Ghost Stories and Mysteries of Sweet Briar

by

Ann Marshall Whitley '47
In a short story entitled *Motive vs. Opportunity*, Agatha Christie had a certain solicitor, Mr. Petherick, make a statement. I am somewhat in accord with the following:

"I may say here and now that I do not belong to the ranks of those who cover spiritualism with ridicule and scorn. I am a believer in evidence. And I think when we have an impartial mind and weigh the evidence in favor of spiritualism there remains much that cannot be put down to fraud or lightly set aside. Therefore, as I say, I am neither a believer or an unbeliever. There is certain testimony with which one cannot afford to disagree."

- *Ann Marshall Whitley '47*
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Preface

Sweet Briar is on the migratory flyway of some of the great raptors of the American continent. Each fall these large birds fly south and in the spring fly north in nature's never-ending cycle of seasonal transitions.

If one of these large birds were to look down at Sweet Briar and knew the lay of her lands, it would see an undulating plateau of forests, open and rolling fields, a cluster of red brick College buildings, two lakes and several roads interlacing to carry the campus traffic to all quarters of her 3300 acres in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge mountains.

A crescent-shaped property, it has changed little in the past century except for the college buildings and a bit more open land. These were the lands of the Fletcher and Williams families. Their presence can still be felt at odd times and in odd places.

Most members of the family are buried on the Monument Hill which rises above the College and from whose summit one can look down on the College buildings with an unobstructed view. It is here, perhaps, that one feels the strongest sense of the family's presence, but some of their spirits have been known to wander and frequent other areas of their former domain.

Indiana Fletcher Williams, founder of the College who died in 1900, continues to make herself known in small ways these many years later. It is as though she is still vitally interested in what takes place at her College.

Through the years, students, faculty, and staff have told stories of supernatural happenings at the College. What credence must we give to such tales as have come from the memories of these members of the Sweet Briar community? You the reader can ponder the following.
Bronze medallion of Daisy discovered in 1931
Daisy Williams Gymnasium

For many years the College did not have a proper gymnasium. Grammer Commons, the large room in the lower level of Grammer Residence Hall, did duty as the gymnasium but the space was inadequate and the ceiling too low for much more than calisthenics. However, it had to suffice, especially during inclement weather. One student reported that she hated gym on rainy days as she detested calisthenics. In those days physical education was required three times per week for all four years. No student was excused.

The President and the Board knew that something had to be done, so fund-raising for a new gymnasium began in the early 1920s. The effort was spearheaded by the Athletic Association. In 1931 the new gymnasium was built and the cornerstone ceremonies were held. A long discussion, campus-wide, had taken place as to a name for the new building. All buildings at Sweet Briar had names, but this building being neither an academic building nor a residence hall posed a special problem. After much discussion and only three days before the dedication ceremony, the name was selected: it was to be the Daisy Williams Gymnasium.

On the very morning that the name was announced, Mrs. Martindale, the college housekeeper, went to her supply storage area located under the first floor steps in Gray Residence Hall. She found to her surprise a large bronze medallion of the head and bust of Daisy Williams. The sixteen-inch diameter medallion was mounted on a somewhat moth-eaten velvet background and it was framed.

Mrs. Martindale had been Director of the Halls of Residence since 1906 and nothing escaped her notice. This was an item she had never seen before. Quite surprised, she carried the medallion to President Meta Glass who was charmed by it but also quite in the dark as to its sudden appearance. People all over the campus were asked if they knew where it had come from. Nobody knew. It remained a mystery and still is. However, Miss Glass decided to have it mounted on the entrance hall wall just inside the doors of the new gymnasium. It is there to this day.

