

Gilnock Hall is a small town with only twelve families. There are the Dunetts, the Peppers, the Gregsons, the Woodills, the Owenses, the Newhalls, the Massies, the Fosses, the Flaggs, the Simonses, the Linders, and the elderly Mrs. Gilnock. Mrs. Gilnock's great-grandfather founded the city, or small town rather, of Gilnock Hall; Harold Gilnock, the founder of Gilnock Hall, came from a very wealthy family from somewhere overseas. He built the first house in Gilnock Hall; that house would later become Gilnock Manor or to some Gilnock Hall's Hall. That house was passed down the family line until we come upon the present, Mrs. Gilnock has no children, nor was she ever married. To the townsfolk of Gilnock Hall, this raises worry of who should inherit the manor and the Gilnock fortune. Mrs. Gilnock; however, doesn't seem to be worried or bothered with this.

Mrs. Gilnock loves the company of the children in Gilnock Hall, she often reads them stories and gives them fantastic gifts. Her favorite stories to read to them are mystery stories. Mrs. Gilnock didn't merely read them these stories; she made them come to life, she even put the children in the place of the detective. Once she had read the book, all but when they solved the mystery, she would have the children deduce who the culprit was. Mrs. Gilnock would read the book to the children on Saturday, and on the next, the children would guess who had done it; once they came to a consensus, Mrs. Gilnock would read the last bit of the book, revealing the wrongdoer.

Last Saturday Mrs. Gilnock read the children a mystery novel set in the medieval ages called *Monk's Hood*. In the book, a man by the name of Gervase Bone1 was poisoned. The children were thrilled by the book; it was a great work of mystery; they spent the week in school wondering, silently and aloud, who had Killed Gervase Bone1. Much to their teachers' displeasure, the students had difficulty focusing on their school work. The teachers must have thought how their focus couldn't be less intent upon their school work; those teachers were about to be proven wrong on that Friday.

On that Friday, the day before they could discover the identity of the book's assassin, Joyce Newhall, Mrs. Gilnock's maid, announced the disappearance of Mrs. Gilnock. Mrs. Gilnock had been asleep when Mrs. Newhall left the manor, at about nine last night; but, she was gone when Mrs. Newhall went back to the house at seven the next morning. Disappearances are an oddity in a small town like Gilnock Hall, and word of anything that Mrs. Gilnock does spreads quickly; so, when Mrs. Gilnock vanished word took the village like wildfire. The school children would ignore their teachers to talk and ponder about Mrs. Gilnock's disappearance; though, I think, the teachers didn't mind as they too could hardly focus. I hear, around the town, no work got done as no one could think of anything but the disappearance. During the day Sheriff Gregson began investigating around the Gilnock manor, and once the school children got released from school, he began to form a search party to look in the woods for the elderly Mrs. Gilnock.

It is a Friday afternoon, the schools just let their students out; so naturally, some of the students went to join the search party that Sheriff Gregson assembled. My friends and I, yes I was a student, decided we had 'solved' enough 'mysteries' that we could deal with Mrs. Gilnock's case naturally enough; even if we failed, we had Mr. Gregson also investigating the same disappearance. In my group, there was Alice, a bright girl who often solved those mystery books before the rest of us, Sean, a boy a bit too strong for his own good, Emily, an extremely well-liked girl who somehow enjoys being around the rest of us, and James, I was the weird kid in the group.

Alice at the time wore her reddish-brown hair in a ponytail and wore glasses. She often wore jeans rather than the skirt her parents wanted her to. Sean kept his brown hair short and kept his pants and shirts filthy. He often would tear at his sleeves and pant legs to give them that "badass" look. Emily always wore her long blonde hair down, with a slight curl at the end. She would wear whatever "made her

eyes stand out," not like I knew what that meant. I had blondish brown hair, that was naturally curly, but I tried to keep it straight. I wore anything that was in my closet and mostly clean.

