang for the attic door before I could intervene or explain. I realized that it would be bad if they burst in on grandfather unannounced, or even announced. He was going through a phase in which he believed that General Meade's¹¹ men, under steady hammering by Stonewall Jackson,¹² were beginning to retreat and even desert.¹³

6. **Commendable** (*adjective*): deserving praise
7. the slant of a surface
8. to split something in two
9. **Ransack** (*verb*): to go hurriedly through a place, causing damage
10. a stringed instrument
11. a United States army officer
12. a general in the Confederate army during the Civil War
13. to leave the army without permission

When I got to the attic, things were pretty confused. Grandfather had evidently jumped to the conclusion that the police were deserters from Meade's army, trying to hide away in his attic. He bounded out of bed wearing a long flannel nightgown over long woolen underwear, a nightcap, and a leather jacket around his chest. The cops must have realized at once that the indignant white-haired old man belonged in the house, but they had no chance to say so. "Back, ye cowardly dogs!" roared grandfather. "Back t' the lines, ye godd— lily-livered¹⁴ cattle!" With that, he fetched the officer who found the zither a flat-handed smack alongside his head that sent him sprawling. The others beat a retreat, but not fast enough; grandfather grabbed Zither's gun from its holster and let fly. The report seemed to crack the rafters; smoke filled the attic. A cop cursed and shot his hand to his shoulder. Somehow, we all finally got downstairs again and locked the door against the old gentleman. He fired once or twice more in the darkness and then went back to bed. "That was grandfather," I explained to Joe, out of breath. "He thinks you're deserters." "I'll say he does," said Joe.

The cops were reluctant to leave without getting their hands on somebody besides grandfather; the night had been distinctly a defeat for them. Furthermore, they obviously didn't like the "layout"; something looked — and I can see their viewpoint — phony. They began to poke into things again. A reporter, a thin-faced, wispy man, came up to me. I had put on one of mother's blouses, not being able to find anything else. The reporter looked at me with mingled suspicion and interest. "Just what the h— is the real lowdown¹⁵ here, Bud?" he asked. I decided to be frank with him. "We had ghosts," I said. He gazed at me a long time as if I were a slot machine into which he had, without results, dropped a nickel. Then he walked away. The cops followed him, the one grandfather shot holding his now-bandaged arm, cursing and blaspheming.¹⁶ "I'm gonna get my gun back from that old bird," said the zither-cop. "Yeh," said Joe. "You — and who else?" I told them I would bring it to the station house the next day.

"What was the matter with that one policeman?" mother asked, after they had gone. "Grandfather shot him," I said. "What for?" she demanded. I told her he was a deserter. "Of all things!" said mother. "He was such a nice-looking young man."

Grandfather was fresh as a daisy and full of jokes at breakfast next morning. We thought at first he had forgotten all about what had happened, but he hadn't. Over his third cup of coffee, he glared at Herman and me. "What was the idee of all them cops tarryhootin' round the house last night?" he demanded. He had us there.

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14. a term meaning weak and cowardly
15. the true facts
16. to talk about God in a disrespectful way

1. The speaker believes there is a ghost in the house because...

- A. he hears someone speaking.
- B. he sees a shadow.
- C. he hears footsteps.
- D. his brother told him.

2. When the mother hears the footsteps, she believes that...

- A. robbers have broken in.
- B. her husband is home.
- C. there is a ghost.
- D. her sons are playing a trick.

3. Why are the police going through the family's home?

- A. They are looking for the burglars.
- B. They think the family is hiding something.
- C. They believe there is a ghost hiding.
- D. They want to make a mess.

4. The grandfather shoots the police officer because...

- A. he believes they are robbers.
- B. he doesn't like the police.
- C. he is imagining that they are army men.
- D. the officers tried to attack him.

5. When the speaker tells the reporter that there is a ghost in the house...

- A. the reporter wants to write a story about it.
- B. the reporter doesn't believe him.
- C. the reporter gets upset with him for lying.
- D. the reporter leaves the house afraid.

6. Which of the following identifies the theme of the short story?

- A. A simple misunderstanding can easily spin out of control.
- B. Lying is acceptable when it's meant to protect someone you care about.
- C. It's important not to underestimate people, as they may surprise you.
- D. Facing something scary is easier when you have the support of your family.

7. How do the boys respond to the potential ghost in the house?

A. They tell their mother so she doesn't call the police.

B. They keep it from their mother so as not to worry her.

C. They try to find out what the ghost wants.

D. They ignore the ghost, hoping that it will go away on its own.

8. In your opinion, did the speaker actually hear a ghost? Why or why not?

9. How does fear keep the story going? In the context of this text, how does fear drive action in everyday life?