On the day of the dedication Miss Glass said, “I could think of no explanation of its appearance except that Miss Indie sent it in appreciation.”
The Death Books

Daisy Williams was dying. Christmas of 1883 had come and gone and the sixteen-year old girl, desperately ill, was bedridden in New York. Her distraught parents were doing everything in their grief to make their only child as physically and emotionally comfortable as possible. Within days, Daisy's brief life ended and she was brought back to Sweet Briar and buried on the Monument Hill near her grandfather, Elijah Fletcher. It was January 1884.

Over a century passed and a College now stood on the rolling meadows and orchards where Daisy had played and ridden her pony. A College library now housed her family's books. Her doll, harp, clothing, jewelry, sewing basket, little chairs and other personal mementos were in the Sweet Briar Museum.

One April morning in 1988 a telephone call came to the Museum. Would we come to the library? Some books belonging to Daisy Williams had suddenly appeared on a table in the library work area. There were eight books altogether, and five of these were miniatures.

On examination we determined that the books were connected to those last sad days of Daisy's life. The small books, easily held in the weakened hands of a dying girl, were filled with the words of Christ, biblical quotations, prayers, and thoughts for the day from religious sources, all designed as a source of solace to the sick girl as well as to her parents.

Nobody in the library had ever seen the books before and nobody knew where they had come from. Every member of the staff was questioned. The books had never been catalogued into the collection. They simply appeared as a small collection, neatly stacked, beautifully cared for, but their source unknown. Daisy's name was in some of them and a few of her final little sketches were between the pages. Could these have been another gift from Miss Indie? The mystery remains.
The Signora Stories

Signora Hollins was born in Virginia of slave parents just as the final convulsions of the Civil War were drawing to an agonizing end. After the war, she was brought to the Sweet Briar plantation by her aunt, who was to be the cook for the Williams family. Daisy Williams was about seven years old at the time, so it must have been in 1873 or 1874. Signora, a few years older, was about nine.

The young girls became good friends and playmates. The two children explored the edge of the woods, pretended to fish in the spring in the west dell, and played with Daisy's dolls, chickens, and rode Daisy's little pony Bounce. They had play houses in the big boxwood bushes. They picked wild strawberries and other fruit and worked in Daisy's little garden.

After Daisy's death at sixteen in 1884, Signora remained at Sweet Briar working for Indiana Williams for about six months. Then Signora was sent by Indiana Williams to Massachusetts. At first she worked for a family that kept a private school for girls in Boston and later she went to Amherst, Massachusetts, where the same family had a boarding house for college boys. Signora was in the north for twelve years before returning to Virginia.

When Sweet Briar College was founded, Signora applied for work. She was hired, and what she saw in those early days were tall buildings where cherry and peach orchards had been. There were only four buildings then, the faculty apartments (the first building to be built), at that time housed the workers who were building Gray, Carson, and the Refectory. Signora was hired to be the cook in the faculty apartments. She was to become a legend for her southern cooking: Virginia ham, beaten biscuits, grits, spoon and corn bread, black-eyed peas and assorted greens cooked with ham hocks. Her fruit pies were talked about for years.

One day before the College opened, Signora came out of the faculty apartments and found Indiana Williams waiting for her.
Although Signora knew that Indiana had been dead for several years she said, “I thought nothing about it.”

She continued that Miss Indie looked perfectly natural and was wearing her usual black skirt and white shirt waist. As they walked together toward the new buildings and then came near the old slave cabin behind the Sweet Briar House, Indiana asked where the iron gate was to Amelia’s house and where was Daisy’s pony? Signora said that she didn’t know.

A little later, near the cabin, Miss Indie told Signora that her money was buried behind the well under a large flat rock at the end of the well drain. She then told Signora to get a stick and stir it around to pry up the rock and the money would be underneath. She continued that there was money on the other side of the hedge (boxwood) buried by Daisy’s hitching post, “Daisy’s money.” There was money buried in another place, she told Signora. “The other place money is buried is under an old pine tree that is a stump now near a large white rock on the hill across the field from the lake.” Signora never said whether she had ever searched for the money or if it had ever been found.

