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Bernard MacLaverty • Norman Mailer  
Rosemary Pardoe • Lynda Rajan • Ruth Rendell • Saki**

**THE**  
*Splintering*  
**FRAME**

**by Antonella Mignani**

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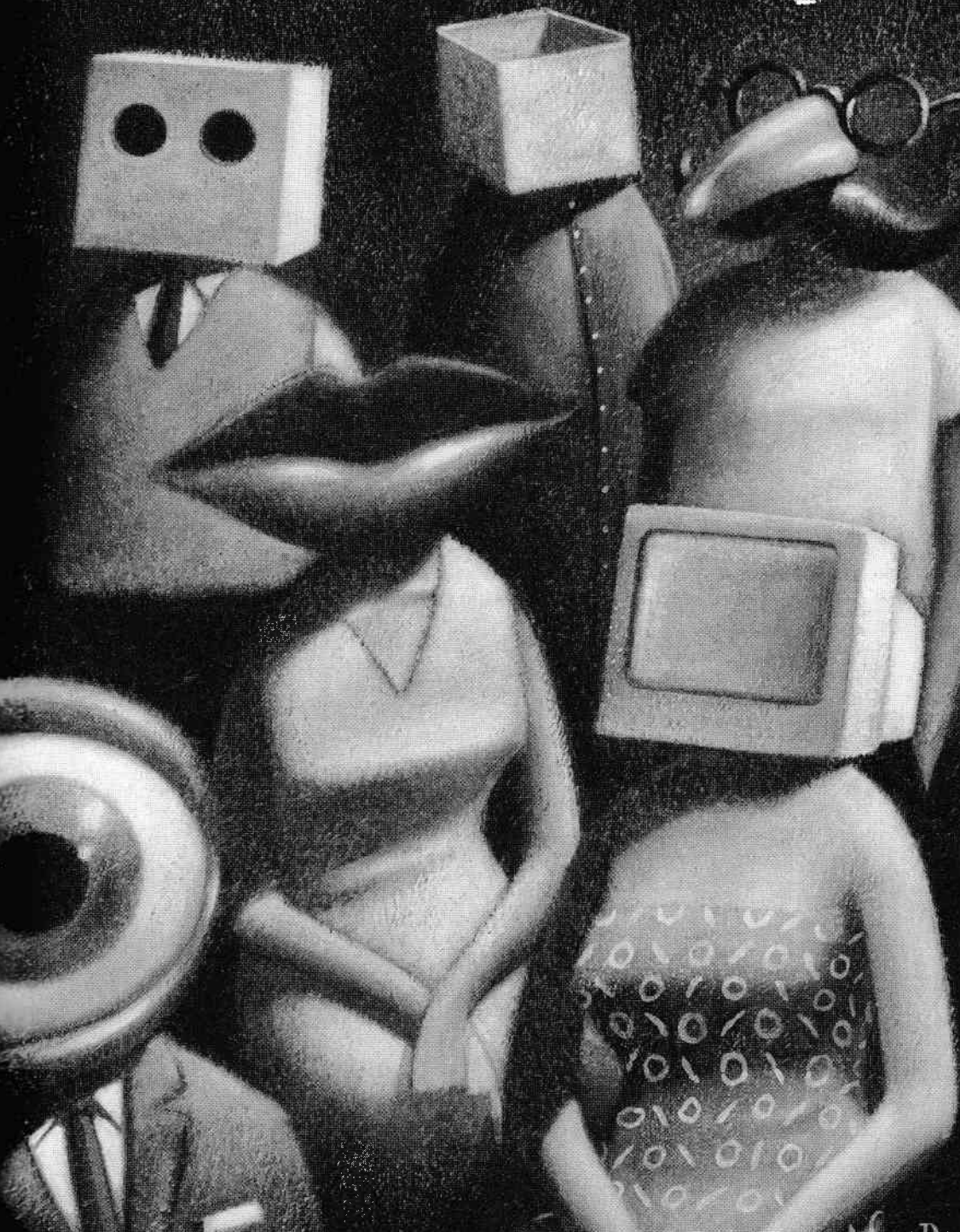
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UNIT ONE

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# Creepy Feelings



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## The Accident

In this very short story a quarrel between two friends ends up with a fatal accident. Will either of them survive?

