

Year 7 Crime and Mystery Anthology

Spring 2



Raven's Gate – Anthony Horowitz

He found Glendale Farm easily enough. There was a turning about a quarter of a mile further along, with the name printed in blue letters on a white gate. Even as Matt cycled down the flower bordered drive that led from the main road, he thought how much more welcoming it was than Hive Hall. The barn and stables were clean and ordered, standing next to a pretty pond. A swan glided on the water, its reflection shimmering in the morning sunlight, while family of ducks waddled across the lawn. In a nearby paddock a cow chewed grass, mooing contentedly.

The farmhouse itself was red brick, with neat white shutters and a grey slate roof. Part of the roof was covered in plastic sheeting, where the farmer had been working on repairs. An old weathervane stood at one corner, a wrought-iron cockerel looking out over the four points of the compass. Today it was facing south.

Matt got off his bike, crossed the farmyard to the front door and pulled a metal chain to ring a bell in the porch. He was early – it was half past nine. He waited, then rang again. No answer. Perhaps Tom Burgess was working in the barn. Matt walked over and looked inside. There was a tractor and an assortment of tools, a pile of sacks and a few bales of hay...yet no sign of the farmer.

“Mr Burgess? he called.

Silence. Nothing moved.

But the farmer *had* to be there. His car, a Peugeot, was parked in the drive. Matt went back to the house and tried the front door. It opened.

“Mr Burgess?” he called again.

There was no answer. Matt went inside.

The place was a mess. Tables had been overturned and books and papers scattered on the floor. All of the inside shutters were hanging off, some of them broken in half. Matt's foot caught a stray pot of paint. He picked it up and put it to one side.

The kitchen was in a worse state. The drawers were open and their contents had been thrown everywhere. There were broken plates and glasses and, in the middle of the kitchen table, a half empty bottle of whisky lying on its side. Matt glanced up. A huge carving knife had been thrust into a kitchen cupboard, its blade penetrating the wood. The handle slanted towards him. It looked odd and menacing.

The stairs led to a landing with three doors. Gently, he opened the one nearest to him.

It led into a bedroom, and this was worse than anything Matt had seen downstairs. The room looked as though a whirlwind had hit it. The bedclothes were crumpled and torn, spread out over the carpet. The curtains had been ripped down and one of the window panes were smashed. A bedside table lay on its side, with a lamp, an alarm clock and a pile of paperbacks thrown on the floor. The wardrobe doors were open and all the clothes were in a heap in the corner. A tin of green paint had toppled over, spilling its contents into the middle of the mess.

Then Matt saw Tom Burgess.

The farmer was lying on the floor on the other side of the bed, partly covered by a sheet. He was obviously dead. Something – some sort of animal – had torn into his face and neck.

There were hideous red gashes in his skin and his fair hair was matted with blood. His eyes were bulging, staring vacantly, and his mouth was forced open in a last attempt at a scream. His hands were stiff and twisted in a frantic effort to ward something off. One of them was smeared with green paint, which had glued his fingers together. His legs were bent underneath him in such a way that Matt knew the bones must be broken.

Matt backed away gasping. He thought he was going to be sick. Somehow he forced his eyes away and then he saw it, painted on the wall behind the door. In the last moments of his life, the farmer had managed to scrawl two words, using his own hand smeared with paint:

RAVEN'S GATE

Skulduggery Pleasant: Scepter of the Ancients – Derek Landy

This is taken from the part of the novel where Stephanie's Mum isn't going to make home because of flooding outside.

Stephanie hung up and grinned. She slipped the phone back into her jacket and put her feet up on the desk, relaxing in the chair, and went back to reading.

When she looked up again, she was surprised to find that it was almost midnight and the rain had stopped. If she were home right now, she'd be in bed. She blinked, her eyes sore, and stood up from the desk and went downstairs to the kitchen. For all his wealth and success and extravagant tastes, Stephanie was thankful that when it came to food, Gordon was a pretty standard guy. The bread was stale and the fruit was a bit too ripe, but there were biscuits and there was cereal, and the milk in the fridge was still good for one more day. She made herself a snack and wandered into the living room, where she flicked on the TV. She sat on the couch and was just getting comfy when the house phone rang.

She looked at it, resting there on the table at her elbow. Who would be calling? Anyone who knew Gordon had died wouldn't be calling, because they'd know he had died, and she didn't really want to be the one to tell anyone who didn't know. It could be her parents--but then why didn't they just call her mobile?

Figuring that as the new owner of the house it was her responsibility to answer her own phone, Stephanie picked it up. "Hello?"

Silence.

"Hello?" Stephanie repeated.

"Who is this?" came a man's voice.

"I'm sorry," Stephanie said, "who are you looking for?"

"Who is this?" responded the voice, more irritably this time.

"If you're looking for Gordon Edgley," Stephanie said, "I'm afraid that he's--"

"I know Edgley's dead," snapped the man. "Who are you? Your name?"

