

SHORT STORIES TO MAKE YOU SHIVER



# MYSTERY STORIES

TEN TALES OF TERROR

*John Townsend*





# MYSTERY STORIES

JOHN TOWNSEND

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# 10

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# MYSTERY STORIES

JOHN TOWNSEND

There's nothing quite like a creepy mystery to get us tingling, wondering and shivering from fears of unknown goings-on 'out there'. When no one knows the whole truth about what may be happening, things can get really spooky. Stories told of mysterious events, places and creatures have delighted and scared us in flickering firelight for thousands of years. Unsolved and unexplained tales still have great power to grip us in their scary spells. They spark our imaginations and send an icy shiver down our spines. Turn these pages and get ready to be mystified...



## SOMETHING'S OUT THERE

**T**he eyes were watching. They stared through a flurry of swirling snow that swept across the darkening hills. They blinked into the icy wind from ever-deepening shadows. As a figure moved across the field, the eyes narrowed. Bronze eyes with pin-prick cores of piercing black. Savage, hungry eyes that reflected the rising Moon.



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Mira was halfway across the field when she first sensed something was behind her... watching. She turned to squint through dancing snowflakes towards the frosted hedgerow. Maybe one of the farm dogs was still out and snuffling in the ditch? For there, behind a line of trees, something moved. Something big.

With her hand to her eyes, Mira tried to peer through the trees silhouetted against a pale, watery sunset. It was hard to make out the moving shadow, but she knew something was there. Something alive and staring – and she knew it had seen her. The first wave of fear rose inside her.

Was it safe to walk on across the bare ploughed field or should she turn back to the main road? But that would mean retracing her steps and passing closer to what sounded like a menacing growl. She pulled her scarf around her ears just as a branch cracked like a rifle shot. From the

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trees behind her, screeching rooks rose like a swarm of disturbed flies. She daren't turn back.

'Get a grip,' she told herself. 'If I cross this field I'll soon reach the track. It's only a mile then to home, where Ryan will be milking the cows. He'll get Dad's shotgun and scare "it" off.' She looked ahead but the fence and telegraph poles marking the distant safety of the road were still out of sight beyond the brow of the hill. She strode on without looking back.

Maybe the rumours were true after all? Since she'd been helping at the farm shop some evenings after school, Mira had always smiled at the daft stories from some of the staff. Just silly talk, she'd thought. The local big joke about the 'Mystery Beast'. It seemed like another of those rural myths and no more than country gossip.

Ryan said he'd seen it twice – each time from the tractor after dark. Two fierce amber eyes had stared at him before vanishing into the night, so



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he said. Mira accused him of living in a fantasy world like in his computer games. 'You just want to play the hero,' she told him, before adding with a grin, 'You know you're my hero big brother, so you don't have to pretend to be Superman in a tractor!'

Their cousin said he'd heard a chilling howl when he got off the school bus at dusk, just before Christmas. It came from the old quarry, and ever since, he had spoken of a werewolf stalking the woods. Then, on Christmas Eve, a woman at the local store said she'd seen a large black shape leaping a hedge in the early morning mist. It was there they found footprints in the snow. Huge prints – and the headless body of a fox. Prints that conveniently disappeared with the melting snow, before anyone thought to take a photo. Mira assumed it was all just a hoax. The young farm workers staying in the caravans nearby were always playing pranks, like making crop

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circles in summer to scare everyone into thinking that there were alien spaceships landing. But now she wasn't so sure.

Mira reached for her phone. It was a long, lonely walk ahead in the twilight. The path twisted over the brow of a hill and down past the crumbling ruin of Gatby Farm. Behind her another growl rose from the shadows. She was now sure a large animal was somewhere among the trees, and she was more than afraid.

Uneven ridges and furrows twisted across the ploughed field, slowing Mira's strides. Now she wished she'd kept to the main road where there were lights and cars... and help. Mist was creeping up the valley and darkness was closing in. Her fingers fumbled over her phone as she tried to run. An angry snarl moved closer, on the other side of the hedge. As she staggered over snowy ridges, her scarf loosened and flapped away into a ditch. But she wasn't going back. Not



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now, for she was at last running downhill, close to a high crumbling wall covered in ivy. Just as a faint line of telegraph poles ahead began to emerge through the mist, she stumbled and her phone dropped in a furrow. As she stooped to pick it up, a hedge just beyond the ditch shook violently and twigs snapped. Earth and stones flew as she squinted up to see a pair of savage eyes. With a terrified scream, she scrambled on all fours across the frozen mud, the dusting of snow biting at her bare fingers. Cold air rushed into her lungs and her heart threatened to burst. A thud shook the ground beside her when the creature jumped with an ear-splitting roar. Mira fell, headfirst, into an ice-filled gully.

A sudden shot ripped through the mist. The deafening crack threw a flutter of birds into the sky and echoed around the valley. Mira's ears seemed to explode as she lay panting, her hands over her head. Whimpering, shaking and with

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her heart pounding like never before, she opened her eyes and peered up. She dreaded what she was about to see. Nothing. Silence. She was alone in the misty field.

After lying still for what seemed forever, Mira slowly pushed herself up onto her knees and looked back across the frozen ground. Had someone shot the mysterious beast? But it wasn't a gunshot. It was the bird-scarer in the next field. It fired every half hour to keep birds off the winter crop. Perfect timing – but she knew her lucky escape might be short-lived. The creature was still there somewhere beyond the hedge, behind the wall, rustling through the trees.

Still shaking and covered in mud, Mira knew just how lucky she'd been – for she'd seen it with her own eyes. She'd glimpsed its face. For a split second she'd caught sight of its fangs and smelt its searing breath. This was no tall story to laugh about with her friends. That 'thing' was

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terrifyingly real and it was up to her to tell them and make them all understand. She knew it was truly horrific, and she now had no doubt that it was out there, within striking distance.

Whatever it was, just beyond the fields and prowling the woods, it was a fearsome predator. As the last light finally faded and the winter night silently closed in, the eyes still glowed through the darkness. Staring. A spine-chilling howl echoed through the trees.



By the time Mira stumbled through the front door, she could hardly talk. Her damp matted hair was caked in mud and plastered over her face. Ryan was eating at the kitchen table.

'Wow, what's up with you? Looks like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards.'

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She tried to tell her story, through fitful sobs. Ryan could only listen, open-mouthed.

'I'd better get Mum,' he said. 'She's in the lambing shed with Dad and Uncle Jed. I'll go and get her while you have a hot bath. Don't worry, Mira, you're safe now.'

He didn't say any more, but he'd noticed how the farm dogs had been restless all day, as if something was on the prowl out there. Before he went outside, he fetched the shotgun they used for foxes, just in case, then headed out across the yard.



Later that evening, the police arrived. Mira was surprised at how quickly they came and how seriously they listened to her. She'd assumed they'd think she'd imagined things. But other nearby farms had recently reported sheep had



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been attacked in the fields. Uncle Jed lost two of his goats the night before. He said, worriedly, 'Their throats were bitten to shreds and all their blood drained. Whatever would do that?'

