



Light and Shade by Ellen Wilson

(Finalist, 11 – 14 years category, Janis Clark Short Story Competition)

"What's this?" I asked Grandad as I pulled a battered-looking scroll of paper from the box of old things I was sorting through. "I think that's a map. Open it up and have a look." Grandad replied. I unrolled the scroll. "It's blank." I said, slightly disappointed. I turned it around to show Grandad. "Ahh, I remember this map," He said as he took it from me.

"Where did it come from?" I asked.

"My great-great Grandad made it – that's your great-great-great-great Grandad. He was a cartographer, someone who makes maps."

"Hmm." I replied thoughtfully. "I don't see why he bothered with this map though. It's completely blank." "That's because this is a special map. It's called The Map of Light and Shade." He said proudly.

"Why's it called that?" I asked.

"I'll show you." Grandad replied. He switched off the dim attic light and pushed aside the short linen curtains revealing a tiny window in the wall. Sunlight came flooding in. He held the map up to the window. I stared at it, and as I did, strange markings started to appear. "Wow!" I said. "How does that work?"

"This paper has different thicknesses," he replied, "So the thicker parts stay shady and the thin parts let light through, creating this illusion."

"Woah." I said, amazed.

"Why don't we try and read it, for a bit of fun?" Grandad suggested.

I squinted at the map. It showed a large box with lots of smaller boxes inside, an 'X' in the corner of one. I wasn't sure what it was – a building maybe? Focused on the map, I realised I knew this place, but couldn't quite put my finger on it. Then it came to me. "Grandad, this is your house!" I said with a gasp of disbelief.

"You're right! And it leads... this way." He replied, pointing to the attic ladder.

"Come on Grandad, let's see where this leads to." I said excitedly. I took the map from Grandad's frail hands, and led him downstairs to see where the map took us.

We weaved our way through the network of rooms and hallways that made up Grandad's house, and eventually got to our destination. "This is it." I concluded as we came to a halt in the far corner of the dining room. We peered around for any sign of the treasure. Nothing. It was just an ordinary dining room.

"Nothing's here." I said gloomily.

As I turned to leave, an unexpected CREAK came from below me. Of course! Under the floorboards was the perfect hiding place for treasure. With Grandad's help, I peeled up the creaky board, uncovering an old wooden box. Sharing an amazed look with Grandad, I opened the rusty catch and lifted the lid, revealing a scroll. I picked it up and unrolled the brittle paper. Another blank map! Where did it lead to? I couldn't wait to find out the secret to reading this map...