

NOSAM

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Cover Illustrated by Nicola J Bolton

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For Paul, Michael and Lisa

CHAPTER 1

The house stood down a quiet road about half a mile from the nearest village. Pete and Josie Bingham had brought their two children Gabby and Joe to look round this rundown looking building that was called 'Nosam'.

"That's a funny name," said Joe as he leaned his head to the side and read the sign that was hanging down by one screw.

Gabby looked at the house then at her parents "You seriously want to buy this load of rubbish?" she said. Gabby was fifteen and starting to get quite opinionated.

"I think it's dead good! It might be haunted," teased Joe. Gabby looked at her young brother, he was eleven and beginning to annoy her.

"Oh shut up, pipsqueak!" she said giving him a shove.

"Right you two, the estate agent's arrived, so behave!" said a stern Dad.

"Mr and Mrs Bingham, hello! I'm Matthew Corey from Corey Estate Agents." They shook hands and started to walk up the drive.

Gabby seemed to find a bit of enthusiasm after being introduced to Matthew Corey - who in

Gabby's language was 'hot' - and took his outstretched hand with shyness. This didn't go unnoticed with Pete and Josie; they just looked at each other and smiled.

"How long has it been empty?" Josie asked as the estate agent unlocked the front door.

"Twelve months now. An elderly couple had owned it since 1953 when they had been looking for something bigger with their three young children. They saw this being built and fell in love with it, so the story goes. My grandfather remembers them buying the house as he was an estate agent at the time. Think he would have liked it himself!"

They entered the front door and found themselves standing in a big square hall.

"It was a shame they let the house go into disrepair," Matthew said, looking up at the ceiling. "The daughters tried to get them to sell it and move into something smaller but they wouldn't. It was their home and they weren't moving, they told them."

"It's a lovely double fronted house," Matthew said, continuing with his sales talk as he took them into the lounge on the left and then into the dining room to the right. At the rear was a big kitchen with a utility area that overlooked the massive overgrown garden.

Dad turned to Joe. "That's a big garden!" Dad said.

"Wow, it's huge," Joe replied, "and I could climb that tree..."

"Er, I don't think so!" interrupted Mum before Joe got really carried away.

Upstairs were four bedrooms and a bathroom which Gabby found to be so old that she didn't fancy sleeping in *any* of them. She made her way back downstairs to the hall with a bored expression on her face, waiting for everyone else to follow.

"If you need any more information or would like to see it again, just contact me," Matthew said as he handed his business card to Mr Bingham.

"Okay, thanks," replied Pete, looking back at the house. He looked at his wife and puffed out his cheeks. "Needs a lot doing!"

"Certainly does! But it has got something about it....as if it's....crying out for someone to help make it nice again," Josie added. And with that thought, they slowly made their way back to the car.

CHAPTER 2

Later that evening Pete and Josie discussed the house and the potential it had to become a great family home. They told Gabby and Joe that they intended to buy the house, modernise it and restore it to its former glory. Joe was more than happy with that plan but Gabby just sighed and muttered, "Whatever!"

As the weeks turned into months and Christmas came and went, work finally started on the house. The Bingham's were able to stay in their present home for another eight weeks until the new buyers moved in, so that enabled the downstairs and upstairs extensions to begin. Joe knew that as soon as the upstairs and kitchen had been finished then they could move into their new house, although downstairs they would only have the use of the kitchen until the two front rooms were finished.

Joe and Gabby passed 'Nosam' each day on their way to school, with Joe always stopping outside the house to watch in amazement in regard to how builders managed to improve the look of a house and make it so much bigger.

“One day I’m going to have my own building firm,” thought Joe.

The workmen noticed Joe standing at the gate and waved; he and his Dad had been constant visitors to the house, checking on the progress of the work over the recent weeks.

“Morning Gaffer!” the young workman shouted to Joe, who was checking the cement mixer. He always climbed up the scaffolding far quicker than the others with no fear whatsoever, even with those very hard looking shoes he wore.

“Hi there!” Joe shouted back, hitching up a bag on one shoulder and his other bag containing his football kit on the other whilst at the same time starting to run after his sister who was miles away by now!

Joe joined the other boys in the playground who were trying to perfect their football skills. Nick kicked the ball at Joe, who neatly headed it to Liam. “Goal!” they shouted as Liam controlled the ball and sneaked it past Jack, who made a late dive onto the improvised goal post made of school bags.

