

Cold Whispers 

The GHOST at THE GRAND INN



by Michael Teitelbaum

Credits

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Worst Weekend Ever!

Craig and Melanie Hoffman sat in the backseat of their parents' car, just inches away from each other.

Twelve-year-old Craig slid his left hand toward his sister.



“Hey! You’re on my side!” cried eleven-year-old Melanie.

“Am not!” Craig shot back.

“Mom!” Melanie whined. “Craig is on my side.”

“Am I going to have to listen to you two fight all weekend?” asked Mom.

“Yeah,” replied Craig, “since we’re going to some dumb old hotel instead of to a water park, like we wanted! I could have gone on a giant water slide. Instead, I’ll be stuck at some hotel with *her*.”

Craig leaned over toward Melanie and stuck out his tongue.

“The Grand Inn at the Mountaintop is hardly ‘some dumb old hotel,’” Dad said. “It’s one of the most **historic** inns in the whole country, just filled with amazing stories from the past.”

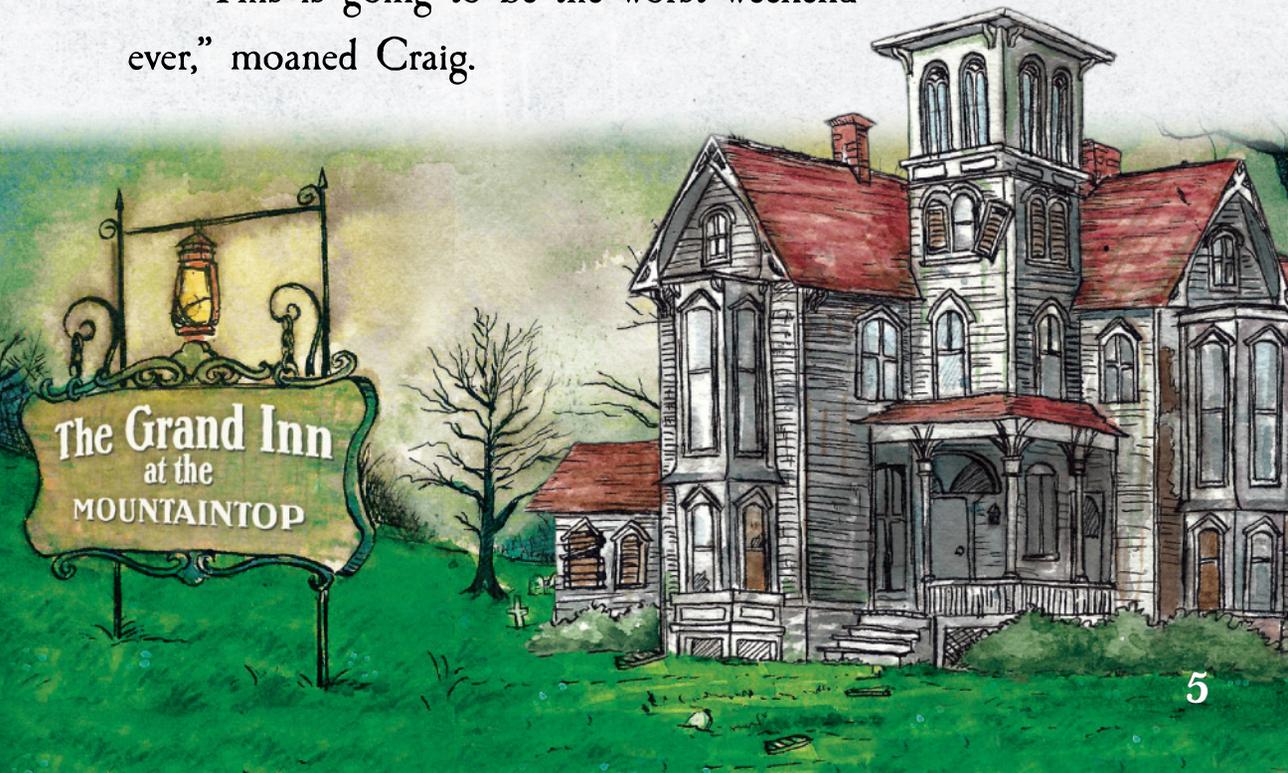


A few hours later, the Hoffmans turned onto a narrow, bumpy dirt road. As they drove around a bend, The Grand Inn at the Mountaintop came into view.

“Oh no,” said Melanie. “This is even worse than I thought!”

The inn was covered in peeling paint. Shutters dangled from windows, flapping in the breeze. The front porch **sagged**.

