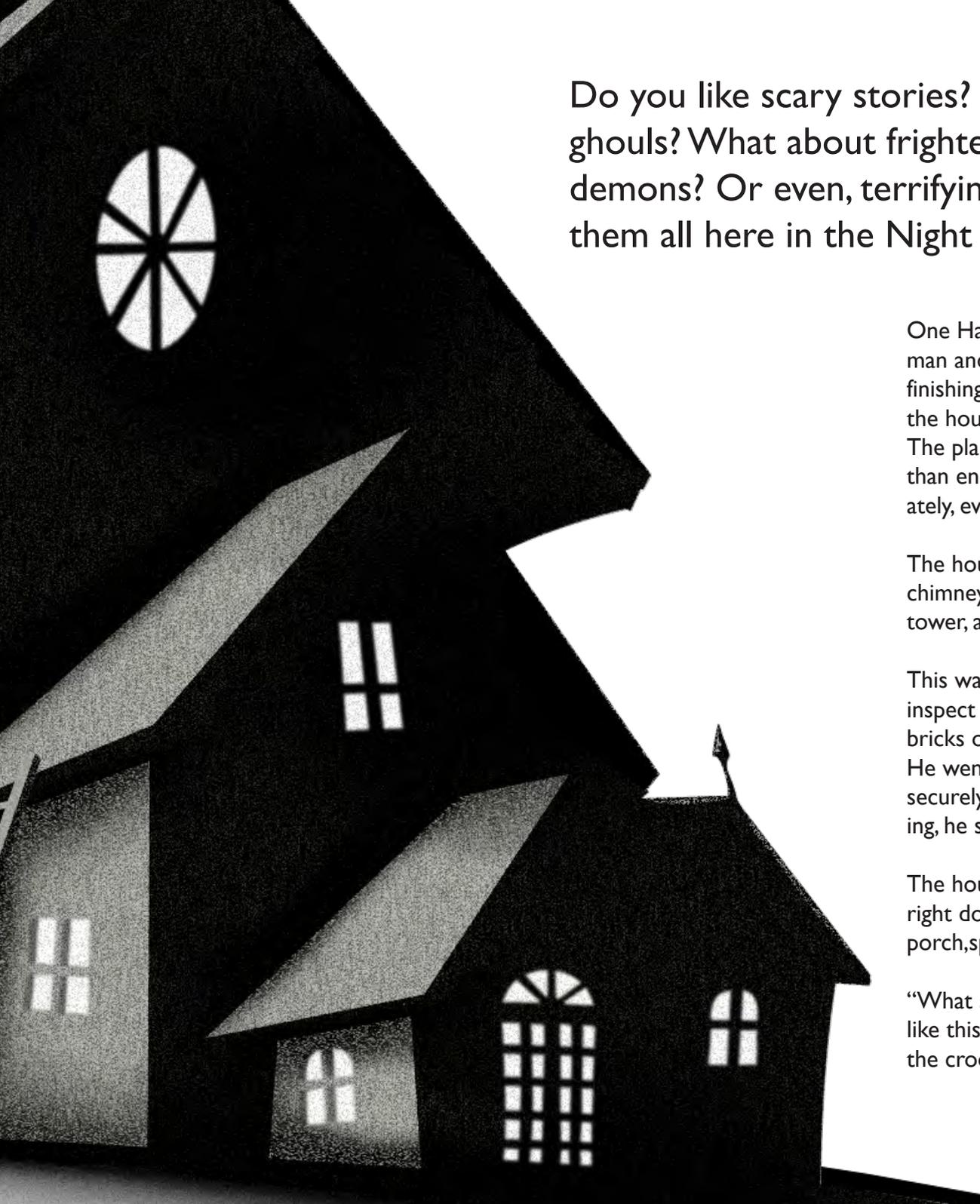




HALLOWEEN IN THE NIGHT ZOO

By the Night Zookeeper



Do you like scary stories? Horrible horrors about ghosts and ghouls? What about frightening folklores of dangerous demons? Or even, terrifying tales of bugs and beasts? We have them all here in the Night Zoo. It can be quite a scary place!

One Halloween, Sly the snake, who was a builder and a business man and didn't go in for any nonsense like ghosts and demons, was finishing construction of a particularly strange house. The plans for the house had arrived a year earlier in the post along with payment. The plans had been covered in cobwebs but the money was more than enough to cover the build, so Sly had started work immediately, even though he had never met the owner.

The house was four floors high, made of brick and had a crooked chimney tower. The plans had been very clear about the crooked tower, along with lots of other strange features.

This was the night that the owner was supposed to arrive to inspect Sly's work and move in. Sly just needed to lay the last few bricks on the chimney and the house would be finished and ready. He went and got the largest ladder he could find and placed it securely against an outer wall of the house. However, before climbing, he stood back to admire the house that he had built.