“Hope you’re not on our side this afternoon,” they laughed at Jack as he grabbed his bag from the pile on the ground.

“I don’t want to be in goal!” Jack muttered as he walked away.

“No, we don’t want you to be either - you’re rubbish!” they replied as they all made their way into school.

“Right, ladies and gents, turn to page seventy four,” Mrs Dukes told class 7P. “If you remember, in the last lesson we had been discussing how people lived during World War II and what effect this had on their lives. Now we are going onto whether people lived longer before the war or after the war. So how do you think we could find this out?”

There was silence!

“Well, they’ll all be dead now so we can’t ask anyone,” said one of the girls.

“No, but you’re in the right direction and closer than you think,” Mrs Dukes said. “We are going on a trip to the local cemetery to read the headstones and we will be able to find some indication that way.”

“Are we going at night, Miss?” Liam called out.

“No we are not!” Mrs Dukes replied as the class began to laugh.

“Is that because you’re frightened?” some of the boys mocked.

“We won’t be able to read the headstones in the dark!” said an exasperated Mrs Dukes.

Luckily the bell rang for end of lessons before the conversation got quite out of hand and turned to her uneasiness in graveyards. She knew that the dead couldn’t harm you but she certainly wouldn’t visit one at night!

Mrs Dukes handed out the forms for parental permission to visit the cemetery.

"I would like these signed by your parents and back by next week at the latest!" she shouted as 7P ran out of the room and proceeded to make their way for the double games lesson.

"When do you move into your new house?" Liam asked Joe as they were tying up the laces on their football boots.

"On Saturday. I can't wait!" said an excited Joe as they ran onto the pitch.

CHAPTER 3

Three days later, two removal vans arrived at the Bingham's old house, one to take some furniture to 'Nosam' and the other to put the rest into storage. Joe and his Dad went to the new house to wait for the furniture to arrive whilst Gabby and Mum stayed to make sure everything had been taken out of the house and it was clean and tidy for the new people moving in that afternoon.

Joe had already picked out his room weeks ago. He wanted to overlook the back garden. He ran upstairs and made a dive onto the new bed that had been bought. He and Gabby were having double beds.

"So much space!" Joe said as he lay there on his tummy, spread-eagled across the bed. He heard Dad's voice coming up the stairs.

"That's to go in here, please," he said as the two removal men heaved the wardrobe into Joe's room.

"You can start by hanging up your clothes," Dad told him.

"Okay," Joe responded as he began to open the suitcase of clothes and hang them up. He was getting annoyed as some kept sliding off the

hangers but eventually it was done. He ran down the stairs and out into the back garden. Mum hadn't arrived yet so he thought he would try his luck at climbing the tree.

"Easy, peasy," he said, feeling pleased with himself as he reached a good spot where he could sit in it safely. From there he was able to watch everything going on, including his Dad in the kitchen, but he hadn't noticed Joe as he was too busy sorting things out and making the kitchen look like home for a short time.

A voice suddenly said, "Okay young fella, might be a good idea to come down from there before you fall out of it!"

Joe looked down to see the workman with the funny shoes.

"I'm not going to fall out, I'm not stupid!" he replied.

"I know you're not stupid, but accidents happen when you least expect it. So come down before your Mum arrives or you'll be getting more than a telling off from her!"

Reluctantly Joe climbed down.

"Charlie Mason's my name, and you are Joe, that right?"

"Yea!" he said, still feeling peeved at having to come down from the tree. "When will it all be finished?" he asked.

"Bout a couple of weeks, that's all. It will look good then," Charlie said, surveying the

property. "I'll miss it, I've grown quite attached to it, I have".

Charlie sat down on a small pile of bricks whilst Joe looked up at the other workmen on the roof hammering nails into the carefully positioned slates.

"What's it like standing on the roof?" he asked Charlie.

"Well, there's a knack to it and takes a while to perfect but once you've got your confidence it becomes second nature. But there's always an element of risk, like anything you do. So don't you go trying it out!"

Joe kicked a pebble in the long grass.

"How's the football going at school?" Charlie asked. "Won any matches lately?"

"Well...not great, we lost 1-0 the other day. Jack, our goalie, isn't very good," Joe replied as he kicked another pebble down the garden.

