

SECRET IN STRATFORD:
A GHOST STORY

Secret in Stratford: A Ghost Story

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SECRET IN STRATFORD: A GHOST STORY

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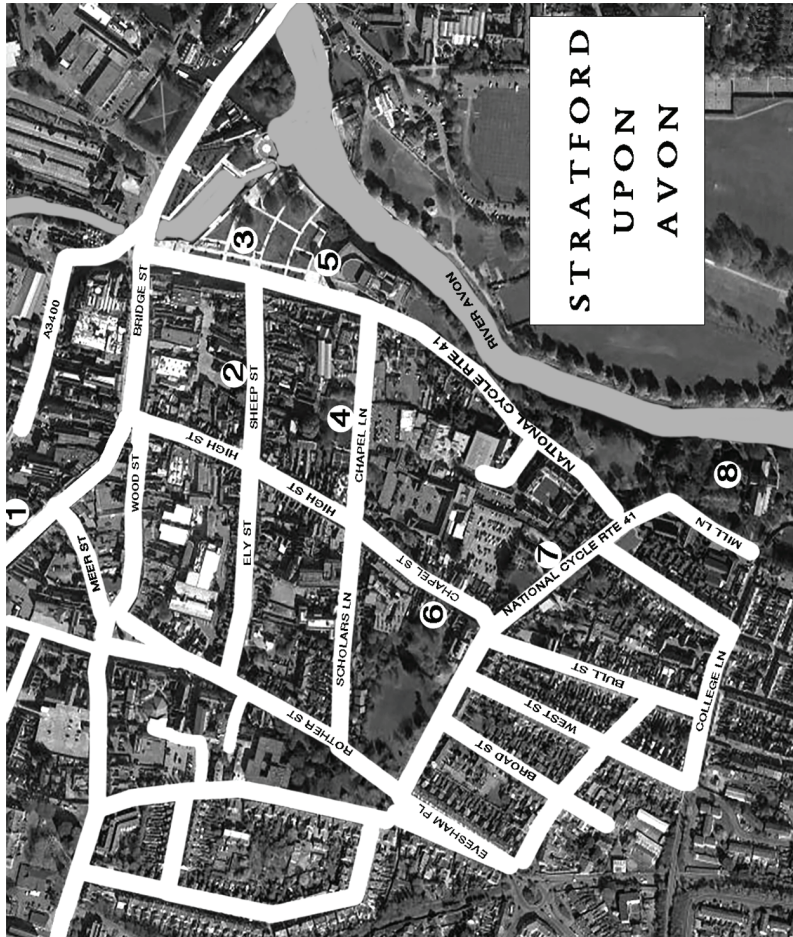
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THE GHOST STORY



STRATFORD
UPON
AVON

SITES RELATED
IN THE STORY

1. Shakespeare's birthplace
2. Shrieve's House (aka Tutor House)
3. Swan Statue
4. Hall's Croft
5. Royal Shakespeare Theatre
6. Shakespeare Institute - University
7. New Place
8. Holy Trinity Church and graveyard



VISITING A MEMORY

Chapter 1

Ever since he barely escaped death in Transylvania, John's been doubting a lot of things. Ghost hunting was just one of them.

Now he was on a plane with his parents heading to England to meet up with Ruth. She was the British girl he fell in love with at summer school. At least, he thought it was love at the time, and he thought it was shared. Now, after months without seeing each other in person, he wasn't as sure as he'd like to be. He was glad when his mom said she wanted to go to the famous Christmas market in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. That way they could see the market and he could see Ruth.

Now, the six months since he had said goodbye after summer school seemed more like six years. He had tried to fill the long

gap with phone and video calls. Neither were good ways to build the bond John was hoping for.

John's thoughts were in many places as he and his parents left Birmingham Airport Customs. John felt that he had a lot of choices to make on this trip. What if Ruth didn't feel the same way about him as he felt for her? Would they be picking up their relationship where they left off in Romania? He wasn't even sure now if the necklace he bought as a Christmas gift for Ruth was enough. And then there was his future, too. He knew he wanted to go to college. His parents wanted him to go to college. He would need to apply very soon. But where? In the U.S. or maybe in Europe? Would he maybe even want to go to college in England? He had a lot of questions, but one he needed to answer right away. Was he going to kiss her in front of their parents, or would a friendly hug be better for now?

