

# ***THE LADY IN THE MIRROR***

Elif Akbal & Hal Ames



Jannetta, Lydia, and Corrine sat huddled together at their usual lunch table talking about Halloween.

Lydia spoke up first. “Why don’t we have a party, and we can have a costume contest to see who has the best.”

Corrine eagerly chimed in, “*AND* we can have lots of food, games, and music.”

The girls laughed and exchanged enthusiastic nods.

But then Jannetta had a thought that made the other two freeze in their tracks. She suggested hosting the party in the old McCormick house, situated on the edge of town.

Corrine and Lydia gasped simultaneously.

Panicking at the mere thought of holding a celebration there, both Corrine and Lydia screamed, “Don’t you know that it’s HAUNTED!”

Lydia continued, “Why do we have to have a party in a haunted house? That’s just TOO scary!”

Jannetta just laughed, “There are no such things as ghosts. It’s just a myth that has never been proven, right?”

The two girls just looked at each other.

Lydia asked, “Does a myth have to be proven? Isn’t it better to just leave it alone?”

Jannetta answered, “What better way to disprove the myth than by having a party there? Then everyone will know the stories are not true.”

After talking for the rest of the lunch period, the three girls finally agreed to have the party at the old house, but the location would have to be a secret until the invitations were sent out.

Over the next few days, the girls made their plans for the party during lunch and after school. Even though they were excited about the idea, Lydia and Corrine were still very nervous. Jannetta kept telling

them it would be okay.

Then she added, "I think we need to tell our parents that the party is going to be at someone else's house."

Lydia agreed, "My parents are going to a movie that night, so you can tell your parents the party will be at my house. My older sister will be there, and my parents trust her. She won't say anything."

Corrine volunteered, "I will bring the food and the drinks."

"I'll be responsible for the decorations. My parents had a party last year and we have two boxes of decorations I can bring," Lydia offered.

Jannetta said, "Cool, I will make the invitations out of the colored paper I got for Christmas last year."

They continued to make the arrangements for the party.

Jennetta enthusiastically said, "It's settled then. We will have the party at the haunted house, *and* it will be on Halloween! It can't get better than that."

This shocked the two girls.

Corrine said, surprised, "I thought it was going to be on Friday, not Saturday. How are we going to be able to trick-or-treat if we are at a party?"

"You can eat your brother's candy. He always gets a lot more than he can eat. You know that," Jannetta answered.

Still, somewhat in shock, the three girls finally agreed to have the party on Halloween night, although not completely convinced it was the right thing to do.

"So, what do you plan to wear, Corrine?" asked Lydia.

"My mother bought me a lot of make-up and we have decided that I'm going to be a zombie," Corrine answered laughing. "I've always wanted to be a zombie."

Jannetta spoke up, "I was a vampiress last year, and my mom says I can use the same costume again, but I want to buy a mummy costume instead. I still have to talk to my mother about it. I'm not really sure what I'm going to be. I guess I'm going to keep it a secret."

"So, Lydia, what are you going to be?" Corrine asked.

"A witch," she answered.

"A witch? Haven't you been a witch for the last two years?" Jannetta asked.

"It's my thing. I change the costume a little every year. You'll need to guess what is different," Lydia smiled as she answered.

"We'll have to wait until the last minute to let our friends know where we are going. Let's put Lydia's address on the invitations, then when they get there, we'll walk over to the haunted house together,"

Corrine suggested.

They all agreed that this would be a good idea.

Friday, after school the three girls went to the haunted house to clean it up. It was scary for them at first. The door was falling off its hinges and the floor was full of dust and dirt.

“This is not going to be easy!” Corrine exclaimed. “This place is a bigger mess than I thought it would be.”

“Where should we start?” asked Jannetta.

“Let’s start in the living room,” suggested Lydia.

The girls got out the supplies they had brought with them and started the hard work of cleaning the room.

The place was a real mess. Nothing had been cleaned in many years. The furniture was old and looked like mice may have been living in them.

They worked until it was dark and they agreed to meet back at the house in the morning. They hoped it would be ready for the party that night.

Saturday morning the girls arrived, already tired from the work they had done the night before, but they had made progress.

When Lydia moved the couch to clean under it, she found an old picture taped to the wall. She pulled it off and showed it to the others.

“Hey, look at this. Who do you think this person is?” asked Lydia.

