

Light and Shade by Milly Taylor

(Finalist, 8 to 10 years category, Janis Clark Short Story Competition)



If you look along my street, the houses are all just the same. They are light and bright and all join together quite happily. Except for one that is. The one at the end. The one at the end is different. All in shade, all on its own. That one seems sad, all wrong. Crooked. The only one that the sun doesn't seem to find.

The children on my street play outside. I like to play hide and seek. The one game that really frightens me though, is the dare game. In the dare game you have to do whatever the other children tell you to. The dare that nobody dares to do is knock on the door of the crooked, shady house.

There was this one day, where I was feeling rather braver than usual. The other children dared me and I walked right up to that crooked, shady house. The others ran off. I was scared, but I just couldn't turn back. There were some shadows moving in the window, was it a ghost? I was even more scared, but as I told you before, I couldn't turn back. My feet were stuck to the ground. What could I do? I swallowed hard and knocked on the old, brown, cobwebby door. I heard footsteps. There was someone coming. The door creaked open 'creeaaaaaak' and standing there was a tiny, old, white haired lady. She didn't look scary at all. In fact she looked a little bit frightened herself.

'Hello, what do you want?' she said in a quiet, polite but sort of kind voice.

'Hello, I'm sorry to disturb you but my friends dared me to knock on your door. I didn't actually know anyone lived here'

The next thing I knew, I was sitting in her house. I found all sorts of things out about her. She was called Ellie, she was 82 years old and she lived in this house all alone. I felt a bit sorry and sad for her. She was all alone in this shady, crooked house.

Then something came over me and I blurted out 'have you always been sad and alone in this house?'

'No,' Ellie replied 'I have had the most wonderful, beautiful life.'

Ellie told me all about her lovely husband called Arthur. She told me how he had died three years ago and from that day on her life had been filled with sadness and loneliness. Then something happened. Her eyes were filled with tears and she said 'I haven't talked to anyone about him...' I quickly apologised and said 'I didn't mean to upset you.'

'Oh but you didn't, it's been great to remember him with you' and with that, she smiled and seemed a little bit happier. From that day on, I visited Ellie every week and we chatted more and more about her wonderful life.

Now, when I look along my street all of the houses are light and bright and happy, even the crooked one at the end.