

House of horrors- Eva Welsby

Sitting down on a damp patch of grass, me and Rue dropped our bags and collided with the dying grass beneath us. Our legs were numb and aching after our lengthy trek back from another tortuous day at school.

“Rue, I can't take anymore of this walking, my legs hurt too much. I don't ever want to stand again,” I whined in a slightly jesting tone.

“If we don't carry on walking now, we'll never get back to my house dry, I could have sworn I just felt a raindrop.”

Peering up with tired eyes, I noticed a dense haze of rain clouds approaching the area of sky above us. Indeed, it would rain, and it would rain heavily. By the time we were to reach Rue's house, we would look like drowned rats, that reality was inevitable. With determination, we raised to our feet, clutched our bags tightly in our hands and embarked on our great journey through the winding streets on the way to Rue's home. Though as we passed the old Victorian manor, of which was abandoned-supposedly, decrepit and practically disintegrating, I stopped dead in my tracks. I could sense her presence. She was watching us. “Rue.” Shifting uncomfortably where I stood, I called for my best friend. “Rue!” I whispered harshly. “She is looking at us from the window. Again! How can you not see her?”

“Right, that's it, you do this every time we pass this silly house. There is definitely not some girl watching us. That house is forsaken, and has been for over two hundred years!” I could tell I had really irked her now, she rarely gets this irritated with me. “I'll show you!” She spun on her heels, seized my dainty wrist with all but one hand, dragged me back to the field opposite the manor and forced my eyes to the window. She was definitely mad. I had my eyes shut tight, I didn't want to look at her again. From all of the glances of her I had managed to get throughout all of my walks to Rue's house, I had never looked at her long enough to properly see her face. Though I did notice that her skin was deathly pale, so much so that she was glowing: unmissable, yet no one other than I seemed to notice her watching them.

Hesitantly, I peeked with slightly open eyelids at the window, ignoring Rue's rambling about how nobody was there, though I could see her. Clear as day. There was definitely someone standing there. I was sure of it. I almost hoped that she didn't know we were there, and were now observing her-more like *I* was observing her. Though what I didn't expect was for her to stare down at me, right in the eyes.

“Rue. Let’s leave, please.” Cautiously turning my gaze away from the ghostly figure spying me through the window, twisting my body towards Rue and looking at the long stretch of grass in front of me. What? Where did Rue go? Looking around in haste and panic, I searched briefly for Rue, until a grand realisation hit me.

I glimpsed falteringly at the window, yet that was empty too. Where did that ghostly freak go and what had she done with Rue?

As if in the blink of an eye, my setting had completely changed. The girl stood forth a dilapidated wooden chair, palms pressed firmly against the crippled oak frame. “Hello,” she began. “I am Lilith.” Her voice was so slow and placid that it was almost hypnotic. How could she be so calm in such a situation?

She let out a silent sigh when no reply came from me, what was I supposed to say to her? What was I supposed to say to a monster?

A heavy and awkward atmosphere fell upon us, I scanned my surroundings, and I appeared to be within a diminutive room, yet the lack of furnishing and decor made it look fairly spacious. The room was bare, with all but an oak table- matching the two chairs adjacent to it, and a door, right behind me. The door was old and grand, yet gnarled with age. It was dangerous but tempting, though I had to think cleverly.

And so, I ran to the door, as fast as my legs could take me, slamming it tightly shut once I was through. I turned and fixed my gaze to the linear, seemingly never ending corridor that loomed before me. There was no time to waste, so I bound down the long corridor. I sprinted past a wide variety of doors, of multiple materials, shapes and sizes with my no longer aching legs-for the determination of leaving this house of horror drove me onwards. My journey through the seemingly elongating passage protracted, until I finally reached the conclusion that one of these doors must be my way out.

I came to an abrupt halt, shoes screeching faintly against the weathered floorboards, and opened the first door my eyes met with. The hinges creaked, like ones of a coffin, and the base of the door dragged against the floorboard.

When I checked my surroundings, it became definite that this was not the exit I had wished for. The chamber was as bare as the room I had begun in, with a rusty, metal framed bed in the corner and a bashed wardrobe opposite it. My ears

twitched and perked up, like ones of an animal, when I heard her echoey voice. Instinctively, my shaking legs sent me under the bed and my body curled up. Maybe I hoped that she wasn't going to find me, but deep down I knew she would snuff me out.