The second time that Signora saw Indiana was in the hall of the Refectory. “She was only walking through and we didn’t speak but she had on the same white shirt waist and black skirt, and she was just looking around.” This was still before the College opened its doors to students.

Many years passed before Signora saw Indiana again. At that time, Miss Emilie Watts McVea was president of Sweet Briar. She had taken up her duties in the fall of 1916. When Indiana materialized the third time, she told Signora that her silver was buried in a wall in the Sweet Briar House. She said it was sealed up in the wall on the landing of the front staircase, “The wall of Mr. Williams’ bedroom.” Signora informed Miss McVea, who was willing to go along with what Signora had told her. College carpenters opened the wall and the silver was indeed there. “It was wrapped up
in three paper packages and they were black with dirt. The spoons looked like gold and I don't know what happened to it after that."

At the time of these stories Signora was well into her 90s and a tape of her stories was made by some members of the Sweet Briar faculty. Signora Hollins died during the summer of 1954.
The Fire

In 1927 a terrible fire nearly destroyed the Sweet Briar House. It was during the second year of the tenure of President Meta Glass and she had already become attached to the lovely antiques sheltered within its gracious interior. There were the oil paintings, furniture, bronzes, clocks, silver, and the oriental carpets of the founding family throughout the rooms.

Every able bodied person on the campus was pressed into service to help carry the contents to safety. Faculty, students, staff, and farm workers converged on the house. The smoke was thick and choking and the flames were leaping through the floors and up the walls from the basement. Some said the fire started in a pile of fire wood under the back porch but the heaviest damage occurred in the front and mid-sections of the house.

The historic properties were carried out the doors and lifted through the windows. The house was not only home to the president but housed several faculty members as well. Many things were destroyed and others smoke-damaged, but the fire was contained and extinguished by late afternoon. The community was shocked and saddened but already repairs and reconstruction were being discussed.

Later that evening as dusk fell a member of the faculty walked into the boxwood circle in front of the house to view the destruction. The moon was rising and cast eerie shadows across the charred facade and porch. The front door was a black gaping void. Dark streaks discolored the bricks above the windows and foundation plantings had been trampled. Debris littered the yard and the smell of damp charred wood filled the evening air. It seemed a scene of utter desolation.

While the professor stared at the ruin she noticed a movement out of the corner of her eye. Stepping out of the boxwoods to her left she saw a tall woman accompanied by a young girl. They were arm in
arm and slowly approaching the porch. They did not speak to her or to each other but walked in a determined fashion to the porch, ascended the steps, and disappeared into the burned blackness of the house.

There was nothing unusual about the pair except for their clothing. It looked quite outdated to the professor. The older of the two had on a long skirt that swept the ground. Her blouse had a high neck with a sleeve style of the 1890s. The girl's dress was calf length and she wore high buttoned shoes, an outfit common to young girls forty years before. This seemed very odd to the onlooker as she was now quite accustomed to the flapper look of the 1920s.

These must be mountain women, she thought. She knew she had never seen them on campus before. She shook her head at the peculiarities of some people and dismissed the incident from her mind. After all, tomorrow was another day of classes and she had work to do.

Nearly thirty minutes passed when another member of the faculty entered the boxwood circle. While she was looking at the house, the two strangers walked out on the porch, stood for a moment while the young girl turned to look back into the dark hall, then they came down the steps, walked silently across the grass and disappeared into the boxwoods to her right. These were strangers to that professor also. She thought them curiosity seekers from the countryside because she too noted the very outmoded clothing styles. As she left the yard she thought no more about them.

Several weeks passed and the two professors found themselves seated at the same table for dinner in the Refectory. Several faculty members were discussing the fire and the reconstruction work that was taking place at Sweet Briar House when one of them asked the table at large if anyone else had seen a woman and young girl go into the house at dusk on the day of the fire. She described the pair and their old-fashioned attire. Did anyone know who they might have been? The other faculty member said that she had seen them come
out and disappear into the boxwood but she assumed that they were just mountain women coming to satisfy their curiosity. No one else had seen them, but the incident was a little bizarre and the story spread.

