

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK
Bloomsbury Publishing Ireland Limited
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 AY28, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2025 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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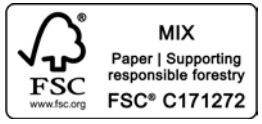
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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB: xxxxxxxxxx; PB: xxxxxxxxxx;
eBook: xxxxxxxxxx; Audiobook: xxxxxxxxxx

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Printed and bound xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx



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HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

Ghosts in the Walls

JOSEPH COELHO • ALEXIA CASALE
• JIM HELMORE • CATHERINE JOHNSON
• E. L. NORRY • FARIDAH ÀBÍKÉ-ÍYÍMÍDÉ
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BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

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FOREWORD



I've spent many years investigating the paranormal and within that time it's been an honour to have walked through every kind of building that's reputed to be haunted – from ancient palaces and castles, old manor houses, and your everyday standard terrace house. In daylight, all these places seem so beautiful and fascinating in their own way but as night-time falls the structures become something different and the haunting tales that you may have shrugged off earlier have now become a fearful reality.

To me, ghosts are very real – I've even been lucky enough to see one or two. I've also been privileged to talk to a few of them as well.

Many years ago, I was given a private tour of

Hampton Court Palace. After I had been shown all the main palatial rooms and halls, I was to be taken up some backstairs known as the 'Silverstick staircase'. I presumed we were heading off to some offices, but as we reached the top my guide bumped into a colleague and they stopped for a moment to have a quick chat.

I froze – suddenly I was aware of a strange noise just behind me. It was soft moan. A woman's moan.

'Are you all right?' asked my guide.

I nodded and decided not to say anything, even though she knew what I did for a living; I didn't want to scare the poor woman.

As we walked further down the corridor, I swore I could hear footsteps. I knew there was definitely a spirit following us.

'Has any ghostly activity been recorded in this area?' I asked carefully.

'Oh yes,' smiled the guide. 'This staircase is known for one particular ghost.' She patted the railing.

'Oh, who's that?'

'Jane Seymour, of course.' She smiled again and moved her hands in a carefree manner.

I shuddered and rubbed my arms; the goose-bumps had arrived and I suddenly felt ice cold.

I looked over my shoulder nervously and yet

intrigued to see if anything was there. Perhaps the outline of a person or an old-fashioned dress? But sadly, there was nothing. As I walked on, I asked myself, 'Have I just heard Jane Seymour's ghost moan?' I shivered again. I was sure I had.

On another occasion, when visiting the Tower of London, I was in awe. What a place! Every inch of stonework, each door, gate and floorboard had a story to tell. If the walls of this place could speak, can you imagine what they would say? I walked across the moat and was delighted to be greeted by a very smart Yeoman Warder – I even did the touristy thing and had a picture taken with him! The sun was shining and all felt great, but as soon as I walked into the main part of the Tower that all changed.

A sense of foreboding crept over me – the whole place seemed to have taken on a darker energy. It had somehow come alive; black fingers of dread crawling towards me. I brushed off the creepy feeling and put it down to my imagination – we all know this place holds some very dark secrets and witnessed many a terrible death. I shook my head and told myself to 'get a grip'!

As I walked through the White Tower, where suits of armour are displayed, I suddenly stood

stock still as I could hear the extraordinary sounds of rapping and knocking thumping all around me. A sure sign of a spiritual presence.

I whispered quietly under my breath.

'How many of you are watching now?'

Well, the knocking fired back like a machine gun shooting rapid fire. Even as I moved out of that area, I could still hear the thumping echoing behind me.

It's safe to say, I believe that the Tower of London is absolutely teeming with ghosts – some good, and some very bad.

When tragedy, murder and sorrow occur in these places, somehow the energy of emotions are consumed within the very fabric of the walls and at some point someone is going to experience a replay of those actions along with awful, harrowing feelings. It can be terrifying, and at the same time very confusing. It can also be emotional, as when you see and feel something you cannot explain, your whole sense of being can be put into question.

As the great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote, 'A house where a man has lived and died is a haunted house'. I think this is both wonderful and so true. If a location is haunted by a ghost, or by history itself, you're bound to sense or see something at some point.

So, as you read the stories in this truly magnificent book, imagine yourself in each palace and try to envisage what you would do when faced with some kind of paranormal activity. Remember the stories, keep them locked in your brain, and next time you visit a beautiful palace or castle, you never know, you may just come face to face with one of its long-lost occupants.

So, sit back, read on, and later when you put the book down … do try to … sleep tight!