## The Chauffeur

A pleasant one-week holiday down in Cornwall, some ordinary characters in a picturesque setting, a historic mansion and its old legends... nothing really extraordinary. But a mysterious presence haunts the place, and the quiet, uneventful holiday turns out to be an unforgettable experience.

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### Tune-in activity

- 1 What or who gives you the creeps?
- 2 In your own words, give a definition of 'fear', then compare it with your classmates.
- 3 In your opinion, is fear something to be dreaded and avoided or desired and enjoyed, i.e. watching horror films, taking unnecessary risks or doing forbidden and dangerous things?

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# The Accident

by MARJORIE BOWEN



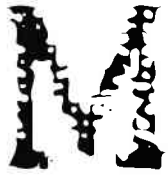
## Marjorie Bowen

Her real name was Gabrielle Margaret Long, née Campbell, a name which she sometimes used together with other pseudonyms, notably Joseph Shearing and George R. Preedy.

Born in Hampshire, England in 1888, she wrote more than 100 novels, historical studies, biographies, plays and short stories. Her Italian and Dutch settings are particularly memorable. Her most famous and successful novel is *The Viper of Milan* (1917). She died in December 1952.

## While listening, note down...

- the feelings of the two characters towards each other.
- how they react to the accident.
- what we are told about the consequences of the accident.



Murchison was amazed at the speed with which he escaped from the flaming car, across the common, for he could now see the red blaze<sup>1</sup> on the lonely road in the distance: they were fools to row, he and Bargrave, and send the cursed vehicle over like that; he had not ceased<sup>2</sup> running since he had felt the first shock of the released fire from the wreckage.<sup>3</sup> 5

He wondered why they had quarrelled: the fright<sup>4</sup> had seared his memory; but he certainly knew he loathed Bargrave; the landscape was oddly<sup>5</sup> dim, like the dimness of an eclipse.

Murchison, still fleeing, suddenly saw Bargrave in front of him, also hurrying – an attenuated, grey wisp<sup>6</sup> of a Bargrave, blown thin by the forlorn breeze. 10

Murchison yelled<sup>7</sup> in triumph:

‘So you were killed, you silly fool!’

‘Do you think that you’re alive?’ jeered the ghost of Bargrave, then Murchison knew that he also had no body and that the red flames were not the blaze of the burning car but the light of their future destination. 15

1 **blaze** : bright red flames of a burning fire.

2 **ceased** : stopped.

3 **wreckage** ['rekɪdʒ] : what is left of a vehicle after a serious accident.

4 **fright** : a sudden feeling of fear.

5 **oddly** : in an unusual and strange way.

6 **wisp** : a thin smoky shape.

7 **yelled** : cried out, shouted.

.....

## Read and Complete

..... and ..... are two friends involved in a ..... accident whose ..... consequences ..... clear only at the end, and leave no ..... for hope.

.....

## Stop and Think

- 1 Why has the accident happened?
- 2 What do the two men do after the accident?
- 3 'The red flames were... the light of their future destination.' On the evidence of this sentence, can you explain what the two friends' future will be?
- 4 Do you think the two men have deserved their destiny?

## STUDY GUIDE

### Overcoming difficulties with vocabulary

- 1 Hypothesise on the possible meanings of the boxed words. Make use of all the contextual clues you can think of, both syntactic (decide whether the word is a noun, adjective, verb etc., from its position in the sentence) and semantic (guess what the word is likely to mean from what comes before and after it).

At the end of the activity, check your dictionary to see if you were right.

