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Opening extract from

# Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse

Written by

**Chris Riddell**

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# Goth Girl

## and the Ghost of a Mouse

CHRIS RIDDELL

MACMILLAN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



THIS BOOK CONTAINS FOOTNOTES BY THE SEVERED FOOT OF A FAMOUS WRITER WHO LOST THE AFOREMENTIONED FOOT AT THE BATTLE OF BADEN-BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG-BADEN





# Chapter One

Ada Goth sat up in her eight-poster bed and peered into the inky blackness.

There it was again.

A sigh, soft and sad and ending in a little squeak.

Ada looked across the bedroom as she held up the candle and stepped out of bed.

'Who's there?' she whispered.

Ada was the only child of Lord Goth of Ghastly-Gorm Hall, the famous cycling poet. Her mother had been a beautiful tightrope walker from Thessalonika, whom Lord Goth had met and married on his travels. Unfortunately Parthenope had been killed when Ada was still a baby, while practising on the roof of Ghastly-Gorm Hall during a thunderstorm.

Lord Goth never talked about that terrible night. Instead he stayed at home in his huge house,

shut away in his study writing extremely long poems. When he wasn't writing, Lord Goth spent his time riding his hobby horse Pegasus, around the grounds and taking potshots at the garden ornaments with a blunderbuss. Before long he had acquired a reputation for being mad, bad and dangerous to gnomes.

Since the accident, Lord Goth had taken to believing that children should be heard and not seen. He insisted that Ada wear big, clumpy boots whenever she walked down the corridors and passageways of Ghastly-Gorm Hall. That way, he could hear her footsteps approaching and avoid seeing her by ducking into his study where he wasn't to be disturbed.







This meant that Ada didn't see much of her father, which sometimes made her sad, but she understood. Once a week, when she took tea with him in the long gallery, Ada would see Lord Goth's expression change whenever their eyes met. His look of intense sadness was enough to tell Ada that he was being reminded of her mother, Parthenope, the beautiful tightrope walker, and the terrible tragedy that had occurred. With her black curly hair and green eyes, Ada looked just like her. (Ada knew this because she had inherited a locket with a miniature portrait of Parthenope inside.)

'Who's there?' Ada whispered, a little more loudly this time.

'Only me,' came a small voice from somewhere in the shadows.

Ada slipped her feet into the black leather pumps beside the bed. They were her mother's



tightrope-walking slippers, a little big but very comfortable and, most importantly of all, very quiet. Ada liked to wear them to creep around Ghastly-Gorm Hall. Exploring was her favourite thing to do, especially at night when everyone else was sleeping. Because, even though Ada had lived there all her life, the Hall was so big there were still rooms she had never been into and outbuildings hidden in overgrown parts of the grounds that she had yet to explore.