When it reached Mt. San Angelo across the road, the elderly Nannie Christian, who was working there, heard the story. She had worked at Sweet Briar for the Williams family before Daisy Williams died.

“Couldn’t be nobody but Miz Williams and Daisy. Sure ’nuff that’s who they was. Sounds just like ’em. I know they comes ’round now and then. Lots of folks has seen Miz Williams includin’ me. She just checkin’ up on her things. Her things meant the world to her. They might be dead, but they’s not gone.”
The Face in the Red Velvet Frame

It was while assembling the antique properties of Sweet Briar to go into a new museum that the question of locating a portrait of the founder of the College, Indiana Fletcher Williams, arose.

Since the founding of the College in 1901, nobody had ever found a likeness of Miss Indie. Many requests for a portrait had come in over the years but no one had been able to produce an identifiable picture.

One fall while doing some research in the College library, I happened upon an old grocery carton sitting on the floor in the corner of a storage room off of the Rare Book Room. The weather had been wet and rainy for some weeks and the smell of dampness was strong in the room. A streak of mildew decorated the wall just above the carton. I felt that whatever was in the carton might be damp, so I carried it into the Rare Book Room, placed it on a table and opened it.

It contained a stack of nineteenth-century photographs of people and houses. These were unidentified but on the back of each was a number. Obviously there had been a key to these photos, however, it was missing. A note in the bottom of the box said, “These photographs were found by Reuben Higginbotham in Sweet Briar House basement in 1953.” Reuben had worked in the Sweet Briar House for Miss Meta Glass, the college’s third president, stayed on through the tenure of President Martha B. Lucas, and then retired in the early years of Dr. Anne Gary Pannell’s presidency.

The photos were damp and some of their edges were beginning to curl. I carried them to Sweet Briar House in the hope of drying them on top of the radiators, which were enclosed in wooden decorative frames. They would also be out of direct light if I used the radiators in the dining room. Edith Whiteman, wife of President Harold Whiteman, was home so she helped me spread out the photos on the dining room table so we could look at them.
I recognized the face of Elijah Fletcher, the founder's father, several of her daughter young Daisy Williams at different ages, two of her husband, James Henry Williams, and one of a young man named Leeds who was the son of Mr. Williams' sister Harriet Williams Leeds. Two group pictures of a family sitting in the yard in front of their home were later identified as the family of Mr. Williams' sister Emma McCall. These were all family photographs.

There were three photos of unidentified women. Two of them were of the same person at different ages. She was fair with very light blue eyes, aquiline features, and a pleasant expression. The third photo of the group was of a woman in her twenties who looked related to the woman in the other two photos but she was stouter, her face rounder, and her hair was darker.

As I looked at the two photos of the same woman I knew I had seen that face before – but where? Of course, the face in the red velvet frame that was in the Rare Book Room at the library. It was locked behind wire mesh doors on a bookshelf that had several mementos of the Fletcher family. The photo had always been identified as Daisy Williams.

I had seen the face in the red velvet frame often enough and I had always doubted that it was Daisy. The face was more mature than any of Daisy's photos. Although it was done in profile I sensed it was another person altogether. The librarians insisted that it was Daisy.

I decided to go back to the library and bring the picture to Sweet Briar House so that I could compare it to the two photos of the unidentified woman.

I left for the Library and within fifteen minutes I returned with the face in the red velvet frame. I rushed into the dining room and laid the photo next to the other two. It was obviously the same person at three different ages! The framed portrait was done at about age sixteen, the second one at around twenty-five and the third one was the woman in her forties.
Then came the acid test. I removed the photo from the red velvet frame and discovered it had been photographed in Paris, France. Daisy had never been to Europe but her mother had at the age of sixteen!