Stephanie hesitated. "Why do you want to know?" she asked.

"What are you doing in that house? Why are you in his house?"

"If you want to call back tomorrow--"

"I *don't* want to, all right? Listen to me, girlie: If you mess up my master's plans, he will be very displeased, and he is *not* a man you want to displease--you got that? Now tell me who you are!"

Stephanie realized her hands were shaking. She forced herself to calm down, and quickly found anger replacing her nervousness. "My name is none of your business," she said. "If you want to talk to someone, call back tomorrow at a reasonable hour."

"You don't talk to me like that," the man hissed.

"Good night," Stephanie said firmly.

"You do *not* talk to me like--"

But Stephanie was already putting the phone down. Suddenly the idea of spending the whole night here wasn't as appealing as it had first seemed. She considered calling her parents, then scolded herself for being so childish. No need to worry them, she thought; no need to worry them about something so--

Someone pounded on the front door.

"Open up!" came the man's voice between the pounding. Stephanie got to her feet, staring through to the hall beyond the living room. She could see a dark shape behind the frosted glass around the front door. "Open the damn door!"

Stephanie backed up to the fireplace, her heart pounding in her chest. He knew she was in here--there was no use pretending that she wasn't--but maybe if she stayed really quiet, he'd give up and go away. She heard him cursing, and the pounding grew so heavy that the front door rattled under the blows.

"Leave me alone!" Stephanie shouted.

"Open the door!"

"No!" she shouted back. She liked shouting; it disguised her fear. "I'm calling the police! I'm calling the police right now!"

The pounding stopped immediately, and she saw the shape move away from the door. Was that it? Had she scared him away? She thought of the back door--was it locked? Of course it was locked--it had to be locked. But she wasn't sure, she wasn't certain. She grabbed a poker from the fireplace and was reaching for the phone when she heard a knock on the window beside her.

She cried out and jumped back. The curtains were open, and outside the window was pitch-black. She couldn't see a thing.

The Red Room – H.G Wells

"I can assure you," said I, "that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me."

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm once more.

I heard the faint sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags in the passage outside. The door creaked on its hinges as a second old man entered, more bent, more wrinkled, more aged even than the first. He supported himself by the help of a crutch, his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth. He made straight for an armchair on the opposite side of the table, sat down clumsily, and began to cough. The man with the withered hand gave the newcomer a short glance of positive dislike; the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire.

"I said--it's your own choosing," said the man with the withered hand, when the coughing had ceased for a while.

"It's my own choosing," I answered.

The man with the shade became aware of my presence for the first time, and threw his head back for a moment, and sidewise, to see me. I caught a momentary glimpse of his eyes, small and bright and inflamed. Then he began to cough and splutter again.

"Why don't you drink?" said the man with the withered arm, pushing the beer toward him. The man with the shade poured out a glassful with a shaking hand, that splashed half as much again on the deal table. A monstrous shadow of him crouched upon the wall, and mocked his action as he poured and drank. I must confess I had scarcely expected these grotesque custodians. There is, to my mind, something inhuman in senility, something crouching and atavistic; the human qualities seem

to drop from old people insensibly day by day. The three of them made me feel uncomfortable with their gaunt silences, their bent carriage, their evident unfriendliness to me and to one another. And that night, perhaps, I was in the mood for uncomfortable impressions. I resolved to get away from their vague fore-shadowings of the evil things upstairs.

"If," said I, "you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will make myself comfortable there."

The old man with the cough jerked his head back so suddenly that it startled me, and shot another glance of his red eyes at me from out of the darkness under the shade, but no one answered me. I waited a minute, glancing from one to the other. The old woman stared like a dead body, glaring into the fire with lack-lustre eyes.

We were Liars – E.Lockhart

WELCOME TO THE beautiful Sinclair family.

No one is a criminal.

No one is an addict.

No one is a failure.

The Sinclairs are athletic, tall, and handsome. We are oldmoney Democrats. Our smiles are wide, our chins square, and our tennis serves aggressive.

It doesn't matter if divorce shreds the muscles of our hearts so that they will hardly beat without a struggle. It doesn't matter if trust-fund money is running out; if credit card bills go unpaid on the kitchen counter. It doesn't matter if there's a cluster of pill bottles on the bedside table.

It doesn't matter if one of us is desperately, desperately in love.

So much

in love

that equally desperate measures must be taken.

We are Sinclairs.

No one is needy.

No one is wrong.

We live, at least in the summertime, on a private island off the coast of Massachusetts.

Perhaps that is all you need to know.

MY FULL NAME is Cadence Sinclair Eastman.

I live in Burlington, Vermont, with Mummy and three dogs.

I am nearly eighteen.

I own a well-used library card and not much else, though it is true I live in a grand house full of expensive, useless objects.

I used to be blond, but now my hair is black.

I used to be strong, but now I am weak.