Rather than searching the forest with Sheriff Gregson, we decided to investigate Gilnock Manor. We passed the gate, that is always left open, and walked through the grounds to the closed front door. We knocked after testing the door and finding it locked. When we saw the door opening, we were shocked; more so at who was controlling the door's movements, Mrs. Newhall. She let us in, and we informed her that we planned on searching for Mrs. Gilnock; she asked if Sheriff Gregson was aware of our investigation, we told her that he did not.

"If you want me to keep this investigation of yours a secret from Mr. Gregson, I can; however, I will have to tell him tomorrow," Mrs. Newhall said. We all nodded in understanding and began to investigate the manor.

We started looking for information related to Mrs. Gilnock's disappearance in the library, the only room we knew other than the foyer. We saw *Monk's Hood* on the desk; the desk that was kept in the center of the room was clean but not without papers. The thing about that desk that stood out to us was the page in the old typewriter, none of us could remember the page in the typewriter last week. On the top of the page was marked a number one in red ink, we didn't recognize the handwriting, so we concluded that the numbering must have been Mrs. Gilnock's. We all knew that she enjoyed writing stories of her own as much as she enjoyed reading them. The page in the typewriter was only half typed, and it would seem that she left the note halfway through a word.

The page read, "The following information may be disturbing to some and dangerous to read. Continue at your own risk." At the end of these two sentences we found ourselves wondering why hadn't Sheriff Gregson taken the page as evidence; perhaps he overlooked it or only thought it a story. We knew it couldn't have merely been a story, as

Mrs. Gilnock's writing was nearly always upbeat, and never unnerving. The page continued, "I fear writing this may cost me my life; however as I have no child of my own, I must share this knowledge with the people of Gilnock Hall." We had become extremely interested in this page now; however, we heard the front door open. We took the page from its post and quickly left the library; after we closed the library door, we heard Mrs. Newhall talking to Sheriff Gregson.

"So, no luck then," Mrs. Newhall asked.

"No we searched the forest around the manor, but there was no trace of her; no footprints, no broken branches, no torn bits of clothing. I think it's best if you stay here tonight, in case she comes back," Mr. Gregson said.

"Of course, I'll go home and pick up a few things then I'll be back." We heard Mrs. Newhall walk out the door, closing it behind her. We peaked our heads around the corner to see if our exit path was clear, we saw Mr. Gregson turn towards the dining room and pulling a key from his pocket he mindlessly walked toward the table. In doing so, he left our sight.

I turned toward Alice, Sean, and Emily and whispered my question, "Should we try to watch or get out?"

"If we do leave now, we'll never know what Sheriff Gregson is doing," Sean whispered back.

"Let's go check out what he's up to," Alice angrily whispered. We slid towards the kitchen, only to find Mr. Gregson mindlessly walking out of the dining room and into the kitchen. As we walked past the dining room, I noticed a key inserted into a leg of the table; it was the same key Mr. Gregson had been carrying. As he turned out of the kitchen and into the mudroom, we could hear what sounded like a low stone grind. Mr. Gregson continued through the mudroom and into the garage. The floor had moved and created a staircase; without shock or hesitation, he walked down the newly formed staircase. We were now

intrigued, more so than before. We knew Mrs. Newhall would be back to the manor in ten minutes; surely, Sheriff Gregson would know that as well. We followed Mr. Gregson at a distance, being as silent as possible; however, there was a loose pebble my foot found. I kicked the small stone down the stairs, as the rock found a step it would thunder a tick. The sound left Mr. Gregson unchanged; he still appeared unaware. After a lengthy staircase, we found ourselves following Mr. Gregson in a dark and dank hallway. We walked for a minute passing four rooms without doors, two on the left two on the right. Mr. Gregson reached the end of the hall that, in the dark, looked plain; he produced a small knife from his pocket sliced the palm of his left hand and pressed it against the wall. He let the blood from his hand run down the wall for a moment; suddenly, he turned away from the wall and faced us. It didn't appear as though he saw us; he just looked beyond us; however, that did not stop us from throwing ourselves into a room. As he passed our hiding place, we could hear him quietly changing in an unknown language. Then from behind him came this shimmering red light; we poked our heads around to see the blood glowing and forming runes, we then looked to the exit and saw Mr. Gregson's feet walking up the stairs. We rushed out of the hallway, not minding too much about noise. By the time we reached the top of the stairs, Sheriff Gregson was in the kitchen, we followed him.