It was a picture of a lady they didn’t know, and in the background of the picture was the shadow of a man in a grey suit. They had never seen him before either.

Jannetta looked at the wall where the picture had been placed. There was a hole in the wall that the picture had covered. There was something wedged inside. Jannetta pulled it out very slowly trying not to destroy it.

It was a paper with a note on it and attached to the note was another picture of the same lady. Behind her was the same shadow, only closer to her.

"It says," Janneta began, her voice trembling, "I am the lady who was killed in this house. I know that the man in the picture was the one who killed me. No one knows who he is. The legend says that on every Halloween he returns to the house looking for someone else to kill! I fear someone else will die before anyone can find him, so I put this note into the wall hoping to save someone else. I have not yet found the man. Please find him so no one else will die."

There was no signature.

“Do you think this is true?” asked Lydia, shaken by the message. “Should we cancel our party?”

Corrine agreed, “Let’s just have the party at Lydia’s house like the invitation says.”

“Are you two chickens?” Jannetta responded. “It’s just a silly note. Anyone could have written that and put it there just to scare people like us.”

Not wanting to be called chickens, it was agreed to keep the party at the house and to continue to clean, but they were still contemplating the message on the note.

After finishing the living room, they went to the kitchen, and on the counter, they saw something that made them jump back. On a plate in the middle of the counter was a half-eaten sandwich. It looked like it had been there for quite a long time. It had bugs crawling in it and green mold growing on it.

“Who do you think left that sandwich in here?” Jannetta asked, getting a little scared.

“I don’t care!” yelled Corrine. “We need to get out of here, and fast!”

Lydia laughed at her screaming, but when the door behind them closed by itself, she screamed the loudest.

The girls hugged each other for a long time.

Finally, Jannetta went over to try to open the door.

“It’s locked!” she yelled.

They looked for another way out of the kitchen. To the left was another door. When they opened it, they walked into a small room, probably a pantry.

There was a light switch on the wall, but it did not work. The door closed behind them with a boom. They tried to open the door, but it was stuck.

On the wall, something flashed at them. They jumped back and screamed.

The wall was dirty and it was hard to see anything. Jannetta took her rag and started to clean the surface in front of them to see what had made the light.

Jannetta continued to clean the glass, yet they still could not see their reflections.

Ghostly shadows danced in the glass and then suddenly a face appeared. It was the lady in the picture.

The girls jumped back and tried to open the door, but it wouldn’t open. They hugged each other even tighter.

She stared at them for a long time before she spoke.

“What are you doing in my house!” the voice asked. Then with a hideous laugh, she continued, “Now that you are here you’ll never get out!”

Jannetta, feeling brave, spoke up, “We only wanted to have a party here. We didn’t do anything to you. Get revenge on the person who killed you, not us.”

“How do you know I want to get revenge?” the woman in the mirror asked.

Corrine responded in a frightened voice, “We found your picture and a note in the wall. We know about the man who killed you, but we don’t know who he is. Please don’t hurt us!”

The lady made them an offer, “In order for me to not hurt you, you have to find the man who killed me, or I will take my revenge out on you! If you want to have your party here, then you must do this for me.”

“How are we going to find him? Didn’t this happen a long time ago?” asked Jannetta.

“Yes, it happened many years ago, but if you look carefully at the shadow in the picture, you will find a clue that will help you solve this mystery. Be careful, he is dangerous, but I can be even more dangerous than him when I’m angry,” she answered. “Now! Go!”

When she was done, the image disappeared, and the door to the pantry flew open. The girls ran as fast as they could into the kitchen. The door to the living room was now open. They left the kitchen, running through the living room. They left the house, leaving their cleaning equipment behind.

They didn’t stop riding their bikes until they got to Lydia’s house. They ran up the stairs to her room, closing the door behind them. They huddled on the floor next to her bed.

“What should we do?” Lydia said through tears of fear.

While sitting on the floor, a face appeared in the mirror over Lydia’s dresser. It was the lady from the haunted house.

The girls screamed!

She said, “Do not tell anyone about me. If you do, I will curse you and your families. This is NOT something you want to play with. I am very serious!

“You are wasting time by staying in this room. You MUST find the man in the picture if you are to avoid my anger. You can start by going to the corner of First Avenue and Main Street. Go to Albert’s Newspaper Stand and buy one of his papers. Look on page thirty-five for my instructions. Hurry, you don’t have much time left.”