Possible answers to that question were given by a crime scene investigator a few days later. She arrived in a police car, introduced herself as Liz and appeared somewhat troubled. Sitting in the farm kitchen, flicking through a bundle of papers, she spoke slowly, with Mira and Ryan hanging on her every word. 'I'm afraid it's not as straightforward as we'd hoped,' she began solemnly. 'We examined fang marks in the dead goats and sheep, as well as dog-like footprints at the scene. We also extracted DNA from saliva around bite marks on the corpses. To be honest, I can only tell you what the animal out there isn't, rather than what it is. I'm afraid it's all very baffling, and a professor of zoology we contacted is just as puzzled. The crux of the matter is,

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**we've an unknown species on our hands.'**

Mira looked at Ryan. 'I may not be a professor of zoology, but I could have told anyone that. From what I glimpsed of its head and eyes, this was like no other creature I know.'

'We're certain it's not a known canine: a wolf, fox, coyote, jackal, dingo or any type of dog. One suggestion is that it might just be...' Liz paused, seeming unable to say the word. 'Some sort of Chupacabra.'

'Whatever's that?' Mira frowned, while Ryan laughed nervously.

'I've seen them in video games but they're not real, are they?'

Liz shrugged. 'Your guess is as good as mine. Apparently, a Chupacabra is a mythical beast that's supposed to kill sheep and goats. Chupacabra is Mexican for 'goat throat sucker'. Some people swear they've seen this creature in parts of America – like a large, hairless dog with



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big fangs and a grotesque face.'

'Sounds like a student I know at college,' Ryan smirked. No one smiled. 'In that case, let me do a search on the laptop.' He tapped the keys, gave a whistle at what he saw, and read aloud, 'Chupacabras have leathery or scaly greenish-grey skin and sharp spines or quills running down their backs. These creatures stand upright and hop in a similar fashion to kangaroos, being able to leap 6 metres in one jump. A chupacabra's face has a panther-like nose, a forked tongue and two large protruding fangs. It is said to hiss and screech when alarmed, as well as leave a strong stench behind. When it screeches, the chupacabra's eyes are said to glow an unusual red. As yet there are no reports of it attacking humans. Its victims, most often goats and sheep, are drained of all their blood, but are otherwise left intact. There is usually no other evidence of a struggle — simply two or sometimes three

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puncture marks in the victim's neck. Creatures resembling chupacabras have been reported in South America, the USA and recently in parts of rural Europe. None have ever been captured and no hard evidence has yet been found to prove their existence.'

Various weird images of a hideous, dog-like creature came up on the screen. Mira looked doubtful. 'I can't be sure the thing I saw is anything like that. I just don't know.'

'The alternative could be even more shocking,' Liz answered before launching into a story that stunned the family sitting around the kitchen table. 'Over 250 years ago a type of man-eating wolf was on the prowl in France, in a region called Gévaudan. Named the 'Beast of Gévaudan', it was even said by some to be a werewolf. From 1764 to 1767 it probably killed over 100 people, prowling from the forest night after night. It preyed almost entirely on women and children



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living in remote cottages and farms, often as they tended animals or gathered crops in open fields. No one could stop it until one heroic hunter apparently tracked it down and shot it with a special silver bullet. Some zoologists have suggested this creature was some kind of dire wolf, a species that died out after the last ice age. Maybe some have survived, but they would be very different from the modern wolf in many ways. They were much larger and stronger, and had massive skulls – fearsome predators. The wolves were once widespread, and their bones have been found in Florida, the Mississippi Valley, and the Valley of Mexico.’

Ryan snorted, ‘Oh, come on – one of those isn’t going to be on the loose round here, is it?’

‘Just hear me out,’ she went on. ‘We know that biologists have been working on de-extinction projects, using the DNA from ancient bones and preserved tissue cells to bring back lost species.

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We don’t yet know if the DNA we found here matches that of the dire wolf cloning projects going on in some countries, which are kept very secret.’

Mira sighed. ‘So why would a creature from what sounds like science fiction end up here of all places?’

‘A good question — and you’re right, it does seem far-fetched. But we happen to know of some cloning projects being done illegally. Who’s to know if one of these “resurrected creatures” has escaped or been deliberately put back into the wild? It’s called rewilding. We know Australian scientists tried to clone a Tasmanian tiger. That was a predator called a thylacene that died out nearly 100 years ago. Scientists were able to extract DNA from remains and create genes. It was a large dog-like animal that hunted in Australia and had a long tail, dark stripes on its back and rump, and a pouch like a kangaroo’s.



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Even though it's meant to be extinct, people sometimes report seeing one in the wild.'

Ryan showed a picture of a Tasmanian tiger on his screen. 'Could that be your mystery beast, Mira?'

She shook her head. 'I don't think so – but who knows? I can't be sure of anything now.' She went over to the window and peered out through the darkness.

'All I know is, there's something scary out there that could have killed me and I'll never forget its terrifying eyes and bloodcurdling growl. I just want someone to get rid of it, that's all.'

Tidying her papers, Liz glanced at Mira and said quietly, 'Judging by the evidence we've gathered, there seem to be more than one of them.'

At that moment the dogs out in the yard began to bark incessantly, with mounting alarm. Ryan went to the front door to see what had upset them.

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Security lights had come on, shining across the yard and the police car dusted with snow. There were no footprints or tracks, the air was still and the cows were quiet in the barn.

'It's probably only Uncle Jed out there pottering about,' Ryan called to the dogs. 'What's got into you? Calm down.'

He returned to the kitchen where Liz was standing, gathering up her papers. 'I'm sorry I can't be more certain at this stage but we'll be investigating further, so please get in touch if you see anything more. We don't want to scare people around here so I'd like you to keep what I've said to yourselves for the moment. If not, you'll have coach-loads of monster hunters on your doorstep and the usual batch of hoaxers. Once we know exactly what creatures we're dealing with, we'll be able to take an appropriate course of action.'

'Just shoot it – or them. That's all I ask,' Mira said. 'I'm not going out there alone until then.'



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The dogs were still barking when they all walked outside to the car.

‘You’ve been very helpful – and brave,’ Liz told Mira, opening the car door. ‘I’ll be in touch again, I’m sure.’

She drove off across the yard and down the drive, the dogs still barking as the headlights disappeared from view.

Ryan was in the middle of scrambling eggs when the phone rang. He answered it cheerily with, ‘Hi Uncle Jed...’ His tone soon changed. ‘OK, I’ll come down. I’ll bring the shotgun.’

He said nothing to Mira as he put on his boots and coat, grabbed the shotgun and a torch, then headed out across the yard, taking the dogs with him. He saw Uncle Jed’s torchlight just ahead – and the rear red lights of the police car. Its engine was still running and the driver’s door stood wide open. Uncle Jed’s trembling voice cracked as he spoke just two words.

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‘She’s gone.’

Torn papers were scattered across the drive, where drag marks led away through the snow. One of Liz’s shoes lay twisted in the car, with a splash of blood on the driver’s seat.

A spine-chilling howl echoed through the trees, from where eyes blinked in the shadows. Bronze eyes with pin-prick cores of piercing black. Staring... before glowing red in the dense and deepest darkness.