<b>common</b>	The article 'the' comes right before it, so the word is a ..... Consider the preposition immediately before it (across) and then the rest of the sentence. It may mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a kind of road</li> <li>• a hill</li> <li>• a field</li> </ul>
<b>row</b>	Considering its position in the sentence, the word is a ..... Is it more likely to refer to action (the characters' behaviour) or feeling (the characters' emotions)? Does it refer to something that happened before, during or after the accident? Now look at l. 7: there's a synonym for it; ..... Is the meaning of 'row' clear now?
<b>seared</b>	It comes after an auxiliary verb, so it is a ..... What happens to memory when we are terrified? Do we remember things clearly after a shock?
<b>loathed</b>	It comes right after a personal subject pronoun, so it is a ..... Does it refer to action or feeling? Does it have a positive or negative meaning? What are your feelings towards a person you are quarrelling with?

<p><b>dim/dimness</b></p>	<p>Considering its position after the verb 'to be' and an adverb, dim is an ..... Dimness is a ..... formed by the root dim plus the suffix '-ness'. To understand their meaning, think about what happens during an eclipse: can you see things clearly? Now try to connect the idea of an eclipse with its possible effects on the landscape.</p>
<p><b>fleeing</b></p>	<p>The suffix '-ing' suggests that it is a ..... Focus on the adverb 'still': it means you have to look back earlier in the story for a synonym, something the subject was already doing before.</p>
<p><b>jeered</b></p>	<p>It is just after a clause of saying, so it is a reporting ..... To guess the meaning, consider the situation and what the character says. How do you think he says it? What is his attitude and tone of voice like? Read aloud and rehearse Bargrave's words as if you were an actor.</p>

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The Chauffeur

by ROSEMARY PARDOE

## Rosemary Pardoe

Born in 1951, she is considered one of the finest contemporary writers of ghost stories, a short fiction subgenre she keeps alive through her annual series of *Ghosts and Scholars* (in its 13th year now) and related titles published by her Hunted Library imprint.

Her most famous collection of supernatural short stories is *The Angry Dead* (1986), written under the pen name Mary Ann Allen. These tales are all narrated by their protagonist, the church restorer Jane Bradshawe. The story included in this collection, 'The Chauffeur', is one of them.

Rosemary Pardoe is also a well known writer of history books.

## While reading, note down...

- what makes the holiday so special for the protagonist.
- how she reacts to the story her friends tell her: what does this tell us about her personality?
- what is rather unusual about the ghost. (If compared, for example, to that of the House.)
- what the Farrows' attitude towards 'their' ghost is like.



ourtham House, in its present form, was mostly built during the reigns of Henry VII<sup>1</sup> and his notorious, much-married son; although portions of earlier work are incorporated into its walls. The building is generally considered to be the best Tudor

Manor in Cornwall, and since being taken over by the National Trust<sup>2</sup> twenty 5  
years ago, it has become a popular spot<sup>3</sup> with day-trippers. In summer the  
courtyards and lovely tiered<sup>4</sup> gardens are thronged<sup>5</sup> with holidaymakers; and  
their cars block the small country lane<sup>6</sup> which runs past Courtham Quay on  
the River Tamar, and forms the only access to the House. In winter, however, 10  
and especially in the evenings, it is a beautifully lonely and isolated place,  
despite the fact that Plymouth is no more than fifteen miles away.

1 **Henry VII** : Henry VII Tudor (reigned 1485-1509) was the first of this dynasty; he ascended the throne after the War of the Roses. He built the foundations of a wealthy nation state and a powerful monarchy. His son Henry VIII (1509-1547) was the absolute monarch of a wealthy state. He broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. He is often remembered for his six wives, two of whom he executed.

2 **National Trust** : a non-profit-making society for the preservation of natural scenery and sites of historic interest all over Britain and Northern Ireland.

3 **spot** : place.

4 **tiered** [tɪəd] : arranged in rows.

5 **thronged** : crowded, full of people.

6 **lane** : very small and narrow country road.

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## Read and Complete

Courtham House is a famous ..... Manor in Cornwall and is run by the  
.....

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