Then the face disappeared as fast as it came.

The girls looked at each other in shock.

“Do you think we should go through with this?” Lydia asked, not really sure what they should do.

“What happens if we don’t? That is the real question,” Corrine added. “I don’t want my family cursed. I suggest that we need to do this, and fast!”

“I guess we need to get going then. It will take us about ten minutes to get to the corner of First Avenue and Main Street,” Jannetta said as she jumped up and headed for the door.

The girls followed her down the stairs and out of the house. Their bicycles were lying on the ground just outside the door. They jumped onto their bikes and rode as fast as they could.

When they got there, they had trouble finding the man selling newspapers. He wasn't where she had told them to look. Then they realized they were on the wrong side of the street.

They waited for the light to change and then pushed their bikes as fast as they could to the other side of the road to buy the newspaper.

Jannetta looked in her purse but couldn't find any money.

"Do either of you have fifty cents to buy the paper with?" Jannetta asked.

After looking through their pockets they realized they had not brought any money.

"I left mine in my room at home," Corrine said sadly.

Jannetta offered, "Let's do rock – paper – scissors to decide who is going to get the money."

They said together, "ONE, TWO, THREE!"

Corrine lost. She had paper and the other two had scissors.

"Oh man, I always lose," Corrine said as she got onto her bike and rode off to her house.

While she was gone, the two girls who stayed behind tried to look at a newspaper, but the man caught them and asked for fifty cents. So, they just waited.

Finally, Corrine arrived with the money. She was breathing really hard.

"Here.... is ..... the ..... money," she could barely speak.

Jannetta gave the man fifty cents. He gave them a paper from behind the counter, and Lydia quickly opened it up to page thirty-five.

A yellow piece of paper fell out. There was a message that said:

*'To Jannetta, Corrine and Lydia.*

*'If you are reading this, then you are trying to find the man who killed me. You are on the right track. The next move you should make is to go to the Community Book Store and give this paper to the owner. He will tell you the next thing you are to do.'*

On the back of the yellow paper was the letter 'R'.

"Do you know where the Community Book Store is?" Jannetta asked her friends.

"Nope," was the answer.

Turning to Albert, the owner of the newspaper stand, Lydia asked him, "Do you know how to get to the Community Book Store?"

"Yeah, I know where it is, do you need directions?" he asked.

"Yes, that would be very helpful," Lydia answered.

“Take First Avenue to Maple Street, turn right, and go to Rural Drive. Turn left and the store is on the right-hand side of the road. You can’t miss it,” the owner gave them the directions they asked for.

They got onto their bicycles and did as they were told. It was farther than they thought, so they had to hurry. They were already running late because they hadn’t had any money to buy the newspaper.

It took fifteen minutes to get to the store. They parked their bikes in the bike rack in front of the store and walked in. They saw a man standing in the doorway.

He spoke up, “Are you the girls who are supposed to get something from my store?”

The girls were surprised by his question.

“Yeah, that would be us,” Jannetta responded, showing him the piece of paper from the newspaper.

“I have something for you. Come in and follow me to the back of the store,” the man said to them.

The girls entered the store. It was full of books stacked in piles on tables everywhere. There was a path between the tables that only one person at a time could follow.

When they got to the back of the store, he reached into a drawer of his desk and took out an envelope.

“I was given this to give to you. I have no idea what is in it, nor do I know the person who gave it to me,” the man said, as he handed the envelope to Lydia.

She tore it open and inside was a blue paper. On it were the next instructions.

It said, *‘Make sure you do not lose the papers you are given! You will need them later. Go to the MacComb’s Pet Store. Your next clue will be there.’*

This time there was a ‘P’ on the back of the paper.

The girls looked at each other in surprise.

“That’s back where we just came from. Is this lady trying to kill us?” Corrine asked in frustration.

The girls left the store, got onto their bikes, and headed to the pet store. They knew exactly where to go this time. Jannetta’s parents had bought a puppy the year before.

They rode their bikes as hard as they could, but it still took fifteen minutes to get there. When they got to the pet store, they were very tired.

Panting, Corrine had her hands on her knees, “I think I’m going to die! This is so hard.”