"Perhaps you should take turns in goal, then you'll be able to find out who the best goalkeeper is that way. It will be a winning streak then with the right goalie."

"Hey, that's a good idea..."

"Joe, can you come in and give me a hand in the kitchen?" Dad shouted. "You look as if you need something to do!"

Joe turned to Charlie. "Have to go now!"

“Must get on myself,” he replied, climbing up the scaffolding.

CHAPTER 4

By Sunday evening everyone was feeling worn out from the move, especially Pete and Josie.

"We are NOT moving again!" Josie said as she lowered herself into one of the deck chairs that they had put into the extended part of the kitchen. "It's so much hassle! Can't wait for the two weeks of living in here to end until we can finally move into the front rooms. And the dust is driving me nuts!"

Pete sat down on the deck chair next to her. "We are definitely staying put, no more moves!" He looked around and added, "It's going to look great though when it's finished!" as he squeezed his wife's hand affectionately.

"Mum, we're starving, what's for tea?" Gabby said as she and Joe came into the kitchen after being in their bedrooms doing homework.

Joe laughed as he watched his Mum heave herself out of the chair. "Oh, you're so old!" he teased.

"They are not the easiest things to get out of," Mum replied, "so for being cheeky you can peel the potatoes for oven chips. Gabby, you can grill the gammon. I'll do the beans!"

They all devoured the meal that they had eventually prepared together.

“Gives you an appetite, this moving lark,” said Dad as he mopped up the juice from the beans with a piece of bread. “When’s your visit to the graveyard, Joe?”

“Tuesday,” he replied as he started to open his yoghurt carton.

“Whoooo, mind the ghosts don’t spirit you away!” said his sister, chuckling at Joe.

“There aren’t such things as ghosts and if there were I wouldn’t be frightened!” he said with conviction.

“Yes you would!” Gabby quickly replied.

“That’s enough,” Mum interrupted as she got up to clear the table. “Dad and I will do the dishes whilst you both go and finish any homework.”

Gabby and Joe didn’t need telling twice; they hated doing the dishes and often used the excuse of having homework to get out of doing them even if they hadn’t, but Mum was wise to the fact.

CHAPTER 5

Class 7P were in an orderly line outside the cemetery gates. Mr Jefferson the PE teacher had also come along to help keep the class in order, he wouldn't stand any nonsense, not like Mrs Dukes, who was a bit of a pushover. She began to go through a few rules in a voice that was trying to be heard but also trying to be quiet - this made everyone start to laugh as her lips began to over-annunciate her words. But the look Mr Jefferson threw at them made them quickly stifle the laughter.

Mrs Dukes continued

"Remember, we must all be very respectful and reasonably quiet as there may be people visiting their relations' graves. So there will be no running, sitting on headstones or trampling on graves. You've all got your clipboards and sheets of paper." She emphasised this by waving one in the air. "So you all know what to do."

They had been told to write the names of the people listed on the headstones, together with their dates of birth and death.

"The first ten will go over on the right hand side with Mr Jefferson, the next ten in the centre

and the rest on the left hand side with me," she added.

"Oh! That's so sad!" said Becky as she wrote down that Thomas Rivers had fallen asleep at ten days old in 1906 and that his sister had died aged two, three years later.

"Well, there are three in this grave!" Joe said as he started to read out the names.

"CHARLES (CHARLIE) MASON

Born 10th June 1930

Died 7th July 1953

(Tragically at work)

Aged 23 years

"Gosh! The son died young. I wonder what happened and where he worked," said Becky, who was hurriedly trying to write all the information down before moving on.

Joe continued reading.

Loving Son

of

POLLY MASON

Died 30th January 1956

Aged 49 years

“Charlie Mason! I’ve heard that name before,” said Joe, racking his brains. “Hey Liam, Charlie Mason, that’s the name of the builder I was telling you about, you know, he told me to come down from the tree.”

“That could be the grandson of this Charlie Mason, I suppose,” Liam replied.

Joe answered, “Suppose it could be. I’ll have to ask him” as he then read the last inscription.

Loving Wife
of
ALFRED MASON
Died 10th February 1990
Aged 86 years
Loving Husband and Father”

Class 7P were soon back at school in the classroom, with Mrs Dukes telling everyone that their homework was to collate all their information, ready for discussion at the next lesson.