## THE MAN ON THE DALLAS PLANE

Nothing can really vanish into thin air, can it? Not unless it's vaporised in some way. But that just doesn't happen to solid objects in normal conditions. It certainly can't happen to people who are alive, fit and well. It's a well-known fact of science

that living beings don't just change from a solid state into gas - even after a big lunch! Vanishing into thin air never happens. There again, we sometimes have to wonder...



**T**he first time I flew in a plane was so unusual that I've never forgotten it. Although I was only 8 years old and the flight lasted less than two hours, I can still remember all the details. I can still see the man's green tie and white shirt, his jacket and shoes. The seats were blue and the air steward wore a bright red neck scarf. But it was what happened mid-flight that I shall never forget. The mystery still baffles the world more than fifty years later. Anyone who searches the man's name online will soon see what I mean.



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My mother and I lived in Illinois at the time and we were going to see my grandparents who lived in Texas. The flight was on a DC-3 plane from Kankakee Airport to Dallas on a bright summer's day in 1968. Although my mother told me it was a small plane, it seemed enormous to me. I suppose it held about twenty-four passengers and I remember how we were all told to fasten our seatbelts just before take-off. I was so excited as the plane began to rumble down the runway, getting faster and faster till I was pressed into my seat by the increasing speed. As we lifted off the tarmac, I looked down at the runway falling away beneath us and felt my ears pop, just as we soared into the sky.

'Wow, this is so amazing,' I said at the top of my voice. Passengers around us turned and smiled at me. I couldn't understand why they weren't as awestruck as me.

'My ears keep popping,' I added, louder than I

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realised. A man and woman in the seats across the aisle looked over with even bigger smiles.

'Here, suck some candy. That always helps,' the man said, offering me a lemon bonbon.

I took it eagerly and felt it tingle on my tongue before my ears began to feel normal again.

The woman with him chatted to my mother briefly. It was one of those conversations some adults have about a child right in front of them. It was as if I wasn't there, yet they were talking about me! Why do they do that?

I was in the window seat so I spent a lot of time looking down at the hills and forests passing beneath us. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. The woman opposite looked across again and said to me, 'Look out for the mountains ahead. Below us are the woods of Missouri. We're about to fly over the Ozark Mountains where black bears and mountain lions live. It's wild country down there.'



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The man by the window next to her told us we were almost halfway to Dallas, when I heard him say, 'Excuse me, honey – I just need the restroom.' He stood, squeezed past her, looked at me with a smile, and headed to the rear of the plane. He wore glasses and had a greyish moustache... but that was the last anyone saw of him. I looked back out of the window as we approached the mountains. Someone said we were flying three thousand metres high. When the plane shuddered a little, my mother said it was just the wind. 'You sometimes get a spot of turbulence over mountains.'

Beyond the mountains, we saw the forests of Arkansas. The woman across the aisle was no longer taking an interest in where we were but she seemed agitated. I saw her beckon the steward. 'Would you mind checking if my husband is okay? He's been in the restroom a while and he may have got locked in.'

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The steward smiled with a 'Sure' and she went to the rear of the plane. Moments later, she appeared beside us and I heard her say, 'Your husband isn't in there, madam. The restroom is empty.'

'Well where is he, then? Where else is there?'

'Nowhere, madam. He's not on the plane.'

'Of course he's on the plane. He was sitting here a few minutes ago. Please look again.'

The steward wasn't smiling anymore. She walked up and down anxiously before going into the cockpit. She emerged again with the co-pilot. They walked past us and I heard her tell him, 'A passenger is missing. A Mr Potter. He isn't there now. No one has seen him.'

I watched them go to the exit door where they touched the handle and examined the floor.

The woman opposite got up and went to join them. I heard the steward say firmly, 'Please return to your seat, madam. There's nothing



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that any of us can do. I'm afraid your husband has disappeared.'

'How can that be?' I asked my mother in a loud whisper. 'Is that what happens on planes?'

'Shh!'

The plane began to descend and the pilot announced we were making an unscheduled landing at another airport. We were told there was nothing to worry about, but that due to an incident on board it was necessary to land the plane immediately. Even I sensed an edge to his voice. By the time the plane landed, most of us knew they feared a passenger may have fallen from the rear door. Eventually, when we were able to leave the plane, we left through that same door and descended the steps. The missing man's wife remained seated, looking stunned. A group of important-looking men were already on the tarmac, all appearing very serious. They were speaking to the pilot in hushed voices. We

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only learned the details of our in-flight mystery when the story was later published in the news. One headline read: 'There one minute – gone the next'. We were amazed at what we read, but puzzled that nothing appeared to be solved.



The missing man was 54-year-old Jerrold Potter, a successful businessman. Carrie, his wife, insisted he was in good spirits on the journey. There was no reason why he should throw himself off the plane. For that was the conclusion. Jerrold Potter had opened the exit door and either fallen or jumped. But why? Nobody on the plane had seen or heard him do either. Had he mistaken the exit door for the toilet? That seemed unlikely as it had a warning on it in large letters:



## DO NOT OPEN IN FLIGHT

So had he fallen against the door and pushed it open when the plane shuddered? That also seemed unlikely because the door had a heavy handle that had to be turned a full circle to release it. It would also make a noise and passengers would feel the cold air rushing in. But strangely, a chain for keeping the door securely shut was found on the floor. So what DID happen to Jerrold Potter?

Police and volunteers searched for his body over hundreds of kilometres of forests and brush, but nothing was ever found. Carrie Potter asked the search to be called off after four days because it was putting people in danger in such wild country. So she never did discover if or where he landed. When she died at the age of 81 in 1991, she still had no idea as to what really happened

that day. If Jerrold Potter fell by accident, why was the door shut behind him? Was he pushed by another passenger? Did he jump deliberately? Was he in a troubled state of mind? She always denied all such suggestions.

To this day, I still keep wondering what happened to that friendly man on the Dallas plane.

As my mother told me long after we arrived in Dallas, 'It seems like it was a terrible accident. I guess we are never going to know the answer to what happened. Poor Jerrold Potter just seems to have vanished into thin air. It's one of those mysteries that's never likely to be solved. Not now. Not ever.' Over fifty years later, her words remain true.





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## MUSEUM OF MYSTERIES

**H**arrison Garcia was the joker in the pack and ‘chief prankster’ of sixth grade. His main aim in life was to play tricks on anyone and everyone, as well as to lecture all on most subjects. He’d yet to get the better of Miss Darovitz, but that never stopped him trying. Of course, she was always ready. Maybe she even planned her class visits to

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interesting places to tempt his mischief-making. Her pleasure from catching him out at his own games was obvious for all to see. Perhaps that was why she arranged the visit to the Museum of Mysteries across the city for a project on ‘The Unexplained’. It would offer a chance to get the better of Harrison one more time.

‘Although one of the biggest mysteries known to humankind,’ she announced to the class, ‘is whether Harrison Garcia will ever stop talking for even a millisecond, I would like you all to listen up so that you all know what I expect from you when we visit The Museum of Mysteries.’