“This is going to be the worst weekend ever,” moaned Craig.



As they got out of their car, the Hoffmans noticed a small cemetery beside the inn.

“That’s kind of creepy,” said Craig.

The front door of the inn creaked open, and a man stepped outside. He was hunched over, and he **shuffled** more than he walked. The soles of his shoes scraped along the porch’s splintered wooden floorboards.

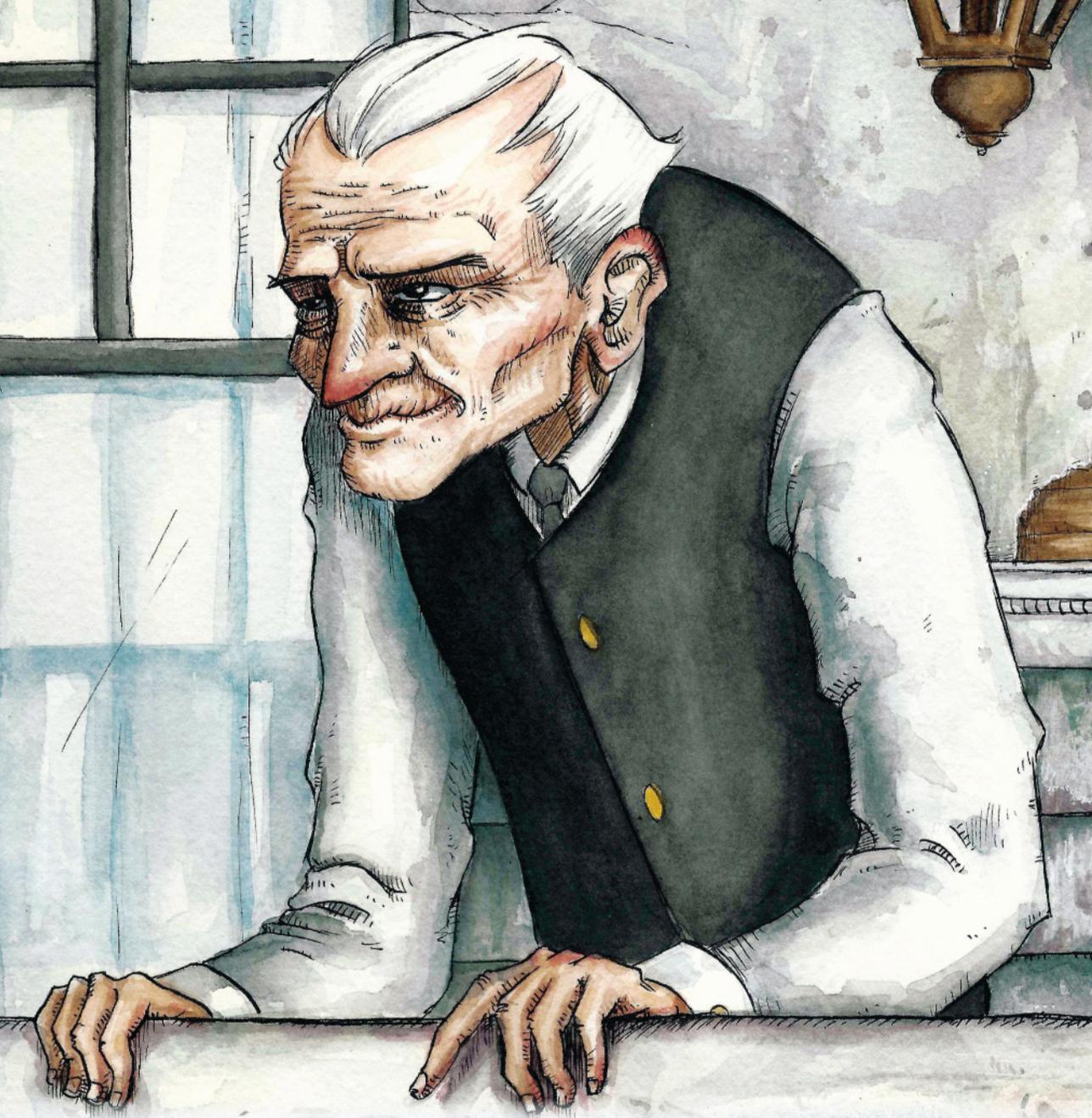
“Speaking of creepy,” whispered Craig.

“I am Mr. Underhill, the innkeeper here at the Grand Inn,” the man said in a raspy, wheezing voice. His coal-black eyes were sunk deep into his face, set off by his pale white skin.

“Welcome. Come in,” he said.