Sheriff Gregson went to the dining room, removed the key from the table leg and put the knife and key back in his pockets. We went back to the entrance of the library as Mr. Gregson returned to where he had been when Mrs. Newhall had left. He slowly seemed to regain awareness, when he was fully there the doors opened.

Mrs. Newhall walked in and asked, "Has she come back yet?"

"Unfortunately not," Sheriff Gregson told her.

"How did you cut your hand," Mrs. Newhall asked, noticing the gash on the Sheriff's hand.

"Oh that happened out in the woods when we were looking for Rose," Sheriff Gregson told her. Rose was Mrs. Gilnock's first name, but all of the kids just called her Mrs. Gilnock.

"Do you need the Doctor to have a look at that?"

"Perhaps I'll have him look at it tonight."

"You should go now, I'm sure no one will be there, and the cut looks bad."

"Maybe you're right," Mr. Gregson said, "Are you settled in?"

"Yes, I'm fine; now go get that cut checked on."

"Thank you, Joyce."

"Of course." At that Mr. Gregson walked out, closing the door behind him. Mrs. Newhall called out to us, "Kids? Alice, James, Sean, Emily?"

We left our spot and approached Mrs. Newhall; once we got to her, we began to explain what happened when she had gone frantically. When we finished our wild explanation, Mrs. Newhall said, "I didn't notice the cut on the Sheriff's hand earlier, so that bit of your story makes sense. As for the rest, I think your imaginations are getting the better of you.

"We can assure you that all of it was true," Alice pleaded.

"Even if you don't believe us, can you at least promise us that you won't tell Mr. Gregson about us investigating, our following him," I asked.

"I don't know if I believe you just yet, but I will keep your investigation a secret," Mrs. Newhall assured us.

We thanked her and began to investigate the rest of the ground floor. Finding a dust-filled baker's kitchen and a lightly-used kitchen we decided we wouldn't see anything else on this story. Then

we remembered the key Mr. Gregson had put in the dining room table's leg. We made our way to the dining room and began to investigate the table. Holes that looked like could fit a key was in each leg; if Mr. Gregson had one key, then there might be four different keys. We began to think of where someone could hide a key in Gilnock manor; deciding that the only two people who went up the stairs where Mrs. Gilnock and Mrs. Newhall, it would be an excellent place to hide a key.

We raced up the stairs to find a mystery of rooms on this floor of Gilnock manor. Many of the chambers had closed doors some of them locked; however, the doors that were left open and unlocked were uninteresting. We went back down the stairs to ask if Mrs. Newhall had keys to the locked rooms.

"I have a key to every room, which do you want to explore?" At this question we shrugged. "The second and third bedrooms should be unlocked, have you been in those," Mrs. Newhall asked. We nodded. "I'll let you into the fourth bedroom and I will think about letting you in the master bedroom."

We thanked Mrs. Newhall for allowing us access to the fourth bedroom and made our way up the stairs, with Mrs. Newhall behind us she had already pulled out the keys. She unlocked the door and we rushed into the newly open door. This room was vastly different from the rest of the house; there was no electric lighting of any kind, the floor was made of a rough dark wood, there was only a circular podium in the center of the room, the two windows were curtained by thick and seemingly heavy leather. Although no sunlight or light of any other kind was entering the windows, the room was well illuminated from a mysterious and unknown source.