Everyone sat very still, with bated breath and eagerly awaiting the arrangements. Apart from Harrison, who was about to butt in. ‘I’ve already done some research, Miss Darovitz. They have a whole room about the Bermuda Triangle and another about mysterious disappearances – like when people just vanish and are never seen again.’



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‘Why do you think I’ve arranged this outing, Harrison? I’m hoping you’ll get some tips.’

Everyone nodded and laughed. ‘Actually,’ he went on without pausing for breath and oblivious to the stifled yawns all around him, ‘there are often simple explanations as to why someone might disappear without trace. It doesn’t always end in murder, you know.’

‘I think the chances are quite high that it will today.’ More laughs. Even Harrison had to smile, despite being disappointed not to be asked to continue his monologue.

Miss Darovitz waited for quiet before adding firmly, ‘As always, I want you all to enjoy the experience but also to learn about interesting things from the displays, movies, interactive games and even the crime scene simulator. That’s where you get to look for clues and to solve a murder mystery.’

Harrison was almost squealing with excitement,

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waving his arm in the air and desperate to speak.

‘Not now, Harrison. I have already visited the museum and arranged with the staff where the tour will begin and how we will organise you all. I’m sure many of you will be interested in the room called Cryptozoology, but I expect some of you wonder what that means.’

Harrison was unable to contain himself. His hand shot up and he blurted out, ‘That’s creatures that we’re not sure really exist because scientists don’t yet have any reliable evidence.’

‘Yes, a bit like a Harrison who doesn’t call out. Does he really exist, I wonder? Can anyone, apart from Harrison, think of any examples of mysterious creatures?’

Although Harrison was almost jumping out of his seat in his desperation to reveal his knowledge, Ella was invited to answer. ‘Unicorns, dragons and mermaids?’

Harrison took over in an instant. ‘No, they’re



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mythical creatures. We're talking about actual beasts out there that people report seeing now and again – like Chessie, the monster like an aquatic dinosaur seen swimming in Chesapeake Bay, and the Jersey Devil or the Yeti.'

The reaction from the class was mixed. Some rolled their eyes at another of Harrison's bursts of information, while others laughed at yet another mention of his pet subjects. When it came to the Yeti, he sounded like a world expert who'd swallowed an encyclopaedia.

Ella giggled, 'Don't get him started on the Yeti – we'll be here all day!'

'Then why don't we give Harrison a challenge?' Miss Darovitz smiled. 'Is it possible to limit to just one minute what you want to tell us about the Yeti, your specialist subject?'

He started even before the stopwatch had a chance to begin. 'The Yeti, sometimes called the Abominable Snowman, is a mysterious creature

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often reported to live in the mountains of Asia, particularly in the Himalayas. Walking upright on two legs, it sometimes leaves tracks in snow in remote areas. Yeti actually means "ape man", as it is meant to be as big as a man and covered in black or brown hair. Over many years, local people have reported seeing a Yeti or found the remains of yaks that it may have attacked. Many expeditions have tried to find a Yeti or photograph one close-up, but so far the remote mountain regions of Russia, China and Nepal continue to hide their Yeti secrets. However, a number of zoologists believe it does exist and when I grow up, it is my ambition to lead an expedition of my own, meet a Yeti face to face and maybe even give one a high-five. Then the mystery will be over forever.'

Miss Darovitz rang a bell to show the minute was up, much to everyone's relief. 'Thank you, Harrison. Let's hope your ambition is



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met very soon, but now calm down before you spontaneously combust. And if you don't know what that means, just wait till we get to the Museum of Mysteries.'

'I know all about spontaneous combustion, Miss Darovitz. It's when people catch fire and all that's left is a pile of ash. I saw a documentary about it. Just imagine disappearing in a puff of smoke – but it only happens in unusual circumstances and to certain types of people.'

'Thank you, Harrison. Probably to bright little sparks who overheat from excitement. I'll bring a bucket of water to the museum, just in case of emergency.'

By the time they were lining up on the sweeping steps of the great museum, everyone had heard something about the Bermuda Triangle from Harrison's continuous commentary during their walk through the park. 'No one really knows how many ships and planes have disappeared

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after entering the area of sea between Florida, Barbados and Bermuda.'

After a detailed description of the dreaded 'Flight 19' when five planes and 14 men disappeared in 1945, Harrison looked very satisfied with himself as they climbed the museum steps. 'You will notice I am wearing my Bermuda shorts especially for the occasion, Miss Darovitz.'

'I just hope they don't mysteriously disappear or combust, or we're all in for a shock,' she said dryly, much to everyone's amusement. Harrison giggled, adjusted his rucksack and followed the class as they entered the foyer through impressive revolving doors. Standing under a scary banner showing a shadowy Jack the Ripper pointing to the 'Murder Mysteries' room, a grumpy-looking woman in a uniform snapped, 'Keep in line while I count you. We have to keep accurate records in case someone gets kidnapped. It often happens here.'



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reptile but not technically a dinosaur. As a plesiosaur could reach 13 metres long with its stretchy neck, everyone thought that was more likely – even though Tomas pointed out that plesiosaurs died out millions of years ago.

Macey shrugged, ‘So what? This one didn’t. Nessie the Plessie.’

The angry sky and menacing loch didn’t appear promising as they stood at the water’s edge.

‘We’d better get sketching before the mist thickens,’ Mrs Milligan suggested. ‘I’ll take a few pictures on my phone to use back at school. Get your waterproofs at the ready just in case and I’ll call the coach driver to come and collect us.’ She took photos in all directions and then stopped to watch one of the cruise boats chugging up to a jetty to moor across the hazy water. Already the hills were lost in grey cloud that sank lower and lower and filled the valley around them.

‘Aren’t you scared, Miss?’ Macey asked.

## MYSTERY STORIES

‘Not at all Macey. You know me – never flustered, never in a flap. Relaxed is my middle name. I never see problems, I see opportunities. Now, what do you think of this nice picture of the loch. Very atmospheric, I’d say.’

Macey looked at the phone closely. ‘What’s that?’ She pointed to a black mark in the middle of the picture. As Mrs Milligan enlarged it to look more closely, her eyes widened. ‘It can’t be! It looks like two humps sticking up from the water and that dark shape looks just like a head. I don’t believe it!’ She looked out over the water to where she’d pointed the lens. But by now, nothing was visible, not even the far shore of the loch.

The muddy-brown mist was closing in, creeping like deadly poisonous smoke, choking all colour and sliding silently over the black water. It drifted, swirled and slithered, swallowing and smothering everything in its path. Hills, trees,



## SHIVERS

rocks and castle ruins were devoured in minutes as the dense cloud pressed down, suffocating the whole landscape and sucking out the light.

‘I’m getting scared, Miss. It’s gone all spooky and creepy.’

‘Just relax, Macey. Everything’s fine. It’s only fog. Although we can’t see anything, we’re all here together by the beautifully calm and peaceful water.’

Suddenly, from somewhere nearby through the mist on the loch, there rose a rumble.