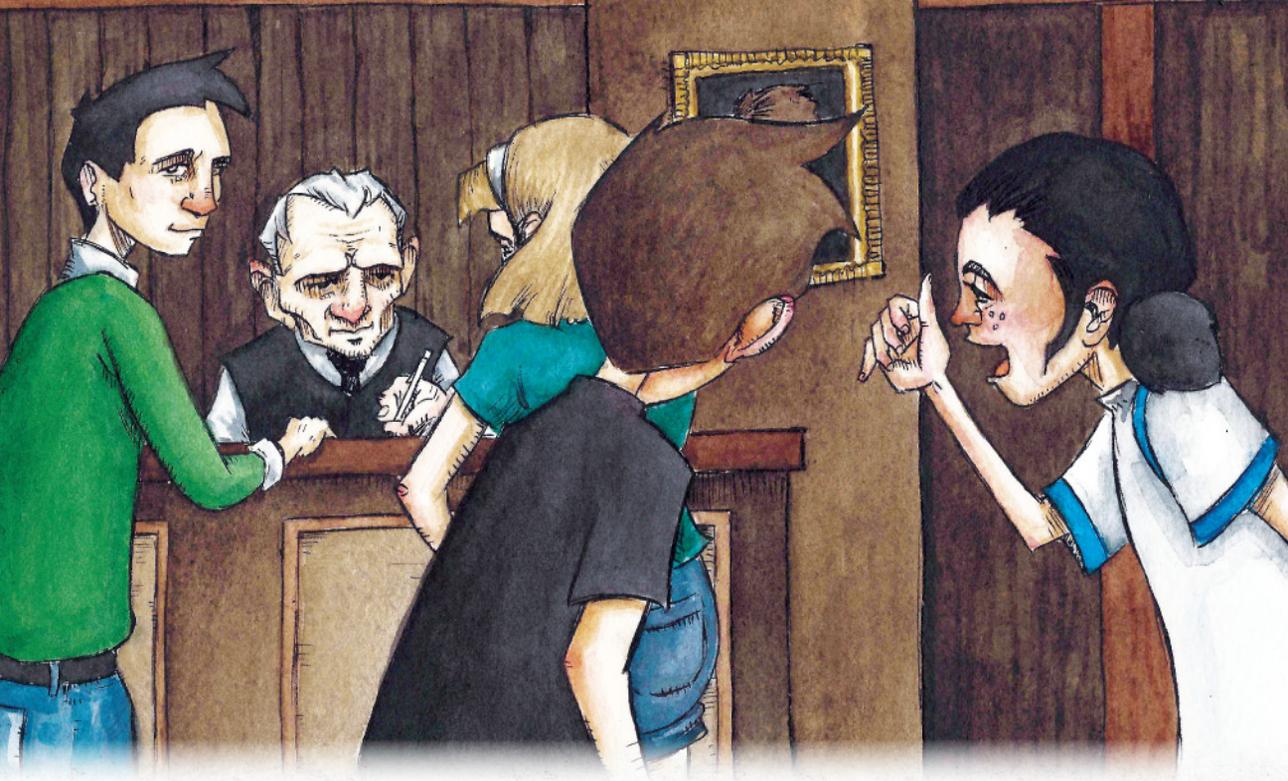
Walking through the doorway, Craig saw the inn’s old, dusty lobby. It looked like something out of a horror movie.





“This place looks like it could be haunted,” Melanie whispered to Craig.

“As a matter of fact, young lady,” said Mr. Underhill, overhearing Melanie’s whisper, “many people believe that it is.”



Melanie's eyes opened wide. "There's a ghost here?" she asked. "Like, a real ghost?"

"Come on," said Craig. "There's no such thing as ghosts."

"Well, now," Mr. Underhill began, in a cracked voice that made everything he said sound **ominous**. "I've been told that some guests have heard a little girl's voice crying out for help. They believe she haunts the inn."

Dad looked doubtfully at the innkeeper and said, "I don't mean to be rude, Mr. Underhill, but my wife and I study history. We heard that you have a very good library, filled with *real* history, not ghost stories."

“Of course,” replied Mr. Underhill, eyeing the family, his neck twisted, his sunken eyes glistening like black marbles. “The inn’s library is open to all guests. And, as it turns out, you are our only guests at the moment.”

As their parents finished checking in, Melanie grabbed her brother by the arm and pulled him aside.

“What if we searched for the ghost?” she asked. “Then maybe this might not be the worst weekend ever.”

“I guess,” moaned Craig. “At least it’ll be something to do.”
Melanie smiled. “Cool! We’re going to find a ghost!”



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