



Virginia did not come downstairs for supper. Mr Otis sent one of the servants to her room. The servant could not find Virginia so everybody searched the house. They looked everywhere but they could not find her. Mr and Mrs Otis were very worried.

It was a summer evening and the sun had not set, so the family and the servants searched the gardens before it was dark. In the garden there were many trees and a deep pond. They looked in the pond. They looked in the trees. Then they asked people at the railway station. But no one had seen Virginia. Mr Otis went to tell the village policeman that Virginia had disappeared. But, by that time, it was dark

and no one could search any more that night.

None of the family wanted to eat or sleep. They sat in the library and waited. They hoped Virginia would return safely. They planned to search for Virginia again in the morning.

It was midnight when the family decided to go to bed. They left the library and started to walk up the stairs together. Suddenly all the clocks in the house struck twelve and they heard a terrible noise. Thunder crashed outside the house and the Otises heard a dreadful cry. Strange music sounded inside the house and a door opened at the top of the stairs.

Virginia stood in the doorway. She looked down the stairs at them. Her face was very pale and she carried a small box in her hand.

'Where have you been?' Mr Otis asked angrily. 'Your mother has been very worried. You have frightened us all. You must never play a trick like this again.'

'Except on the ghost,' said the twins. 'You can play tricks on the ghost!'

'Father,' Virginia said quietly, 'I have been with the ghost. He is dead and now he can rest. He gave me this box of beautiful jewels before he died.'

She showed her father the small box. Inside was a necklace made of red stones.

'Where did you get this?' asked her father. 'Where have you been?'

Mr Otis forgot to be angry. He was so pleased to see that Virginia was safe.

'Come. I'll show you,' said Virginia.

She turned back to the door at the top of the stairs. All of the family followed her. Washington Otis carried a lighted candle.

Virginia led them along a secret corridor. They came to an old wooden door which was open. Beyond the door was a little room with a low ceiling. There was an iron ring in the wall and two chains. At the end of the chains was a body. Only bones remained. It was a skeleton.



'This is the body of Sir Simon de Canterville,' said Virginia. 'He murdered his wife in 1575. Then his wife's brothers shut him in ~~this~~ room. He was given no food. Sir Simon starved to death. His ghost was in this house for three hundred years. But now he has found peace.'

The Otis family looked around the little room and did not know what to say. Virginia knelt on the floor beside the skeleton and began to pray.

There was a funeral four nights later. The Otises buried the body of Sir Simon de Canterville in a grave among the trees.

The Otises, Mrs Umney the housekeeper, and all the servants from Canterville Chase stood near the grave. Behind them were people from the nearby village. Many people had come to the funeral.

Virginia carried white flowers. She looked up at the stars and the pale moon and the dark trees. She remembered what the ghost had said about the Garden of Death. A nightingale began to sing. The bird's sweet song was beautiful and sad.

Virginia smiled. 'God has forgiven him for murdering his wife,' she said.

THE END