Like a steamy cauldron, the peaty loch just beyond their feet bubbled and fizzed. Its surface wrinkled and rippled as something broke the surface with a fearsome hiss. Plunging splashes churned the water into a seething, boiling commotion. Waves rolled outwards and tumbled over the shore, soaking everyone’s feet, causing terrified squeals. Somewhere close by, rising from the watery depths and stirring the fog

## MYSTERY STORIES

into whirling wisps, a throaty growl echoed out across the loch and thundered around the valley.

‘Just relax, everyone,’ Mrs Milligan said as calmly as she could, to quell the whimpers around her. ‘It’s only the *Jacobite Queen* cruise boat chugging past. I took a picture of it earlier before the fog came down. Its propellers make a bit of a splash, that’s all. Anyway, let’s stroll merrily back to Nessieland for hot drinks and biscuits until the coach arrives.’

Once back in the warm and dry, everyone else began to relax as well. Mrs Milligan cheerily approached the man with the beard who’d given the talk earlier. ‘What do you think this is on my phone?’

His eyebrows raised as he stared at the photograph. ‘Quite possibly you’ve seen her. I reckon that’s Nessie – you’ve captured the Loch Ness Monster!’

Macey was quick to answer. ‘I think we heard



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her, too – but Miss said we should relax as it was only the cruise boat chugging and making waves.’

He frowned and looked at his watch. ‘Not now. Not in the fog it wasn’t. Boats don’t sail in bad weather. They’ve all been moored for the past hour. No boats were out on the loch when you heard that noise.’ He looked very serious, lowered his voice and added, ‘The only one brave enough to venture into those dark and misty waters would be the very monster itself.’

Mrs Milligan could only gulp and stare. Apart from that, she still seemed fairly relaxed. So relaxed, she didn’t stir. That’s because she’d just fainted with a terrified gasp – face down in the man’s porridge.

## MYSTERY STORIES



## THE GHOST SHIP

I was only 12 at the time. It was my first voyage as cabin boy on the ship *Dei Gratia* in 1872. In fact, it was me who first spotted flapping sails in the distance and reported the drifting vessel to Captain Morehouse. Little did we know what we were about to find.



## SHIVERS

In case you are wondering, Dei Gratia is Latin for 'by the grace of God'. She became a well-known name, all because I told the captain what I'd seen that chilly December day.

There was a fair wind and the sea was choppy, although I'd known far worse. I was still finding my sea legs and was horribly sick when we first set sail in heavy seas. I always dreaded being told to climb the main mast to deliver a message to the lookout in the crow's nest. Up there you feel the swell far worse and have to cling on tight. Our ship had two masts, so it was called a brigantine. She was built in Canada only the year before, so we were both getting used to crossing the Atlantic. We were apparently 400 miles east of the Azores, some 500 miles from the coast of Portugal. The lookout pointed over to the horizon, but I happened to glance further to my left and saw a tiny speck in the far distance.

'Have you spotted that ship over there?' I

## MYSTERY STORIES

asked. The lookout held a telescope to his eye.

'That's mighty odd,' he muttered. 'She seems to be out of sorts, if you ask me. Go tell the captain.'

Captain Morehouse was concerned and he ordered us to change course. He steered us towards the ship, keeping a close eye on her strange zigzagging through the waves.

'She's going all over the place. Whoever's at the helm must have been on the rum all night.'

The closer we got to the 'drunken ship', as the captain called her, the more alarmed he became. He called to Mr Deveau, the first mate: 'That ship is definitely adrift. There's nothing guiding her and she's at risk of keeling over if no one sets her a proper course. Lower the rowing boat and investigate. Take the second mate and the boy and tell me what you find.'

I gingerly climbed down into the boat and we rowed across to the swaying ship, drawing up alongside. John Wright, the second mate,



## SHIVERS

told me she was also a brigantine, an American merchant ship, and that her name was clearly painted on her stern: *Mary Celeste*.

We all shouted our approach, but no reply came. It was strangely silent apart from the ghostly flapping of the sails.

'Ahoy there – who's on deck? We're coming aboard.' We scrambled up her port side and trod the deserted deck. With no one at the helm, the wheel spun one way then the other with every wave that struck.

The sails were partly set, with some missing and torn. Much of the rigging was dangling, swaying over the deck, with ropes hanging loosely over the sides. The main hatch cover to below deck was secure, but two other hatches were wide open, their covers left strewn beside them. I was told to stay at the helm and hold the wheel steady while the two men entered the main hatch. It was eerily quiet standing there

## MYSTERY STORIES

all alone in the wind and the spray, the timbers creaking and the ropes slapping against the masts. I noticed the lifeboat was missing and the glass on the ship's compass was smashed.

Down in the hold, the men saw water sloshing around – about three feet deep. The cargo of 1,700 barrels of industrial alcohol was undisturbed. The last entry in the ship's log was nine days before, on 25th November at 8 am. Her position was given at over 400 miles from where we then were. The list of people who had been on board showed there were seven crew, as well as the American captain Benjamin Briggs, his wife Sarah, and their two-year-old daughter, Sophie. *Mary Celeste* had set sail from New York on 7th November, bound for Genoa in Italy. She had battled heavy weather for two weeks before finally reaching the Azores.

Mr Deveau said the cabins below deck were damp and the captain's possessions were



## SHIVERS

scattered over his bed – but papers and his navigational instruments were missing. In the galley, everything was tidy, with a six-month supply of food and water safely stowed. There was no sign of a struggle, violence or of fire anywhere. It seemed as if everyone on board had simply abandoned ship in an orderly way and rowed off in the lifeboat. But why?

We were absolutely mystified. None of us could imagine what might have happened.

We rowed back to our own ship to report our findings to Captain Morehouse, who decided to sail *Mary Celeste* to port 800 miles away. Four of us went back on board to sail her, while the *Dei Gratia* led the way.

The weather was fairly calm for most of the voyage, although we were delayed in fog, so arrived in Gibraltar a day after Captain Morehouse. I spent ten days on that haunted ship, creaking with secrets.

## MYSTERY STORIES

When we arrived, some people thought we must have killed the crew onboard that ship so we could claim the salvage money. Although we did get paid, I swore to everyone we were guilty of no such crime. That would never happen.

In time, all kinds of other rumours were told about the *Mary Celeste*. None of them made sense. Captain Briggs had been an experienced sailor and he was used to sailing in all conditions. Stories of pirates attacking the ship were told – but nothing had been stolen and there were no signs of attack anywhere. I was convinced there had been no fighting onboard. If danger had struck, like bad weather, illness or even some kind of sea monster, why ever would everyone abandon ship, without a mention in the log and no sign of panic left behind? There seemed no reason whatsoever why all ten people would have disappeared at once, leaving a perfectly good ship and its expensive cargo to the ravages of the



## SHIVERS

angry ocean. Those ten people and the lifeboat were never found. The disappearance of the *Mary Celeste* will remain one of the great mysteries of the sea. Even today, many years later, as I write this at the age of 65, I cannot forget the chilling feeling of being on that doomed ship as a boy. It's as if her shivering ghosts entered my very bones. In fact, her final fate struck just three years later when she was wrecked on a reef – sinking with all her dark secrets, to be lost forever beneath the all-knowing waves.