A comment from John's mom brought him out of his deep thoughts. "John, we're counting on you to spot Ruth. Your dad and I have only seen her that one time on your video call," John's mom said. John's mom was a blond-haired woman dressed in jeans and a sweater. She carried her long black puffer coat over her arm.

John had a tall, slender build, with long dark blond hair. He looked like his mom's side of the family, though he did share his dad's facial features. John had always wondered if his hair would thin like his father's. He also hoped he wouldn't end up needing glasses like both of his parents.

"Yes, Mom," John replied. "I don't think I'll have a problem spotting her," he said with a little sass in his voice. "I just need to find her and her dad. She said they'd be here."

Before saying anything more, John saw Ruth's smiling face in the waiting crowd. Ruth's puffer coat hid her slender frame. Her knit cap hid most of her wavy black hair. It could have been easy to miss her in the crowd. It helped that she was waving both hands and jumping up and down. John scanned the crowd near Ruth. He looked for someone he guessed Ruth's dad would look like.

No one looked like they might be him. A new worry shot through John's head, *Does her dad not want to meet me and my parents?* He didn't need a new worry.

"Oh, there she is," John said, spotting her in the crowd.

"Do you see her dad?" John's dad asked.

Before John could answer, they got close enough for Ruth to run up to John. She wrapped him up in a big hug and gave him a quick kiss. *Well, that clears up one concern*, John thought to himself as he returned Ruth's big hug. A bright red blush broke out on his face.

The big grin on Ruth's face backed up Ruth's comment, "I'm so glad you're here!"

"Ahem," John's dad cleared his throat.

"Oh, yes, Ruth. This is my mom and dad," John said as he swept his hand towards them. "Tom and Jill Sadler."

"Mom, Dad, this is Ruth," John said.

"So nice to at last meet you in person," John's mom said.

"It's so nice to meet you in person, too, Mr. and Mrs. Sadler," Ruth said.

"Where's your dad?" John asked.

“Oh, sorry, I did say he would come today, didn’t I? He had to work, but I can get you to your hotel,” Ruth said.

“That’d be great,” John’s dad said, “but you can’t drive, can you?”

“No, but my dad can’t drive either,” Ruth said with a shrug of her shoulders. “We’ve got great ‘pub trans’ here.”

The words ‘pub trans’ took a second for John and his parents to grasp. Then, they all saw Ruth meant a bus or train. “That’d be great. We have our bags, so lead the way,” John said.

John’s parents were tired from the long flight. They had some concern that this young girl would be able to get them to their hotel. They were hoping the person who met them at the airport would have a car to drive them to their hotel. Stratford-Upon-Avon was almost 30 miles away. But, they often traveled down to Washington, D.C. on public transport which was about the same distance. So the train wouldn’t be a problem.

“Oh,” Ruth said. “I almost forgot, these are for you all.” She held out a bag that was open at the top. “They’re a bit bad, but they’re good.”

Jill Sadler looked inside the bag. There were some odd looking candies inside. John took a quick look and saw what looked like candies that had melted together a bit. The candy reminded him of some Ruth offered him and some others in Romania. Jill Sadler smiled, but leaned back. All she could say was, “Ah, thank you,” but didn’t take any. Jill recalled John saying that Ruth was a bit quirky. Now, she wondered how quirky this young girl would be.

Tom Sadler glanced inside the bag, put his hand inside, and brought out a gooey looking candy. He popped it into his mouth. “Hmm, that’s different, but it’s good. Thank you.”

John reached for the candy, but stopped before he got to the bag. His hand stopped on the edge of the scarf that hung around Ruth's neck. He saw that it was the scarf he had knitted for her in Romania and he smiled. (Ruth had brought yarn but didn't know how to knit. Luckily, John knew how and finished it for her before their summer school ended.)