The house looked just as the future owner had asked for in his plan, right down to the broken glass windows, creaking wooden porch, spider clock and strange, luminous plastic gargoyles.

"What strange and frightening animal would want to live in a house like this?!" Sly thought before setting off up his ladder to the top of the crooked chimney tower.

He began laying the last of the bricks and as he worked a foggiest (that is fog mixed with mist for those of you not familiar with the Night Zoo) began to gather around the house. Soon the chimney was completely shrouded in an impenetrable darkness.

Sly looked up after laying the last brick and saw... practically nothing. You see the foggiest was now so thick that he could barely see his long tongue poking out of his mouth. He very slowly slithered across the roof to where he had left the ladder and was shocked to see that it had gone! It had disappeared into the foggiest, leaving him stranded on a brick island in a sea of fog.

“ello?!” he shouted, “Can someone elp?”

“No” replied a sinister sounding voice from deep within the foggiest. Sly, who isn’t normally afraid of anything, started to feel a little nervous.

“What’ve you done wit me’ladder?”

“I haven’t done anything to your ladder” said the voice.

“I don’t believe you!” said Sly, now feeling a little cross with whoever he was talking to.

“So, don’t believe me. It doesn’t matter anyhow. Without the ladder you can’t get down. You are stuck.”

Sly had to admit, the voice had a point. He was indeed stuck, there was no way down without the ladder and the foggiest was so thick that he couldn’t see where it had gone.

“So, if you ain’t gonna elp me, what do we do?” He called out.

“We talk.”

“About what?”

“About anything we choose...” The wind had picked up and was rattling the windows of the house. Sly shivered and said nothing. “Perhaps I should start. My name is Jasper No Face and I’m a ghost.”

“There’s no such thing as ghosts” hissed Sly.

“Oh I wouldn’t be so sure” said Jasper No Face, “After all, you just built a house for one.”

“You’re the one that sent me the plans?!” replied Sly in disbelief.

“Yes. And I expect to move in just as soon as you give me the key and leave this place forever.”

“Why would a ghost want a house to move inta?” said Sly sceptically.

“My last home was knocked down long ago and ever since I have wandered the Night Zoo, hoping to find another home, exactly like the last one. In the end I decide to have you build one for me.”

“Why not move inta a nice new oome?”

“You sir, clearly know very little about ghosts” said Jasper No Face, who sounded quite upset.

“Well, if you want me ta go, give me, me ladder back and I’ll leave.”

“I told you” said Jasper No Face, “I didn’t take the ladder”. A few minutes passed during which Sly thought he heard some gentle sobbing. After a while, Jasper No Face spoke again. It sounded like he was fighting back tears. “It seems that my curse has not lifted after all.”



“A curse?” enquired Sly.

“Yes. It is a terrible curse, placed upon all ghosts.”

“What is it?”

“Well, first, you must understand that all ghosts stay in the world because they believe there is a chance that they can return to the past. This curse means that they never can. I knew of the curse of course, but I thought my plan was special. You see, I only wanted to return to the house that I loved and I thought, if a new house was built that was exactly the same as my old one, I could fool the curse and live happily back in my old home.”

“Maybe it’s time ta move on. Find a new oome” said Sly.

“Yes. Perhaps you are right” admitted Jasper No Face.

Suddenly, a great wind blew and the foggiest cleared. Sly scanned the night for Jasper but couldn’t see anyone. Then he looked down and there, right where it should have been, was his ladder. He was so shocked he nearly fell off the roof, but he managed to cling on by wrapping his tail around a satellite dish. “I don’t remember putting that there” he thought before sliding down the ladder.

He arrived on the ground and was still feeling very shaken up when he reached the gravel driveway and perfect metal gates. “Hang on” he thought, “I don’t remember building a gravel driveway and perfect metal gates.” He turned around and his jaw fell open. The house looked completely different! It was painted white, had a beautiful blue door, hanging plant pots full of flowers and a clean swept porch.

“Hello” enquired a voice behind him. Sly turned around in horror, recognising the voice.

“I’m Jasper, Jasper the Jaguar” said the stranger wearing a big hat that was tilted over his face. He was standing next to a beautiful female Jaguar and a green car. “You must be Sly?” he continued.

Sly nodded.

“I must say you have done an excellent job! Do you have the house keys?”

Sly nodded and passed Jasper the keys. Jasper got back into his car and drove it into the driveway. His wife got out of the car and walked up into the house. Jasper followed, but as he was about to walk through the door he turned to look at Sly and said, “We’ll see you later, don’t be a stranger!”

Sly looked up as Jasper took off his hat and he saw that Jasper...
HAD NO FACE!

The End