## MYSTERY STORIES



## SHARK MURDER MYSTERY

April 1935

To The Sydney Police  
Department, Australia

They say there's no such thing as the perfect murder. That's because murderers always leave clues behind

## SHIVERS

somewhere. Clues that can lead to an arrest. Let me tell you otherwise.

I have just committed the perfect murder. You will never find the body and never know what happened. I will walk free for the rest of my life and you'll never know who I am.

I am only telling you this to get my own back. Some of your officers think they're so clever and better than me. Well, they're so wrong.

I simply wanted to tell you I've beaten you all and that gives me the greatest pleasure. I've murdered someone who tried to blackmail me and I'm going to get away with it. Just how great is the Australian Police Force after all?

## MYSTERY STORIES

You're never going to solve this crime because I'm just too smart for you.

Yours smugly,  
A Successful Murderer  
(never to be arrested!)

**W**elcome everyone to our fantastic new exhibit. Just a few days ago our tiger shark was swimming in the ocean, but now you can watch this great predator of the deep in a feeding frenzy right here. One of the most dangerous sharks off our coast, tiger sharks don't just have stripes like a tiger, they have tiger ferocity, too. Don't get too close – it bites!

It was a big day out for families on the Coogee beaches near Sydney, Australia. Being Anzac Day, the public holiday held on 25th April, visitors



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flocked to the coast. The great new attraction at the aquarium was a deadly 5-metre-long tiger shark swimming safely behind toughened glass. Crowds watched in awe as the fearsome predator circled its tank in the build-up to feeding time. Posing glamorously above the tank behind a safety rail, two assistants held up buckets of fish. But before the dramatic countdown to dinner began, the shark suddenly thrashed around, twisting and turning, as if distressed. People gasped as it rolled over, retched and coughed up a disgusting cloud of sick. Those at the front were horrified to see what was spat out from the shark's jaws and slowly sank to the bottom of the aquarium – a human arm.

Staff quickly moved the crowds on and screened off the shark tank. A diver then had the risky job of retrieving the arm for the police to examine. It was all that remained of the poor victim of a shark attack – or so it seemed at first.

## MYSTERY STORIES

When the police arrived, they were convinced 'the shark-arm incident' was a prank – either by the staff themselves or by local medical students who'd stolen an arm from the mortuary. As no one had reported any shark attacks lately, it all seemed like a big publicity stunt. But this was not a joke. When the arm was examined properly, a rope was found tied around the wrist. More sinister was the verdict that the arm hadn't been bitten off by the shark at all. It had been cut off with a blunt knife after death. The victim, it seemed, had been murdered. Had the body been cut up and dumped at sea? Tiger sharks are well known for swallowing whole anything they find lying around in the ocean. So the shark in the aquarium had probably gulped down the arm from the seabed just hours before it was captured. Then, after one big fit of indigestion, it brought up its gruesome lunch in full view of the public's gaze.



## SHIVERS

The police had a big mystery to solve. How could they find out whose arm it was? By the 1930s, the science of fingerprints was developing, so police scientists set about taking prints from the dead fingers and trying to match them against anyone on their records. Before the age of computers, this had to be done by many officers searching through thousands of paper records. Meanwhile, there was one important clue. The arm was a man's left arm, with a distinct tattoo on the shoulder of two boxers fighting. The police printed pictures of it in newspapers to see if anyone recognised it. Sure enough, Mrs Smith called to say the arm belonged to her husband who had mysteriously disappeared recently. He was 40-year-old James Smith, a former boxer and builder. The fingerprints also matched his police record, as he had previously been arrested for minor crimes. But now the police had another mystery. Who killed James Smith?

## MYSTERY STORIES

Mrs Smith told police, 'The last I saw of James was on Monday morning, the 8th of April. He was going out fishing with a friend, although he didn't say who that was. When he didn't come home that night I wasn't too concerned at first. After another day or so, I began to get worried. He was due back at work at the boatbuilding yard. One night I had a mysterious phone call from a man I didn't know. He said, "Don't worry, Jimmy will be home in three days' time." But Jimmy never made it home.'

She gave the police the names of her husband's friends and contacts. Some of them said they had seen him with a man called Patrick Brady on 8th April, at a hotel bar in Cronulla nearby. The police knew Brady had been involved in forgery and smuggling so they went to question him. Interestingly, he rented a cottage in Cronulla so they searched it for clues. Nothing – except a witness said a big trunk that was usually in



## SHIVERS

a bedroom was missing. Just right for hiding a body inside and rowing it out to sea?

Patrick Brady seemed to be lying. He said he hadn't been in Cronulla on 8th April. The police arrested him, despite his angry protests. 'You can't prove anything!'



Just days later, a speedboat sped out of control in Sydney Harbour. The police gave chase and when they finally caught the driver, he turned out to be a boatbuilder called Reginald Holmes, none other than James Smith's boss. He was in a confused state, having just been attacked and shot by unknown attackers. Then came an interesting confession. A few days before, Patrick Brady had admitted to him he'd killed James Smith. It was because Smith had threatened to

## MYSTERY STORIES

tell the police of Brady's crimes unless he paid up – Smith was attempting to blackmail him. The police promptly charged Brady with murder but before Holmes could testify in court, he was found shot dead. Someone had wanted him silenced. One of Brady's gang, perhaps?

So now the evidence against Patrick Brady wasn't enough to convict him for the murder of James Smith. Without modern forensic science, nothing could prove Brady was guilty of the crime. Not to be outdone, the police arrested him again for forgery, so Brady ended up in prison after all. How he must have cursed his luck – and the shark. If that tiger shark hadn't swallowed an arm, been caught and coughed it up in public, Patrick Brady would have got away with all his crimes. Who could have guessed the chances of that happening?

Even so, in the end, the official outcome of James Smith's murder remained 'unsolved'.

## SHIVERS

September 1935

Dear Patrick Brady,

They say there's no such thing as the perfect murder. Correct.

So you think you've got away with murder, eh? Let's face it, prison is still prison! So it seems you're not so smart after all. Maybe, as you spend time behind bars, you might begin to realise that we're much smarter than you'll ever be. Once that shark coughed up, things began to look very fishy indeed!

With love from the Sydney Police

P.S. Warning: sharks can be 'ARMFUL to life and limb!

## MYSTERY STORIES



## NEVER SAY NEVER

**M**y great-grandma is amazing. She's nearly ninety now, but her memory is as sharp as a pin. Ever since I can remember, she's told fantastic stories. What's more, they all really happened because she was actually there when some incredible mysteries unfolded. I suppose living so long in many



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different places, she's happened to come across strange events. It's just as well I've recorded her tales. There's nothing quite like hearing a story from someone who was there at the time...



As a girl, I lived in Colorado. I guess you could call it the sort of town you see in Wild West cowboy movies. Most folks lived by scratching a living out of the land. We had a few cows and chickens on a small plot. Our neighbours were the Olsens, who were also farmers until they hit the jackpot. Something happened one day that changed their lives and put our town on the map. It's a mystery to me how all that happened. After all, how can anyone live without a head? Impossible as it sounds, never say never.