Yvette Fielding

HAMPTON COURT PALACE



The Prince in the Painting

By E.L. Norry



Hampton Court Palace
6th July – Schools Only Day

'Class, welcome to the Clore Learning Centre,' Mr Murphy says, as we walk through a red brick archway framed by gold leaves. Once the whole class is inside the light, airy space, he hands out clipboards and maps of Hampton Court Palace.

'The audio guide handsets will talk you through the history of the palace and help you complete your worksheets. Bluetooth headphones won't work with the guides, so if you need to borrow headphones, then line up here.'

I'm glad I've got my own wired earphones. Marley, my best mate, pulls some out from her

blazer pocket too; we grin at each other.

'Jay, wanna be partners?' she asks, untangling the wire and flicking biscuit crumbs off the foam coverings.

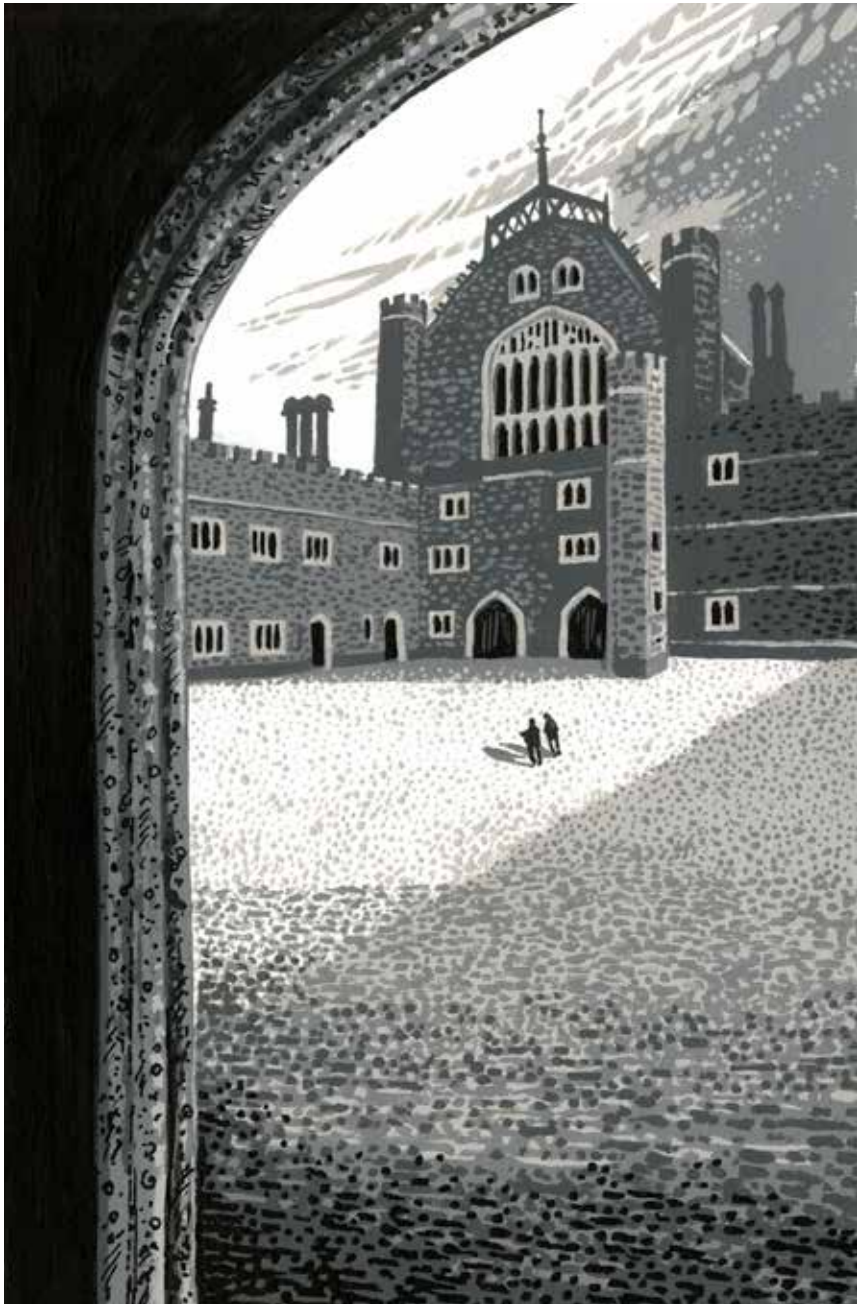
I nod. Marley loves history – ever since we did Egyptians in Year 3. If anyone can make today fun, it's her.

Mr Murphy claps his hands for silence.

