

A ghost wrote this book.

Chapter 1 - A rather unfortunate disclaimer

A very good morning, afternoon, or evening to you, depending on when you have picked up this book. I hope you are well, but I am afraid that I must begin by offering some terribly disappointing news. In spite of the title, which the publisher insisted upon so that readers like yourself might have their interest piqued, I must sadly inform you that there is no evidence whatsoever that ghosts are indeed real. Forgive the deception, but please understand that this is, as much as any of us might like to believe otherwise, true. Now, I shall take the assumption that you are a reasonably intelligent sort of a person, given that you have picked up a book in lieu of, say, yet another episode of *Keeping Up With The Kardashians*, and as such, do not display a propensity to believe in the undead anyway. In any case, allow me to dispel a number of beliefs which many would hang onto.

We all know a Nicola from work who swears blind that she once saw a little girl at the top of the stairs of her flat, wearing a curious pale dress and with bedraggled wet hair, who vanished upon approach, or a Roger from our Year 9 class in school who would insist that, the time that he had broken into that abandoned house up on Bermondsey Street, when he was in the upstairs bedroom paintings had fallen off the wall *all by themselves*, or some other such nonsense. Alas, it is my duty to advise you that Nicola from work is in fact a very lonely sort of person, and craves the momentary attention of making such outlandish claims, and poor Roger from school, if he was even in his own mind telling the truth (which is very rarely the case for a fourteen year old boy) had his mind muddled in fear when a photo frame fell over because of some disturbance he himself had caused, and he had run helter-skelter from the house in a blind panic, most likely causing more disorder along the way, and the only way to explain his mildly damp tracksuit bottoms to himself was that *it was indeed a ghost that had tried to ward him from the place!* Unfortunately, Roger was rather prone to exaggeration, and so the rumours grew.

“But”, says you, the imaginary reader, “I saw the episode of *Ghost Hunters* where they braved the depths of that abandoned mental hospital in Runshawe – how the blazes would you explain the orbs that they saw, and the books that went careening from the shelves toward the cameramen, and as they ran, the awful, demonic voice screaming “**Leave this place at once!**”, and the abject terror on the faces of the presenters?” (I will admit that I have never once watched such a terrible show and am not very familiar with the premise). “How do you explain that, author!?”

Well, reader, firstly, I would ask you to lower your tone. Secondly, let us examine each of these occurrences fairly and with an open mind, so that we can then fold them neatly up and toss them tidily into the bin.

Orbs are, without a shadow of a doubt, the most infuriating piece of absurdity that it is possible to discuss with a sceptic. I am simply clueless as to why so many “ghost truthers” would cling to the idea that the chosen method of manifestation for the ethereal spirits of the undead would be that of a speck of dust. And that is all that an orb is; it is a fleck of old

nothingness which has been blustered up into the air and caught in the beams of the lights on the television cameras – because that abandoned mental hospital in Runshawe was a very dusty place! We can see the same effect when it rains and the water gets splashed onto your eyelashes; squint and look at a light and you will see the light refracted as orbs, and what can we take this to mean? Have dozens of terrible spectres taken the rain as the ideal opportunity to festoon your eyelashes with their unearthly presence? Are they so attracted to moist eyeballs that they will stop at nothing to bestow themselves upon them? Or maybe, just maybe, could it just be possible that these things may be explained with science and rationale and are nothing more than a tiny piece of reflective nothing?

If what awaits after death was nothing more than a perpetual fluttering as a piece of dust visible only on flash photography, then we have much to fear. No, the orbs are not ghosts, and if you do not find yourselves convinced of that then I would ask you to place this book down wherever you are at the moment and take a nice long walk, for there is nothing more that can be done for you. This is the last that I shall write on the matter.

Anything beyond this is television trickery. The men and women at *Ghost Hunters* have a living to make, and they cannot earn that living by showing an hour's episode of nothing week after week (forgive me for mentioning them again, but the *Kardashians* already have that base covered) - and heaven forfend they find themselves honest jobs, for they are not honest people. As I am sure you suspect, they use a combination of camera trickery and outright lies in order to captivate and enthrall the most gullible of viewers. I am of reasonable assurance that were the former Runshawe Hospital for the Mentally Deranged indeed infested with the souls of its former residents, and those residents had then taken it upon themselves to interfere with a meddling camera crew, they would do much more than rattle a few doors.