I sometimes went round to see Lloyd and Clara Olsen. One day in 1945, Mr Olsen (as

## MYSTERY STORIES

I called him) asked me if I'd like to see one of his roosters. I remember I just said, 'Ain't one rooster just like any other? I've seen hundreds of them.'

'Not like mine,' he chuckled. Then he said, 'Last evening Clara asked me to get a rooster for her to make chicken stew. I went up the yard with my axe and picked a good plump rooster for the chop. I swung the axe, off came its head and I waited for our supper to stop flapping. The thing is, that bird just didn't stop. I went indoors to wait and deal with it later but when I returned to collect supper, I reached down and flap flap flap! The only thing to do was to come back the next day when that headless chicken had finally stopped flapping. We went without stew that night. Next morning, that bird was still perched there, alive and headless. So, I set about giving the rooster breakfast. Well, why not? I fed it with grain crushed in milk with an eye-dropper down



## SHIVERS

its neck. Now do you want to see my rooster?"

'Yes sir,' I said. 'You bet.'

Mrs Olsen showed me how she cleared the chicken's throat with a syringe when it spluttered or choked, then fed it with porridge in a dropper. She said they were calling the bird 'Miracle Mike, the Wonder Chicken', and no longer wanted to eat him in a stew but to get rich from owning a living headless chicken. Believe it or not, news of Miracle Mike travelled far beyond our town. After our local newspaper printed a story about him, it took less than a month for a man called Hope Wade to show up. He ran sideshows at fairs and he saw a way to make a quick buck by putting that chicken in a freak show. He said people would pay 10 cents to see Miracle Mike.

All this time, I kept asking everyone to explain to me the mystery of how anything could live without a head – in particular, without a brain. Was the answer a no-brainer? The Olsens were

## MYSTERY STORIES

also mystified, so they took their now-famous chicken to a university in Salt Lake City where scientists made a careful study. They said the bird's brainstem, which is like a tube in its neck, was still working and that it was able to control the most important functions of a chicken's body. A freak blood clot had stopped the chicken from bleeding to death.

When the story of Miracle Mike appeared in *Life Magazine*, he became so famous that he went on tour and everyone flocked to see him. My Ma said he earned the Olsens about \$4,500 per month! That was unheard of back then.

I remember being so upset when I heard the sad news. Miracle Mike was on show in Arizona when the Olsens booked into a motel in Phoenix. On the night of March 17th, 1947, they were woken by the sound of their beloved chicken choking.

'Honey, where's that syringe to unclog Mike's throat?'



## SHIVERS

'I dunno, dear – it might be in my purse in the automobile. I'm sure I had it here some place.'

But it was already too late. While they tried to find something to clear Mike's airway, their famous fowl dropped from his perch and died. The show was finally over. Can you believe Mike had survived for an astonishing year and a half without a head? How we all missed him. Even today, the town remembers Miracle Mike with a metal sculpture of his headless body. They now host a Headless Chicken Carnival each year in his honour. As far as I'm concerned, all that fuss, as well as a creature surviving so long without a head, is one of those great mysteries. Just like Mike, I'll never get my head around it!



When I grew up and married, we moved north west to live in Oregon. It was there, when I was forty years old, that I was a witness to another

## MYSTERY STORIES

bizarre and mysterious event that baffled the world. Little did I know when I got on a plane in Portland that I'd be part of an unsolved crime.

It was the day before Thanksgiving in 1971 and I was flying to a family gathering in Seattle. It was no more than an hour's flight and not long after take-off, I noticed a man in the seat in front give the flight attendant a note. I wondered if he couldn't speak or couldn't communicate in English but when I saw the look on the attendant's face on reading that note, I knew something scary was kicking off. It was when he opened his briefcase to show wires, a battery and red sticks inside that some of us saw he had a bomb. You can imagine the panic from people sitting close by. We didn't know it then, but he was demanding parachutes and \$200,000 in \$20 bills.

I must have been asked to describe that man so many times. All I can say was that he was just a normal-looking guy – not much older than me, I



## SHIVERS

guess. He wore a suit and a tie, had dark glasses and medium-length brownish hair. That's it – that's all there was to him. Apparently, he had signed in at the airport as D. B. Cooper, but that was just a made-up name.

Thankfully, the plane landed smoothly and the stewards ushered us all off in a hurry, while that man remained seated. It was only later that we read the story and realised that we were witnesses to one of the most mysterious robberies ever.

Once all the passengers were off that plane, the man hijacked it. As soon as he got his money and parachutes, he forced two pilots, a flight engineer and a flight attendant to stay on the plane. He ordered them to take off and fly to Mexico City. In the safety of the airport lounge, I watched that plane take off and disappear into the clouds. According to reports, the man tied all the bank notes to his body and strapped on

## MYSTERY STORIES

a parachute. Shortly into the flight, he opened the plane door, lowered the rear steps and jumped from almost three kilometres high. They say the windchill up there would be minus 57 Celsius – enough to kill you in normal clothes. But the thing is, both the man and the money disappeared. The guy known as Mr Cooper from Flight 305 was never seen again.

I've often wondered about that man. Was he a trained parachutist or just a crank? Did he survive and live to spend all that money, or did he fall to his death? After all, he would have fallen into heavily wooded and rugged country. Of course, there were massive searches and years of dead-end leads. Then, in 1980, a boy found a decaying package containing \$5,800 buried along the Columbia River. The serial numbers on those \$20 bills matched those of the ransom money. Yet, after even more searches, nothing more was ever discovered. The FBI kept the case



## SHIVERS

open for forty-five years until they finally closed it as UNSOLVED in 2016. That mystery of the man known only as 'D.B. Cooper' – who I saw – remains one of the eeriest unsolved crimes in American history. I guess it may never be solved. But like I always say, never say never.



Living in Oregon and at one time enjoying hiking out there in the great outdoors, I was bound to come across folks who'd met Sasquatch. That's Bigfoot to most Americans – the mythical ape-man we're often told doesn't exist.

Around a third of all Bigfoot sightings are reported in the state of Oregon, so that's thousands. I'm now one of the people who's spotted it, even though we're often told it doesn't exist.

It must be about twenty years ago now, when

## MYSTERY STORIES

my husband and I were spending a weekend in the wilderness – a remote hilly area with miles of thick forest. Our log cabin was by a lake, which we wanted for a peaceful time of fishing and boating. With the Blue Mountains nearby, we hoped to see a few eagles or elk but I was reassured wolves, bears and cougars would leave us alone. This was wild country but I didn't think for a moment that Bigfoot would show up at our camp.