'Complete your worksheet, then you'll have time to look around. Please remember that you represent the school, so be respectful. No running, pushing or eating. And keep your hands to yourself! We'll meet by the fountain at 1 p.m. The warders in red coats are there to help, so if you need anything, ask one of them, OK? Check your map for your starting point and remember the focus today is the Tudors, specifically Henry VIII.'

Marley and I collect our audio guide handsets and loop our earphones around our necks. The class head up a long wide driveway. At the end is the palace entrance – a proper old-style castle with turrets of red brick and a flag flapping in the breeze. Walking through the archway takes us into Base Court, a big square with cobblestones and a fountain. This place is seriously impressive.

'Come on, this way!' Marley flaps the map in my face. She turns left and heads up a flight of stone



stairs. 'We're starting in the Great Hall. Then we end up in the Haunted Gallery.'

'Haunted Gallery?' I jog after her. 'It's really called that?'

'Cool, right?'

I pull a face. 'You don't believe in ghosts, do you?'

'Why not?' Marley shrugs. 'There's loads in life we can't explain.'

I tut. 'Yeah, the Big Bang, maybe, or why we dream.'

The Great Hall with its high beams and huge ceiling reminds me of a cathedral. I stare up at the wooden roof carvings and wonder how long it took to build. Mounted stag heads look down on massive, faded tapestries which line the walls.

'Those stag heads are way creepier than ghosts – they were real animals once. Ghosts are just things in stories made up to scare little kids.'

I go to plug my earphones into the audio guide handset, but Marley takes it out of my hand. 'You don't need the audio guide when you've got me,' she says. 'I know everything about the Tudors.'

I raise an eyebrow. 'Really?' Now's my chance to test her.

'Try me.'

I narrow my eyes and try to remember the name

I saw in the YouTube video.

'OK. Who was John Blanke?'

Marley frowns. 'Who?'

'See!' I gloat. 'You don't know everything!'

Marley folds her arms and stares hard at me. 'You're suggesting you know something that I don't? About history?'

I take my audio handset back off her. 'John Blanke was a Black trumpeter who played in Henry's court.'

'If he was so important, how come I've never heard of him?'

I can't answer that, but I reply, 'He spoke up about getting better wages.'

'That is cool.' Marley looks impressed, but then her face falls. 'Oh no. Did I miss a page of the homework?'

I shake my head.

'No. I lost my worksheet, so I watched YouTube videos about Tudor public executions instead, and a video about him came on.'

The next room we enter has a curved stained-glass window full of bright blue and gold panes with Henry VIII's face in a circle in the centre. I get as close



to it as I can – the colours are amazing. A warder dressed in red stares at us.

I point to the blue windowpane and Henry VIII's face. 'Someone liked being the centre of attention!'

Marley groans. 'Cross comedian off your future career list, won't you?'

I sigh. 'Just trying to keep this trip interesting.'

'It is interesting!' Marley says, desperately. 'You loved that play *Six* when we saw it.'

She was right, I did, and I didn't usually like musicals. 'Those were good songs.'

'Come on, let's go and see some ghosties!' Marley holds her arms out like a zombie and rolls her eyes back.

We turn into a dim corridor with lots of dark wood. The paintings there are three times my size, hanging on red and cream backdrops. We're the only people here and, even though it's sunny outside, the air here is chilly. The atmosphere feels heavy, as if a storm's about to come.

Marley's taking this way too seriously; she examines every painting and reads the information panels. With the warders hovering there's no chance to mess about, so I may as well do some work. I glance at my worksheet and answer the questions about Henry's wives. Something tickles the back of my neck and, wincing, I slap my hand on it.

'Better not be a spider,' I mutter, scuttling over to Marley.

At the end of the corridor are two lamps like giant candlestick holders, which cast dancing black shadows in between the paintings. The atmosphere feels murky.

'Why's it so dark in here?'

'To protect the tapestries. Sunlight would damage them,' Marley explains. 'What do you think life was like for them – the Tudors?'

I had no idea. 'Full of disease and rats?'

She whacks me playfully on the arm. 'At least try and appreciate this place. It's full of history. You can feel it.'

Marley is really into all this, but I can't see what we have in common with these dusty old Kings and Queens.

'They had no TV, phones or video games. Life must have been really boring.'

'Boring?' Marley exclaims. 'What about jousting and feasting and riding?'

I shrug. 'Still not as good as anything on the PlayStation.'

At the end of the corridor we turn right, and the backdrop becomes a dark rich green, instead of red. The carpet under our feet is thick, and along the