"But what about the photographs I have seen on the internet?" you question again, and I thank you, good and fictional reader, for asking the question I was prepared to answer next. As I am sure we are all aware, there are a great many photographs on the internet, some of which are appropriate for reasonable discussion and others which are far from it, but I trust the ones to which you refer are pertaining to ghosts. There are, of course plenty of other phenomena which cause the more feebly-minded among us to go running toward the newspapers (or more likely, the internet) with nothing more than a blurry photograph and the cries of "Ghost, ghost!", but each and every one may be explained away in the same manner; a smudge on a camera lens, a trick of the light, or a desperate plea for attention. As it happens, I myself once met a man who had previously worked for a pub named *The Old Man and Scythe* in Bolton, one of Britain's oldest ale houses, who had at some stage or other produced a video from their security cameras of a light illuminating the bar at the dead of night and revealing a ghostly apparition. A few beers into the evening, the gentleman confessed to me that it had been produced using nothing more than a cheap iPhone app and a torch, with the intention of drumming up a little more business. This supposed footage had been sent to world-renowned ghost experts the world over who had declared the footage undoctored and genuine in its appearance, which should inform you of everything you ever need to know about anybody who declares themselves a ghost expert.

So no, I am afraid that you will find no evidence of ghosts no matter how hard you look. If that is the reason that you have picked up this book, I am afraid you will be sorely disappointed,

and if you have already purchased it, then I thank you ever so much for your custom, but that is unfortunately very often simply the way of the world.

Now, I suspect that by this point, the more dreary-minded of my readers have abandoned this book and headed towards their nearest Starbucks for some sort of pumpkin spiced nonsense, irritated that they have fallen for a rather clear marketing ploy. You, however, remain. That is commendable, and tells me one of two things; that either you, like me, are very much a sceptic, and are still interested in whatever it is that I might have to say, or that your belief in the undead is so strong and unwavering that you simply will not be persuaded otherwise, and are rather indignant at my outlandish claims that there is not, now or ever, any evidence for ghosts. This demonstrates either impressive stupidity or an impressive faith in the unseen, which, for reasons beyond my ability to put into words, I take to be a rather admirable quality. I shall trust it is the latter, as, were it the former, the odds of you understanding the meaning of the words “latter” and “former” would be rather low and you would have given up reading a book which regularly uses words of upwards of four syllables.

And so I trust I am among like-minded company, and I will hurry to my point: although I have hopefully demonstrated to you that no evidence of ghosts exists, this does not mean that the ghosts themselves do not exist. In fact, I hold a rather firm belief that ghosts are very real indeed. This said, I would be a rather foolish sort of person to blindly believe in something with no evidence without a rather substantial reason, and so a reason I shall produce.

Over the past four years I have enjoyed a wealth of ethereal experiences, and now the time has come for me to document many of them here. I hope that you, too, my reader, will come to join me in an unwavering belief in the undead, for it is a statement of fact that four years ago, I died, and a ghost wrote this book.

Chapter 2 - A new chapter, to provide a dramatic pause after the recent revelation

I don't recall particularly much from Year 10 English class at Moorside High School, but I do remember Miss Howarth teaching us that a well-placed pause for dramatic effect can keep the audience reading. I hope providing this new chapter has had the intended effect. Of course, I suspect that perhaps explaining my narrative tool may provoke a contradictory reaction, but I was not particularly studious, and do not remember much else of what she said.

I shall imagine your melodramatic gasps to my own contentment, and ask you to please take ahold of your senses before continuing to read further. You will, of course, have questions, and I shall do my utmost to answer the majority of them on the following pages, although you must forgive me if I do not answer everything you should like to ask, as I am of course, dead, and therefore we cannot communicate directly, and, even if it were possible, this book has unfortunately been written in the past, and so I cannot predict what questions you may be asking now.

Firstly, you may wish to ask how it is that I have written a book, what with the unfortunate circumstance of having died. I shall answer this question in due course, and rest assured, my answer features a rather excellent joke about a ghost-writer; however before I explain how this came to be I must slowly introduce you to the realities of the world now that you are aware (I hope) that ghosts are a rather real fact.

Broadly speaking, every creature can be placed into one of three categories; the Undeads, the Not Deads, and the Deads. The Undeads are those such as myself – anything which once was alive and is now no longer, but is not typically dead either. Also classified as Undeads are vampires, resurrected thralls, and various other abominations that spit in the face of God and science, some of which are real and others fictional. Werewolves also belong to this category as an honorary member, although there is some discourse amongst the Undeads as to whether they should in fact be classified as Not Dead.

The Not Deads are easier to understand; I presume you, my reader, are Not Dead, and if you find yourself Undead or Dead, you have my commiserations, as either one presents its own unique challenges. The Not Deads are anything which is simply not dead.

The Deads are perhaps the most simple of all to understand, they are that which is dead, like the pig that provided the bacon you had for breakfast, or that terribly misfortunate bird in the gutter you nearly trod in that time, or your childhood dog which your loving parents told you they'd needed to give away due to your father's allergies. The Deads are by far and away the least interesting of the three.

Now that I trust we are on the same page, I suppose I should detail to you how it came to be that I made the transition from Not Dead to Undead. I shall do so in yet another chapter, in my very best prose, and I apologise for the short length of this chapter – it was, after all, written simply so that I was able to effectively use a dramatic pause. I suspect that is not the last time we shall see one of those.