Our cabin had a log burner, so when I awoke early one morning just as it was getting light, I thought I'd make myself useful by going outside to gather some wood. As I bent down to fill a large basket with branches, I saw a family of wild hogs foraging in the undergrowth. There was one adult and about six hoglets almost half-grown. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a huge hairy creature on two legs crashed through the trees. At first I thought it was a black bear and

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feared it was coming to attack me, but I soon realised it wasn't a bear at all. I would describe it as about three metres tall, covered in dark hair and with an unpleasant, ape-like face. It moved with plodding, ungainly strides and stumbled in the mud of the creek. By now the hogs were squealing and running off, but that creature lumbered after them, reached out with a long arm and grabbed one of the hogs. Making loud whooping noises, the creature stared at me, before growling and suddenly turning to shamble off up a slope into the forest. The poor hog gave a last bloodcurdling screech before everything went deathly quiet. I couldn't believe what I'd just seen and I made my way over to where the Sasquatch had appeared – for that's what I was sure it must have been. I was struck by two things: the enormous footprints in the mud and a strong, lingering unpleasant smell, like nothing I've ever known.

## MYSTERY STORIES

Although I was completely startled, I didn't panic as the Sasquatch didn't seem to be a threat to me. I went back indoors with my basket of wood and said, 'Honey, you'll never guess – I've just met a Bigfoot. Either that or a hefty man in a scary gorilla suit!'

I later reported what I had seen and a bunch of people came in a truck to investigate. They took plaster casts from those footprints, but they never caught sight of the creature. All the same, that night I slept with a heavy wooden club by my pillow – just in case.

When my great-grandma finished speaking into the microphone, she gave me a quick wink. 'It's been an interesting life,' she said with a wicked smile, 'and I can't wait for the next big surprise!'





## MYSTERY FACTS

Did you know...

1. During an attempt to fly around the world in 1937, American aviator Amelia Earhart disappeared somewhere over the Pacific Ocean. The wreckage of her aircraft was never found, and her disappearance remains one of the big unsolved mysteries of the 20th century. Before her disappearance, Amelia Earhart was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.
2. The search to find the Yeti can be traced back to the time of Alexander the Great, who in 326 BC set out to conquer the Indus Valley and demanded to see a Yeti for himself. Local people were unable to help. The name 'Abominable



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Snowman' wasn't used until the 1920s. In the 1950s the Nepali government cashed in on Yeti myths by issuing Yeti-hunting licences priced at £400 per Yeti. So far no one has succeeded in capturing a Yeti, dead or alive.

**3.** Mystery ape-men are reported from every continent except Antarctica. They include the Sasquatch of North America, the Yowie in Australia, the Yeren of China, the Almas of Russia and the Mapinguari of Brazil.

**4.** Belief in guardian angels can be traced throughout history, in many cultures. Surveys in the USA show that over half of all adults believe that they have been protected by a guardian angel during their life. In 2007, a poll suggested 68% of Americans believe that 'angels and demons are active in the world' and 20% said they had had an encounter with

## MYSTERY STORIES

an angel or a devil. Surveys in Britain suggest about a third of people believe they have a guardian angel, while one in 10 people claim they have had contact with one. A poll showed that 39% of women and 26% of men believe in guardian angels.

**5.** Alien Big Cats (ABCs) are animals such as panthers and leopards which have been reported in areas far from their natural habitats. Sightings, tracks and remains of prey have been reported in countries such as Britain and across Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. In British folklore, the Beast of Bodmin Moor is a wild panther-like cat living in the remote moorland of Cornwall. Sightings of ABCs are often reported in rural areas, as well as in suburbs outside some towns.





6. The Loch Ness Monster has long been of interest to scientists. In 1987 Operation Deepscan was the largest scientific search for 'Nessie' so far. After three days of scouring the deep waters with the latest sonar equipment, the biggest search for the monster ended with still more questions. A fleet of 24 boats spread out over Loch Ness to measure underwater signals. At one part of the lake, the sonar apparatus detected three large objects at depths of between 100–200 metres. A researcher said these could be living creatures 'larger than a shark but smaller than a whale'. However, boats failed to pick up any more traces when they returned to the same part of the loch on following days. The mystery lives on!

7. Perhaps the *Mary Celeste* sailing ship was always jinxed? Originally named *Amazon*, she was given a new name after a series of



## SHIVERS

mishaps, including the sudden illness and death of her first captain and a collision with another ship in the English Channel. After she was famously found deserted, an investigation into whether the *Dei Gratia*'s crew had 'stolen' her for salvage money found no evidence of foul play. Even so, many rumours spread, with *Mary Celeste* sailing under different owners for 12 years before her last captain deliberately ran her aground in Haiti as an attempted insurance fraud. All her dark secrets sank with her.

8. Both the story of Miracle Mike, the Wonder Chicken and that of D. B. Cooper jumping from a passenger plane really did happen. Miracle Mike has websites that celebrate this 'fowl mystery'. For many years after the disappearance of D. B. Cooper on 24th November 1971, the FBI investigated this case that baffled America. Just what really

## MYSTERY STORIES

happened to the mystery man who hijacked a Boeing 747 plane, then jumped out of the plane with the loot, never to be heard from again? We will probably never know.

9. Bigfoot legends go back at least 3,000 years, and a Cherokee legend tells of such a mysterious creature with the power to read people's minds. Ever since, Bigfoot sightings have been reported in every US state except Hawaii. According to a 2007 survey, only 16% of Americans said that Bigfoot 'absolutely' or 'probably' exists. 44% responded 'probably not' and another 40% insisted it 'absolutely does not' exist. Interestingly, nearly half of Americans in another survey (45%) believe in ghosts, demons and aliens.

10. The most famous Bigfoot sighting is the creature filmed by Roger Patterson and Bob



## SHIVERS

Gimlin in the Bluff Creek region of northern California. Despite much investigation since that footage from 1967, it is still uncertain whether this was a hoax or a genuine sighting. Take a look at it online and decide for yourself – if you dare!

## MYSTERY STORIES

### GLOSSARY

**Bermuda Triangle** an area in the Atlantic Ocean between Bermuda, Puerto Rico and Florida where ships and planes have apparently disappeared mysteriously.

**Chupacabra** a creature of legend said to live in parts of the Americas, with the first sightings reported in Puerto Rico. The name comes from its reputation for drinking the blood of goats.

**Cryptozoology** the study of creatures, such as the Chupacabra, the existence of which has not been scientifically proved.

**Dire wolf** an extinct wolf that was widespread in North America up to about 12,000 years ago, having a larger body and a smaller brain than today's wolf.



## SHIVERS

# GLOSSARY

**Ghost ship** a ship with no living crew aboard; either a haunted vessel of folklore or a real derelict ship found adrift with its crew missing.

**Guardian angel** a spirit or being that is believed by some to protect and guide a particular person.

**Inexplicable** impossible to explain.

**Jack the Ripper** an unidentified murderer of great mystery who killed at least five women in London's East End in 1888.

**Jersey Devil** a legendary creature said to inhabit Southern New Jersey, USA – with the head of a goat, leathery bat-like wings, horns, small arms with clawed hands, cloven hooves, a forked tail and a 'blood-curdling scream'.

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# GLOSSARY

**Spontaneous combustion** the burning of a living body without an apparent external source of heat.

**UFO** any 'unidentified flying object' seen in the sky or landing on Earth, sometimes believed to be from another planet.

**Yeti** an ape-like creature taller than an average human, similar to the legendary Bigfoot, and said to live in parts of the Himalayas.