Jannetta put her hand on Corrine’s shoulder, “Remember, if we don’t do this, we are goners. We can’t give up now. We have to keep going!”

After putting their bikes against the wall, they opened the door to the pet store. This time no one met them at the door, in fact, it seemed like no one was there at all.

They began to search the store for a clue.

“I can’t find anything. How about you guys?” Jannetta yelled over to Corrine and Lydia.

“Nope, nothing here either,” Corrine answered.

Just then, a lady came into the store.

“What are you doing in here? Who said you could wander around my store? Get out! NOW”! she yelled while pointing to the door. “I don’t open for another fifteen minutes.”

Corrine saw a red piece of paper taped on the side of the door the same size as the yellow and blue ones she had in her backpack. She quickly grabbed it as she ran out the door after her friends.

Once outside, Corrine whispered, “Look what I found. I think it’s a clue.”

The girls looked at the paper, and sure enough, it had directions to their next destination.

Written on it, it said, ‘*Go to the park and look for the fountain that has water coming from the mouth of a fish.*’

Now there was an ‘A’ on this paper.

“The park! Do you know how far it is to the park?” Corrine complained.

“It doesn’t matter. We have to get the next clue if we are going to solve this mystery and save ourselves,” Lydia answered Corrine while getting her bike from against the wall.

The three girls rode as quickly as they could toward the park. They knew exactly which fountain to go to. Unfortunately, it was on the far side of the park.

It took almost ten minutes to get to the fountain. They looked and looked for the paper but could not find it.

“The last clue said it is here, but we can’t find it. Did we go to the wrong fountain?” Jannetta questioned. They sat down on the edge of the fountain to think.

A green paper floated down onto Corrine’s lap.

“Where did this come from?” she asked as she looked around.

The only place it could have come from was from the tall tree next to the fountain, but no one was there.

“This is freaking me out,” Lydia commented.

Corrine noticed the letter ‘T’ on the back of the paper.

“Why is there a letter on the back?” she asked.

Jannetta noticed the letters on the backs of the other papers.

“Maybe, this is part of the clue?” Lydia surmised.

“Let’s see we have R, P, A, and T’,” Lydia read the letters.

“TARP, TRAP or PRAT?” guessed Corrine.

“No silly, PART. Can’t you see?” Jannetta responded



“PART? Could that be PARTY?” Lydia guessed.

“Why would you say PARTY?” Corrine asked, very confused.

“I don’t know. It was just the first thing that came to my mind.

Written on the paper, it said, *‘Go back to where you started. Go back to your house.’*

“What!?! We rode all this way just to go back to my house?” Lydia exclaimed.

“Okay, let’s get going. We don’t have much time.” Jannetta said as she got onto her bike once again.

It took almost twenty minutes to get back to Lydia’s house. They dropped their bikes in the yard and ran to her room. On the mirror was a purple paper they had not seen before.

Lydia took the paper and read it.

*‘Return to my mirror at the house and I will give you the last clue to find the man who killed me. If you do not do this, I will kill all of you!’*

They screamed.

“Back to the haunted house? You have to be kidding. I’m exhausted,” Corrine said as she sat on the bed.

Jannetta took the paper and on the back was the letter ‘Y’.

“You were right! It *is* PARTY!” Corrine yelled to Lydia. “I think there is something suspicious about all of this. Why would we go all over town to only go back to the house where we were going to have our party?”

“That’s it!” said Jannetta. “There is going to be a party at the house. Let’s go and find out who did all of this. I want to wring their necks, grrrrrr.”

It was now almost dark. The old house rose in front of them silhouetted by the darkening sky. When they opened the door, a man stood in their way. He man they had been looking for was standing in the doorway. He did not look happy.

The girls jumped back in surprise.

In a strange voice, he asked, “Welcome to my house. What can I do for you?”

“We were told to find you. Now that we have found you, what are we supposed to do with you?” asked Jannetta.

“Come in. I have something to show you,” he answered.

The room lit up, and standing behind him were the people from the places they had gotten the papers from, as well as the lady in the picture.

From the kitchen came their parents followed by their friends whom they had invited to the party. The place was clean and there were decorations on the walls.

“SURPRISE!” they yelled.

The girls were *NOT* surprised at all. They were so tired, they didn’t even care.

Their parents had heard about the party and wanted to play a joke on them. They planned the whole thing.