I didn't hear any footsteps though, rather, an obnoxious rumbling sounded through the room. A faint light filled the chamber, so I peered rashly at my whereabouts from beneath the bed. The wall seemed to have disappeared- or rather, opened, as a door would. An emotionless eye gazed back at me and a large hand seized the bed I had retreated under. Gasping for air, I clutched at the collar of my school shirt, struggling under the belittling grasp of Lilith. "Come here, doll," her voice reverberated in my head, the forthcoming events would not be pleasant.

I opened my eyes, only now realising they had been shut, and peered at the titan before me in absolute terror. Had she grown in size or had I shrunk? The giantess placed me roughly down on the oak chair where I had begun. My tiny-scale limbs and body ached greatly, my skin tore and stretched as my blood soaked body grew to one of a less miniscule scale. "Welcome back, doll," her voice pounded in my head, nevertheless, I didn't understand anything she said due to the intense pain of my body.

The kitchen was almost silent- minus Lilith's taunting voice, but there seemed to be a hushed whispering coming from the audience of dolls of which sat around the rectangular table. Their mouths did not move. But sound still came out. Their eyes were cracked and their worn eyelashes fluttered at the spine-chilling draught that flew through the room. Their gazes were harsh and firm and the pressure of the glazed orbs was unbearable. In short, jolty, animatronic movements, their porcelain hands reached toward the set table, where a vast selection of cakes and confectionery were displayed, eating as they conversed. The food prepared in this nightmare of a house looked so out-dated, inedible and dull that I could have passed them as the last tenants of the house. Nevertheless, the dolls still ate it and it did look suspiciously appetising. Though the most fascinating element of the feast was the monstrosity of a cake that lay right in the middle of the table. It was the centrepiece, like it was there to be looked at, to lure me in. Yet the cake wasn't what drew me in, the knife that stuck into the cake really *stood out*.

My patience had grown thin long ago, I'd had enough of Lilith's games, so as a meek attempt to be brave, I made what would soon be a reckless mistake. Sneakily, I reached for the knife, the large surface of the cake concealing my moves. Deep

down I knew Lilith could see- or sense what I was up to, yet she didn't do anything to stop me.

My hands raced to the knife, grasped the rough handle and plucked the knife from the slab of desert, leaving a deep gash in it, almost resembling a wound. Though my hands trembled and the air in my throat caught with every breath, my fingers curled tighter around the base of the weapon, and forced the knife into the monster's chest.

The vermilion coloured liquid of which I expected to drip from the flesh came out in vast gushes and my hands were drenched in incriminating splatters of it. A smile, or rather a grimace appeared on her countenance and she released an obnoxious howl of amusement. Her face flickered through images of people I know, the knife still in her torso, chest bleeding out. The faces of these people flashed with little to no rhythm, the wound only making the illusions more disturbing, until it finally came to an unanticipated halt. Rue's face. Her lifeless eyes stared into mine and blood trickled from her shrivelled, claret stained lips. Though the troubling vision of my best friend's death haunted me, the eroding division of realities, revealing the outside world became a superior distraction. The towering walls proceeded to collapse, leaving me in the field I had last seen Rue on. Relief washed over me when I saw my surroundings. My chest heaved and heart raced in anticipation and expectancy, though nothing happened. Was it really over?

Everything was gone- Lilith was gone, though the traumas this vision had presented would plague me evermore. Though as usual, relief came too soon, something still felt off. A sickening rotting smell filled my nostrils, nausea washing over me as I peered down at the aftermath of my carelessness. Rue was gone. Really gone. There wasn't a particle left of that horror house or anything in it, dolls- gone, house- gone, *Lilith- gone*, wasn't it all just my imagination? Hadn't this knife been a part of the vision too? And why was it lodged so messily inside of Rue, blood trickling down her torso. The numbness in my knees returned, and spread through my whole body as I stared at Rue with eyes just as impassive as hers. I had done this to her. To my own friend and I would never forget the look of pain and terror froze upon her face as death swallowed her.