I used to be pretty, but now I look sick.

It is true I suffer migraines since my accident.

It is true I do not suffer fools.

I like a twist of meaning. You see? Suffer migraines. Do not suffer fools. The word means almost the same as it did in the previous sentence, but not quite.

Suffer.

You could say it means endure, but that's not exactly right.

MY STORY STARTS before the accident. June of the summer I was fifteen, my father ran off with some woman he loved more than us.

Dad was a middling-successful professor of military history.

Back then I adored him. He wore tweed jackets. He was gaunt.

He drank milky tea. He was fond of board games and let me win, fond of boats and taught me to kayak, fond of bicycles, books, and art museums.

he loved my mother that he let our golden retrievers sleep on the sofas and walked them three miles every morning. He was never fond of my grandparents, either, and it was a sign of how much he loved both me and Mummy that he spent every summer in Windemere House on Beechwood Island, writing articles on wars fought long ago and putting on a smile for the relatives at every meal.

That June, summer fifteen, Dad announced he was leaving and departed two days later. He told my mother he wasn't a Sinclair, and couldn't try to be one, any longer. He couldn't smile, couldn't lie, couldn't be part of that beautiful family in those beautiful houses.

Couldn't. Couldn't. Wouldn't.

He had hired moving vans already. He'd rented a house, too. My father put a last suitcase into the backseat of the Mercedes

(he was leaving Mummy with only the Saab), and started the engine.

Then he pulled out a handgun and shot me in the chest.

I was standing on the lawn and I fell. The bullet hole opened wide and my heart rolled out of my rib cage and down into a flower bed. Blood gushed rhythmically from my open wound, then from my eyes,

my ears,

my mouth.

It tasted like salt and failure. The bright red shame of being unloved soaked the grass in front of our house, the bricks of the path, the steps to the porch. My heart spasmed among the peonies like a trout.

The Signal-Man – Charles Dickens

“Halloa! Below there!”

When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furred round its short pole. One would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about, and looked down the Line. There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said for my life what. But I know it was remarkable enough to attract my notice, even though his figure was foreshortened and shadowed, down in the deep trench, and mine was high above him, so steeped in the glow of an angry sunset, that I had shaded my eyes with my hand before I saw him at all.

“Halloa! Below!”

From looking down the Line, he turned himself about again, and, raising his eyes, saw my figure high above him.

“Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?”

He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my idle question. Just then there came a vague vibration in the earth and air, quickly changing into a violent pulsation, and an oncoming rush that caused me to start back, as though it had force to draw me down. When such vapour as rose to my height from this rapid train had passed me, and was skimming away over the landscape, I looked down again, and saw him refurling the flag he had shown while the train went by.

I repeated my inquiry. After a pause, during which he seemed to regard me with fixed attention, he motioned with his rolled-up flag towards a point on my level, some two or three hundred yards distant. I called down to him, “All right!” and made for that point. There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zigzag descending path notched out, which I followed.

The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitate. It was made through a clammy stone, that became oozier and wetter as I went down. For these reasons, I found the way long enough to give me time to recall a singular air of reluctance or compulsion with which he had pointed out the path.

When I came down low enough upon the zigzag descent to see him again, I saw that he was standing between the rails on the way by which the train had lately passed, in an attitude as if he were waiting for me to appear. He had his left hand at his chin, and that left elbow rested on his right hand, crossed over his breast. His attitude was one of such expectation and watchfulness that I stopped a moment, wondering at it.

I resumed my downward way, and stepping out upon the level of the railroad, and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows. His post was in as solitary and dismal a place as ever I saw. On either side, a dripping-wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon; the shorter perspective in the other direction terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing, and forbidding air. So little sunlight ever found its way to this spot, that it had an earthy, deadly smell; and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck chill to me, as if I had left the natural world.

Before he stirred, I was near enough to him to have touched him. Not even then removing his eyes from mine, he stepped back one step, and lifted his hand.

This was a lonesome post to occupy (I said), and it had riveted my attention when I looked down from up yonder. A visitor was a rarity, I should suppose; not an unwelcome rarity, I hoped? In me, he merely saw a man who had been shut up within narrow limits all his life, and who, being at last set free, had a newly-awakened interest in these great works. To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure of the terms I used; for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that daunted me.

He directed a most curious look towards the red light near the tunnel's mouth, and looked all about it, as if something were missing from it, and then looked it me.

That light was part of his charge? Was it not?

He answered in a low voice — "Don't you know it is?"

The monstrous thought came into my mind, as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine face, that this was a spirit, not a man. I have speculated since, whether there may have been infection in his mind.

In my turn, I stepped back. But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some latent fear of me. This put the monstrous thought to flight.

Opening to chapter 4 Jekyll and Hyde

NEARLY a year later, in the month of October, 18—, London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone up-stairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box, which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience), never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighbouring gutter—the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim: but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post, and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.