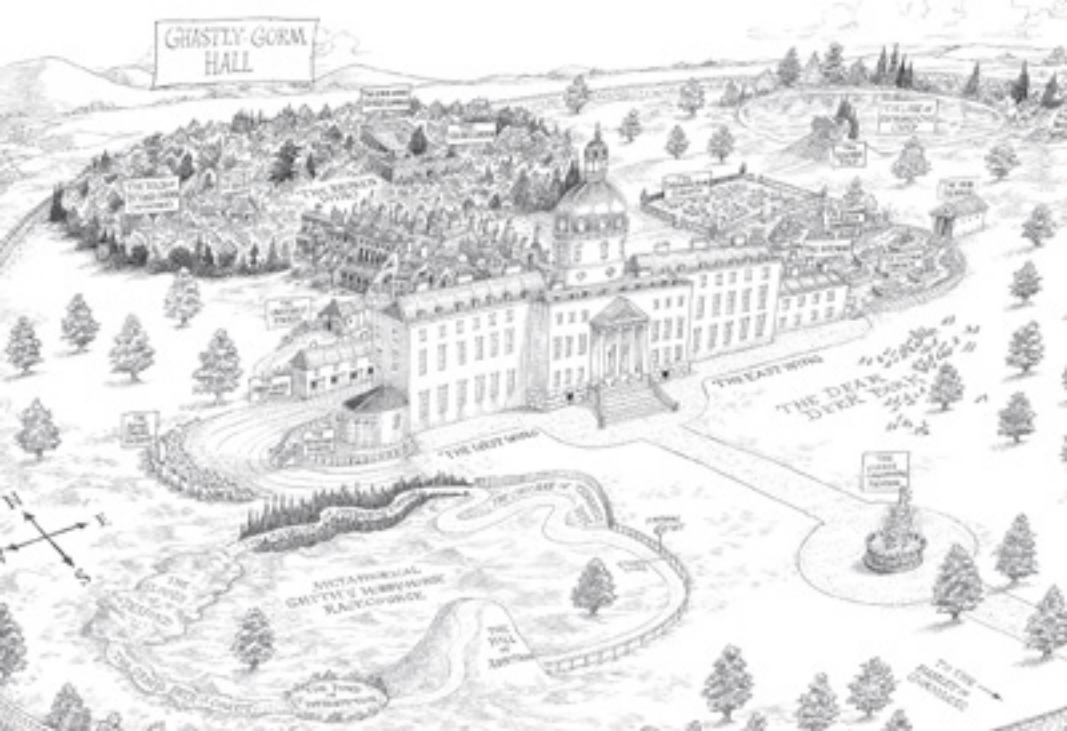
Ada stepped on to the faded Anatolian carpet, holding the candle out in front of her. There, just visible on a faded patch in the centre, was a small figure, white and shimmering and slightly see-through.

Ada's eyes opened wide.

'You're a mouse!' she exclaimed.

The mouse shimmered palely and gave another sigh that ended with a soft squeak.

'I used to be,' it said with a shake of the head, 'but now I'm the ghost of a mouse.'


GHASTLY GORM HALL
THE GREAT WING
THE EAST WING
THE DEAD DEER PARK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL GRIFFIN'S HUMPHOUSE RACECOURSE
THE HILL
THE LOWER GARDENS
THE UPPER GARDENS
THE KITCHEN GARDENS
THE ROSE GARDEN
THE LAKE
THE ORANGERY
THE STABLES
THE CHAPEL
THE GATEHOUSE
THE LODGE
THE VILLAGE
THE CHURCH
THE VICARAGE
THE VILLAGE GREEN
THE VILLAGE HALL
THE VILLAGE SCHOOL
THE VILLAGE POND
THE VILLAGE SHOP
THE VILLAGE PUB
THE VILLAGE GARAGE
THE VILLAGE BUS STOP
THE VILLAGE WAR MEMORIAL
THE VILLAGE ALLOTMENTS
THE VILLAGE CEMETERY
THE VILLAGE CRICKET PITCH
THE VILLAGE FOOTBALL PITCH
THE VILLAGE TENNIS COURTS
THE VILLAGE SWIMMING POOL
THE VILLAGE PLAYGROUND
THE VILLAGE DUCK POND
THE VILLAGE WELL
THE VILLAGE PUMP
THE VILLAGE STOCKS
THE VILLAGE WHIPPING POST
THE VILLAGE DUCKING STOOL
THE VILLAGE PILLORY
THE VILLAGE GALLOWS
THE VILLAGE GIBBET
THE VILLAGE GUILLOTINE
THE VILLAGE ELECTRIC CHAIR
THE VILLAGE LETHAL INJECTION
THE VILLAGE FIRING SQUAD
THE VILLAGE HANGING TREE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION DOCK
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION BLOCK
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION SQUARE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION FIELD
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION WALL
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PIT
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION GRAVE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION MONUMENT
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION MEMORIAL
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PLAQUE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION STONE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION CROSS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION ANGEL
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION STATUE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION BUST
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PORTRAIT
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PAINTING
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION DRAWING
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION SKETCH
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION ENGRAVING
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PRINT
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION POSTER
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION BANNER
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION FLAG
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION PENNANT
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION BUNTING
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION GARLAND
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION WREATH
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION CROWN
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION CROWN OF THORNS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF FLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF MOSQUITOES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF GNATS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF MIDGES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF BLACKFLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF HORSEFLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF DEERFLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF TSETSE FLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SAND FLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF BLOWFLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF HOUSEFLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF FRUIT FLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF VINEGAR FLIES
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF DROSOPHILA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF MELANOGASTER
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SIMULANS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SECHELLIA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF YAKUBA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF TEISSIERI
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF ERECTA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF ORNATIFRONS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SUZUKII
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF BIPECTINATA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF PSEUDOOBSCURA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF PERSIMILIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF MIRANDA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF WILLISTONI
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SCALARIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF PARAMELANICA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF INCISPINOSA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF TRISTIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SUBOBSCURA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF OBSCURA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF FUNEBRIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF HYDEI
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF VIRILIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF ACUTILABRIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF GUANCHE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SILVESTRIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF NIGROMELANICA
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF PSEUDOOBSCURA
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THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF GUANCHE
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF SILVESTRIS
THE VILLAGE EXECUTION HALO OF NIGROMELANICA