I stared down at the pictures getting more excited by the second and said to Mrs. Whiteman, who I thought was behind me, “Do you know who we have here? It is the founder, it is Miss Indie. We have found Miss Indie.”

I heard a distinct low laugh behind my left shoulder. I turned to Mrs. Whiteman with a big grin on my face. She was not in the room. She was not even in the house. I was alone.

—Ann Marshall Whitley ’47
If the Walls Could Talk

When the College was built and the first faculty hired there was not enough housing on the campus for everyone. So, several faculty members were invited to live in the extra bedrooms at the Sweet Briar House. These were not normally superstitious people who took fright at odd happenings and things that might go bump in the night, but, one or two felt uneasy after Sterling Jones told them of the body that had been dug up from the floor in a basement room. The room had been the old winter kitchen during plantation days.

Sterling had helped with the construction of the original College buildings as well as with the remodeling of certain areas of the Sweet Briar House. In those early days the house became the Administration Building and contained the president’s suite, offices, infirmary, faculty rooms, and the Post Office.

In plantation days, cooking was done in the lower-level kitchen in a large fireplace complete with cooking crane, pot hooks, and a fieldstone hearth. A dumb waiter was built along the side of the chimney to carry food and wine to the dining room directly above. During renovations, all of this was to be removed and concrete was to be poured to make a wide smooth area for the future Post Office.

When the hearth stones were pried up to be carried away, the skeleton of a man was discovered to be lying stretched full length and fully clothed in a shallow grave beneath.

Sterling, Lewis Chambers, and several others described the man as being dressed in clothing of the far distant past, probably early nineteenth century. The man had black hair touched with gray and probably was in middle age. He had on a brown coat with buttons, a shirt with a red neck cloth, a vest, and in the coat pocket there was a fur cap. Lewis removed the body to the rear yard and buried him elsewhere at Sweet Briar. Nobody knows who he was, why he was buried there, nor when he was buried. In all the history of Sweet Briar these questions remain unanswered.
It was only after Sterling told this story that the faculty members living in the house began to tell little stories of their own about their experiences since taking up residence. Before this no strange happenings had been reported.

One professor reported that, upon going into the middle parlor one afternoon when it was empty, Daisy Williams' music box suddenly began to play. It played one full tune of the eight for which it had been programmed, and then cut itself off. Most items in the room had belonged to the founding family of the College and the music box sat on the marble base of one of the tall pier mirrors, where it had always been. The professor admitted to being "a bit uneasy."

After this, the story of the seventh step materialized. It seemed that for some reason several faculty boarders as well as others working in the house tripped on the seventh step from the bottom of the front hall staircase. The seventh step was no different from the other steps in the stair well. It was not uneven, did not project further than the other steps, but it seemed to endlessly catch heels and toes causing near accidents.

No less reliable a person than Miss Dee Long, professor of English for many years, told that Miss Elizabeth Czarnomska, of the Department of Religion, fell at the seventh step one evening. After a moment of unconsciousness she opened her eyes and said to those trying to lift her up, "Miss Indie tripped me in revenge. I broke one of her teacups today."

Even today, after these many years of use, people using the stairs are wary of the seventh step. The saying has always been: if Miss Indie is unhappy with something you have done, she will trip you on the seventh step. It still happens today.
In the early days the infirmary used two rooms upstairs in the back of the house. Students were frequently put to bed there with assorted aches, sprains, colds, and pains. These women had to be fed. Their meals were carried from the Refectory kitchen by a young man named Sam. As soon as Sam reached the walk leading to the house he was heard to repeat over and over, "Miss Indie, if you don't do nothin' to me I won't do nothin' to you." Sam claimed to have seen Miss Indie walking through the boxwood bushes on two occasions at the dinner hour. On reaching the path to the house he was also reported to carry the tray as fast as he could without spilling anything. One student said that if Sam had been timed, he would probably have broken every world record for the 50-yard dash.

