UNGODLY THINGS

It was afternoon towards the end of winter. Daphne and Christie were walking amidst the moss-covered tombstones in that old Scottish graveyard they often liked to visit. The sun had set, and a dark grey sky covered the earth like a shroud. Though it was hard to tell when the sun was setting those days; so dark and cloudy that the weather was. The outline of the bare trees around them had the grey sky for a canvas with the ravens perching silently upon the twigs. On their right, the dreary walls of the mediaeval castle were looking over the place. Not a soul around to be seen.

The girls went up the little hill in the middle of the graveyard that offered a splendid view of the countryside on one side, and of the graveyard and the castle on the other. Sitting on their favourite bench, they talked about books, religion, witchcraft... But it was an unfortunate characteristic of that hilltop that no matter how warmly dressed one was, the cold was all-pervading. So, they decided to head back home.

Even as they stood up, a mist started spreading so quickly that they soon found themselves on an island surrounded by a sea of vapour. Only the top of the tallest tombs broke through it; here an angel’s statue appeared floating, there a poet’s, or a priest’s. They both wondered at this, but it was getting darker. They had to leave. Christie had to use her phone’s flash and carefully lead the way down the slippery hill. As Daphne was about to follow, she caught a movement with the corner of her eye. She turned left towards the graveyard and, indeed, there was a gap in the mist as if something had stirred there. She told Christie, who said that it was probably a raven - though they had not heard any fluttering.

They were now both in the misty sea, wading slowly through it. Only the crispy sound of the hoar-frosted grass beneath their feet could be heard. The atmosphere became suddenly even chillier, though not because of the weather, and the hair on the back of their necks was standing up now. They went to the little gate across the hill, as it was the shortest route to a small path outside the graveyard. But they found it locked! So strange, they thought. Was that gate ever closed all these times they came here? Feeling a bit agitated, they started heading towards the church’s gate, when they heard whispers around them. They froze. A strong feeling that they were being watched came upon them.
“Did you hear that?” asked Daphne in a low voice.


And they ran towards the church. And in her haste, Christie tripped over a little tombstone and fell on the ground. The current of her fall pushed the mist away, so when she raised her head, she could see the grave right in front of her. To her horror, it was open. An old man’s mummy-like head was protruding from the muddy hole. His mouth was wide open with his teeth exposed and his lifeless grey eyes were staring at her sideways. An overwhelming sensation of unholiness made her sick to her stomach. “My God...” she said, and the head turned with a loud crack towards her. She jumped up and ran towards Daphne, who was now rushing back to her.

“Run! A head! I saw a head!” Christie shrieked.

As they were standing there, they heard deep voices of men chanting inside the church. They called out for help and the chanting stopped abruptly. Then, the whispers started again. They looked in terror back at the graveyard where something astounding happened. The previously smooth misty surface was now taking shapes – human shapes! Moaning, whispering, groaning, lamenting voices filled the air. They ran to the main church gate, but it was also locked. And what is more, there were such thick weeds covering the rails that they could not even see the street beyond.

They had given up all hope, when they heard a male voice on their left calling them: “Quick – come here!” They saw a tall man’s figure standing close to the opening of a ruined building that led to the street. They followed him down the steps, where they could see the street and the streetlamps, but there was mist even there. They turned to see the man and their terror was renewed. Here, there was standing a being that though it looked human, clearly wasn’t. He had a very pale withered face and long dark hair; his piercing eyes were a glowing yellow and the whites, black. He looked tortured, broken. But there was something unthreatening and comforting in his presence. There was no malice in his eyes.

“Don’t be afraid, I mean no harm,” he said in a low voice. “Your souls are in great peril here; you mustn’t linger in places where your circle has ended.”

“What? What are you talking about? What’s happening?” asked Daphne.

“No time to explain. Something dreadful will happen here tonight.”

“The gates are locked – we can’t leave!” said Christie.
“Yes... They don’t want you to leave. As they didn’t want me to leave,” he responded in a grave tone. He quickly moved towards the gate and tapped the locks, which opened at his touch. At this, an angry chorus of voices filled the air, turning their blood cold. The ground shook and a sulphurous odour surrounded them. Alarmed, he pushed them through the gates.

They looked back and they could faintly see his pale face and his glowing eyes through the rails, wondering why he didn’t follow. The gate closed abruptly, and he flew backwards as if a strong current of air had pushed him back.