Being so old and so big, Ghastly-Gorm Hall was home to quite a few ghosts. There was the white nun who sometimes appeared in the long gallery on moonlit nights, the black monk who occasionally haunted the short gallery and the beige curate who slid down the banisters of the grand staircase on the first Tuesday of each month. They usually mumbled, wailed softly or, in the case of the curate, sang in a high-pitched lisping voice, but they never actually *said* anything, unlike this mouse.

'Have you been a ghost for long?' Ada asked, putting the candle down and sitting cross-legged on the carpet.

'I don't think so,' said the ghost of a mouse. 'You see, the last thing I remember was scuttling along the corridor of a dusty, cobwebby part of the house I'd never been in before.' The mouse shimmered palely in the candlelight.

'I'd been visiting a shrew in the garden and lost my way on my return journey. I have a cosy mouse hole in the skirting board of your father's study – at least, I did have . . .'



The mouse paused and let out another little sigh before changing the subject.

'You must be the daughter,' it said, looking up at Ada. 'The little Goth girl. The one that stomps around in those big boots.'

'That's right. My name's Ada,' said Ada politely. 'What's yours?'

'Call me Ishmael,' said the ghost of a mouse. 'Anyway, I was keeping to the shadows, head down, when I picked up this delicious scent wafting down the corridor towards me. Well, I couldn't resist. I followed my quivering nose and it led



me to this lump of cheese – yellow with bluish bits and a smell like a stable boy's socks . . .'

Ishmael closed his eyes and his entire body flickered appreciatively.

'Sounds like Blue Gormly*,' said Ada. There were several truckles in the kitchen larder the last time Ada looked. Not that she went to the kitchen very often. It was run by Mrs Beat'em, who was very large and very loud and far scarier than any ghost. She spent her time inventing recipes and writing them down in an enormous book while shouting at her kitchen maids and making them cry. Her food was extremely complicated and often difficult to eat, needing twenty-three different knives, forks and spoons at breakfast and lunch. Even more cutlery was required at dinner. Her rhinoceros-foot jelly and baked sea-otter pie in a reduction of scullery maid's tears was Lord Goth's favourite dish, though Ada preferred

Fact Nug

*Blue Gormly is one of the lesser-known cheeses of England. Together with Somerset Goat, Moulds Bishop and Cheddar not-so-Gorgeous, it is also considered one of the stinkiest. Personally I think it smells fine.





a soft-boiled egg and soldiers herself.

'Blue Gormly?' said Ishmael. 'It smelled delicious, whatever it was. I reached out to take it when . . . SNAP! Everything went black.' He gave a little shudder.

'The next thing I know, I'm white and see-through and hovering in the air looking down at myself caught in a horrible mouse-trap.'

