

The Ghost Train

14th January 1984 The Royal Alexandra and Albert School

The silhouette of the school stretched across the sketchy black sky, and the towering building seemed a single bird in the lonely patch of land. No lights shone in any of the windows; the curtains were all drawn to protect the sleeping children in each room. All the lights were off – all except one. Anabella (or Bella as her friends called her) had a room of her own and was often up after hours, staring out across the frost covered lawns, watching the horses gallop across the fields and listening to the soft ripple of the rock pools below. Holly, a close friend, had told her not to do this on many occasions but Bella had ignored her wise warning every time. Bella's face was pressed so close to the window that her breath was visible on the glass. Suddenly, a strange noise pierced the air and a glow appeared on the hillside, beside the forest. Bella watched curiously as the light slowly slithered towards the abandoned train station that rested on the border of the school grounds.

Bella glanced around the room, then decided – she would go and explore. Slipping on her one family possession, a light pink coat with a faded purple collar, she carefully opened the door, switched off the light and crept silently down the corridor. Out in the night air, the blue moon hung in the sky and the forest loomed ahead of her. This was weird. No one was allowed to go down to the station, it was fenced off and no one outside the school knew about it. How then, was there anyone down there? A soft, blue glow from the moon set over the forest as she entered the black abyss of tangled trees. At first, the only thing in her way was the thick blanket of fog which carpeted the forest but as she delved deeper into the tangle of fallen ash trees, it began to be a struggle to stay upright. The undergrowth was in need of water and seemed to want to eat everything around it. The long branches climbed up towards the sky, casting grotesque shadows on the ground, and Bella's thin coat was struggling to keep out the chill.

Nearing the wired fence, Bella began to grow cautious of her surroundings and carefully climbing over the border, slipped down hurriedly, taking refuge behind a large oak. From in between the spindling branches she could just about make out an old fashioned train, resting in the station. Now she was puzzled. The tracks were bent, broken and unusable, so how then was there a train, right in front of her eyes, resting on them? Suddenly, something else caught Bella's eye; something that made the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. A violet coat, a red t-shirt and a pair of blue shorts. She blinked. Yes, there were figures on the platform, boarding and waiting for trains. This was serious! Bella began

to doubt her decision to come down, but managed to calm herself. To assure herself further, she decided to have a closer look.

As silently as she could, Bella slipped away from the safety of the shadowy tree and, keeping low, moved across the spongy ground towards the stone slab that made the station. Her hands touched the cool stone as she hauled herself up onto the platform where the figures stood, their backs turned to her. After taking in her surroundings, Bella decided that the safest place to observe was the bright yellow door that had once led to the passenger lounge. Not wanting to disturb the figures, she crept over silently and waited. Minutes passed. Bella began to grow weary. Finally, she caved in and decided to approach the mysterious figures. Cautiously, she clambered over the ivy choked platform towards the nearest figure, who was wearing a red coat, and tapped on her shoulder gently. As soon as she did, a terrible coldness crept into her but she pushed it away. As confidently as she could, she spoke to the lady, "Excuse me ma'am but could you tell me what's going on?" The lady turned. The grotesque figure that was hidden under the coat was a glowing skeleton; a vivid nightmare in real life. Bella screamed.

Before she knew what she was doing, Bella was tearing across the station and back towards the fence. A wild and terrifying cry filled the night as the skeleton creatures gave chase. Bella clambered over the wired fence but the monsters pursuing her just slipped through the holes and carried on. Ducking and diving behind trees for shelter, Bella stumbled through the forest and sprinted across the frost covered lawns towards the looming building that stood ahead. It was so close. She was almost there. Almost to the safety of her room and her warm, helping friends. Bella turned to see where her chasers were. That was her downfall...

The next day an old fashioned train was found, half burnt, half battered, as though someone had used it for a ritual. In the front carriage of the train, a young girl's clothes were found; clothes belonging to a student at the school. Among them was a light pink coat with a faded purple collar.