Sometime after the infirmary had been moved to new quarters in the faculty apartments at No. 1 Faculty Row, the smallest of the two rooms that it had formerly occupied in Sweet Briar House was turned over to a faculty boarder. The room is only large enough for a bed, chair, chest, and bookshelf. There is also a clothes closet.

The professor had difficulty in keeping her room door closed. Often when she was in the room the door would open and close of its own accord. On investigation she discovered that in the plantation days the room had been Daisy Williams' play room. This was where the child kept her dolls, books, toys, and games. Could this have been Daisy coming to play? The professor was convinced that this was so. Sometimes the door would open and close immediately. At other times it would be open for ten or fifteen minutes before closing. When the professor left her room she always closed the door. On returning, the door was usually wide open.

One evening an instructor who liked to read in the west parlor was seated comfortably in a large green velvet overstuffed chair, one of two in the room. Electricity had been installed in the house by that time. A few years previously, oil lamps were used.
The large overhead chandelier with crystal prisms had been wired for electricity, but at that moment it was not turned on. The instructor was using a floor lamp. Suddenly the chandelier lit up and immediately switched off. On and off it went a half dozen times. No one else was in the room. The instructor said, "Daisy, stop playing with the lights!" The activity ceased immediately. Daisy was known to have been a very obedient child.

The Sweet Briar House has long been known for the lovely pier mirrors in its parlors. Originally there were six and they were a delight for the children who were invited to the house to play with Daisy. In 1931, an elderly woman, Elizabeth Robertson Lee, wrote a journal of her childhood experiences for her family. Elizabeth had been a cousin of the Caperton family who lived on a farm adjoining Sweet Briar lands. She visited her aunt, uncle, and cousins from her home in Buena Vista across the mountain during several summers as a little girl.

"We loved to visit Daisy at Sweet Briar. We would dance and pirouette in front of the tall mirrors in the parlors because we could see our reflections multiplied so many times. After we played, Mrs. Williams would give us cakes and sweets. It was like a fairy tale castle and Daisy was the princess. We did love to dance before the mirrors."

One afternoon one of the professors who lived at Sweet Briar House stood before one of the tall mirrors to adjust her hat before going out. How careless, she thought, the mirror is so cloudy it must need cleaning. As she looked more closely the cloudiness vanished only to return a few moments later. The cloud seemed to move across the glass like a mist, disappear, and then the mirror cleared. She said it looked as though the cloud was dancing.
Student Tales

The following two stories are creative student writing from 1910. Faculty, staff, and students of that time were close to the plantation period. The years from 1906 until World War I were Sweet Briar's horse-and-buggy days. Travel was difficult and many students spent their holidays, including Christmas, at the College.

Sweet Briar was small and the faculty and students were very close. The community was tightly knit. Oral history of the Fletcher-Williams family was familiar to all because many of the people who were hired by the college had worked on the plantation and knew the Williams family. They had interesting stories to tell from their own personal experiences.

The students were observant and avid listeners. The stories they made up around the basic facts, as they knew them from others, were fun, ingenious, and interesting.

In the Light of the Embers

The big hall clock was just chiming eleven as I finished the last page of my story. With a sigh of regret that the absorbing romance was ended, I closed the book, put out the lights, and crossed over to the big, open fire. It was Christmas week, and I was one of a party of girls and teachers who were spending the holidays at College. We were staying, not in the dormitories, but in the more-homelike atmosphere of the old Sweet Briar House.

Tonight when I finished reading I remembered that every one else had retired early, and consequently I was the sole occupant of the whole lower floor. On the one hand, the thought made me feel a bit uneasy because of the many supernatural stories connected with the house; but, on the other, my story had put me into such an imaginary, dreamy frame of mind that I was loath to go to bed. A deep chair before the fire extended a most welcome invitation, so, sinking into its luxurious depths, I decided to watch the blazing logs.
The flames cast a weird, uncertain light over the old room. Now and then a log slipped as its former support crumbled to ashes. Then rays of light leaped forth, illuminating for an instant different objects in the room. At one time a ray transformed a bit of gold from the mirror's edge into the burning eye of a dragon. At another, it changed the mahogany claw of the table into the brown, bony hand of a skeleton. For a long time I watched with absorption these wonderful metamorphoses. At length two particularly vivid streaks darted forth. One fell upon the portrait of the child Daisy, now dead for so many years; the other upon the long-silent harp standing in the recess of the window. Then the two darts converged and at once disappeared.

This rather unusual action aroused my thought. I glanced at the harp, and then, turning to the left, directed my gaze upon the features of the solemn-faced little girl looking down from her massive gold frame. Strange I had never before noticed what a very wistful expression she had. And, stranger still, that I had never noticed the object upon which her yearning eyes were so intently fixed. I started to investigate, and a few minutes later discovered that it was the harp which held her attention. I glanced again at the portrait and the change I saw in the expression was marvelous.

The face was joyous, and the eyes, now gazing in my direction, seemed to be thanking me for some great favor done. In fascination I stared at the picture. As I stared, the object of my gaze began to descend gradually to the floor. Reaching the carpet, it stopped, and from its embrace stepped forth the little maid of fourteen summers whom I had hitherto regarded merely as a picture from some artist's brush. What a mistaken fancy, for here she was a living, breathing child! A child, too, whose face was not solemn and melancholy, but which was, on the contrary, radiant and beaming with the light of some hidden joy.

For a second the little picture-girl stood still. Then with noiseless tread she started across the room.
“Oh, you dear little girl,” I impulsively called out, “won’t you come talk to me?”

But heedless of my remark, she moved on, and turned her steps toward the harp. When she reached it she deftly drew off the cover, and, with a little sigh of satisfaction, lovingly laid her check against its side. The next moment she began to pluck the strings gently.

What a picture the child made as she played! Never, never can I forget the scene. The look of rapture that overspread the childish face as she drew her fingers across the strings was as saintly and perfect as the expression of a madonna. And how wonderful were the strains of music that floated out at the touch!

At first a single little melody, full of pathos and pleading, stole forth. Timidly it began to pour out its story, and, finally dying away, was followed by other melodies, sometimes in slow and sometimes in hurried succession—each one telling a certain part of the tragic romance that the music as a whole was depicting. Each new strain vividly told its part, and after the last one all former melodies returned and blended into one harmonious crescendo.

I was held spellbound. Then the music carried me so completely in its wake that I began to quiver violently from head to foot as if held under some tremendous nervous strain. For support I reached for the arm of the chair. As I touched the velvet I was so startled that I sprang to an upright sitting posture. For an instant I gazed around in a bewildered manner. Then, my senses returning, I looked with strained eyes toward the harp. With difficulty I discerned its outlines and saw there was no figure by its side. I turned to the left and perceived that the picture of Daisy hung in its accustomed place on the wall. The fire, I found, was giving out its dying rays. The room was exceedingly cold, and I was shivering until my teeth chattered.

I arose from my chair, and as I did so the clock chimed half-past twelve. How quickly the time had flown! Could it be possible that I had been dreaming before the embers! No, I rather believe I had
been an eyewitness to Daisy’s return home. For was it not Friday night, and had I not been alone in the Gray drawing-room at twelve o’clock?

—Eugenia W. Griffin, 1910

The Shadow-Child

For a long time I had heard, on the far side of the hedge, a scraping among the dead leaves and in the pauses a child’s voice singing wordless songs. The singer, I thought, must be the gardener who had tied up the ragged cosmos flowers that yesterday had sprawled over the ground in the box-circle where I sat. At the thought, I saw it was true, for a child came through the opening in the hedge, brushing the leaf-mould from her short skirts and pushing back long curls from a high forehead, and blue eyes set far apart. She sat on the ground beside the crumpled flowers and began to smooth the pink petals through her earth-stained fingers.

“Do you live here?” I asked, for I had thought the house empty and its owners dead. The child quickly raised her face with a faint surprise in her wide eyes. She looked down the green box-walk, through the dark yew-tree arch at the closed shutters of the house beyond, before she answered.

“Yes.”

“Do you allow people to go through the house?” I went on.

“Yes; let me show it to you,” she smiled, almost eagerly.

The child ran before me down the walk, where she waited on the porch, beside the door which was half-opened on a dark, cool hall. We went in and started up the white-railed stairs, but on the lowest step she checked me.

“Somebody told me once,” she began shyly, “that a little girl lived here a long time ago – a little girl who died. Let’s pretend I am that little girl, and you are visiting me in this house?”
As I preceded her up the stairway—
“Remember,” she laughed, “that you’ve just come in your old coach, and it’s waiting for you now by the turn in the hedge. Can’t you hear the horses stamping?”

We waited in the dim silence of the upper hall until I fancied I heard hoofs pawing the hard clay road. I could see nothing in the gloom, but the child found a doorknob beside me. We entered the room, where I waited in the darkness while the child ran to open the shutters.

“This,” she began, as I stood dazzled by the sudden rush of sunlight, “is the best bedroom.”

As my eyes grew accustomed to the light I saw a tall four-poster with flowered curtains. There was fresh matting on the floor and pink cosmos flowers in a glass jar.

“Do you like it?” she asked eagerly. “Now we’ll go to my room.”

We went down the stairs, past a tall gilt mirror, and paused at a half-open door.

“This is the library, but we can’t go in. Papa’s in there writing.”

We tiptoed hastily by, but I turned my head and through the crack saw a man’s shoulder bent over a table.

“Was this the little girl’s?” I asked as we went into the close-shut room.

“Yes,” said the child softly. “But you’re forgetting. It’s my room and my desk and my flowers in the windows.” As she spoke heavy furniture stood out dimly among the shadows, and the light in the square panes came through green leaves and pink transparent petals of flowers. The child called me to the bed and I saw that it was heaped with little piles of linen and silk and satin, folded and uncut.

“These were hers,” she said gently.

“The other little girl’s? She had a great many lovely things.”

“Yes,” the child replied slowly, “but I think she would rather have had some other children to play with.”
I had forgotten our game in thinking of the other girl, who would have been almost an old woman now if she had lived. I looked across at the child, who stood on the other side of the bed, folding a piece of pink-sprigged lawn. She looked up with a little start when I said, "Shall we go on?"

"Oh, yes," she smiled; "I'll show you my harp."

I followed her through the hall again into a room of dim furniture wrapped in linen covers. She lifted a corner of one to show me the bright brocade beneath. A great square piano filled one angle of the room, and beside it the gold harp frame showed through its worn green cover. The child patted the torn case.

"Do you play on it much?" I asked.

"I did. I mean I haven't practiced much, and some of the strings are broken. Come over here and I'll show you the Japanese cabinet."

She started across the room and I turned to follow her, but stopped to look again at a picture that I had seen first only as the vague outline of a face. It grew clear now as the portrait of a child - a little girl with long, quaint curls and a gentle face. I looked from it to the child coming back from the cabinet. A little wind banged the shutter to, and in the sudden twilight that it made I could see her only as a shadow among the shadows.

"Is that the picture of the little girl?" I began, and stopped.

"That died," finished the child, "and that you didn't know in the garden, and everybody else that comes here knows? So when I saw you didn't I thought I'd pretend I was real." She looked wistfully around the room in which she had been real.

We walked silently back to where the door we had entered opened on the sunlight. Outside under the yew-tree arch the child looked back once before she was lost among the boxwood. Behind me the door swung open on a bare and empty room.

—Anonymous