CHAPTER 6

Liam went home with Joe from school that day.

"We could ask Charlie whether he's related to these Masons," Joe told Liam as they went upstairs to dump their bags in his bedroom.

"Yeah, okay, let's ask him now," said Liam as they ran back down.

Joe began looking for Charlie. "There he is," said Joe as he pointed to Charlie, who was standing at the cement mixer.

"Where?" Liam asked.

"There!" Joe pointed again, "next to the cement mixer."

"But there's no one there, you noggin!" exclaimed Liam.

"Course there is, look! He's got those funny shoes and his shirt sleeves rolled up," Joe said as he waved to Charlie.

Liam started to say "Are you having me on....." when realisation hit them as they both turned to look at each other.

Liam spoke slowly. "You don't think its...!"

".....a GHOST!" Joe finished for him.

They both stood still, wondering what to do.

"Why can't you see him and I can?" Joe queried in a soft voice, "and what's he doing here at my house?"

Liam whispered, "I dunno. I'm not of the spirit world, but clearly you're in contact with them."

Both boys back-tracked and returned to Joe's bedroom.

"We're going to have to find out whether he is a ghost," Liam told his friend.

"I know! But I can't go up to him and say 'by the way, are you a ghost?'. It sounds silly!" Joe looked at Liam and added, "We could follow him home this evening and see where he goes... they'll be finishing soon."

It wasn't long before the workmen started to leave. Joe and Liam ran into the front bedroom so Joe could see from the window as to which way Charlie went.

"He's turned right out of here," Joe said, peeping round the curtain. "Come on, let's go!"

They ran out to the front, with Joe keeping a good distance from Charlie and ready to dive for cover before he turned round and spotted them. All Liam could do was keep close to Joe, as he hadn't a clue to Charlie's whereabouts, not being able to see him.

"What's he doing now?" Liam asked Joe. "We've been walking for ages."

"Ooh no!"

“What?!” Liam exclaimed.

“He’s just walked through the cemetery gates, *without* opening them!!”

Liam stopped. “This isn’t funny now Joe, I’m not going in there!”

“Don’t be daft, we have to. Quick, round the back we can climb over the wall!”

A reluctant Liam followed. He wasn’t as tall as Joe so when Joe offered to give him a leg up first he wasn’t too happy, as he thought it would be just like Joe to help him over and then run off and leave him!

“Come on, what you waiting for?” Joe said quickly.

“You go first,” Liam insisted.

Joe hadn’t time to mess around so he climbed with ease over the wall, leaving Liam to struggle and fall over the other side with a thud.

“Shush! He’ll hear!” Joe whispered as he bent down to Liam’s level. “We will have to keep low down, hiding behind the headstones.”

They both crept around, grateful in one respect that it was still light outside. Then Joe stopped, pulling Liam down behind a headstone.

“He’s sitting on the headstone... the Mason family one.”

“Keep down, he’ll see you,” Joe said as Liam began to get up to have a look.

"But I can't see him, remember?" he pointed out as he was pulled roughly down again

"I know! But *he'll* see you!" Joe replied indignantly.

It felt to Liam that they had been in this cemetery far too long.

"I'm going back," he said

"Oh alright! I'm coming, there's not much happening, Charlie's still sitting there."

They both made their way back to the wall in the same way, staying low. This time Liam didn't mind the leg up *out* of the cemetery. Neither boys stopped running until they were safely back at Joe's house.

CHAPTER 7

Joe found himself day-dreaming in class and was constantly asked to pay attention. He longed to tell someone else other than Liam about Charlie Mason but who could he trust not to think he was completely mental. Certainly not Gabby; she would tell everyone at school and he couldn't stand the humiliation of that. Mum and Dad would probably only half listen and just say "That's nice!", meaning 'don't bother me, I'm too busy!'. No, he and Liam were going to have to solve it themselves but he wished that his friend could also see 'the dead', or was it that maybe Charlie was just a good magician?

Joe and Liam decided that they would go and see the vicar of St Oswald's at the local parish church. It was only a short distance from the cemetery so it was likely they held records of funerals that had taken place there. They weren't too sure how that would help but at least they were trying to do something.

Joe couldn't wait for school to finish, as he was dying to make some progress on what happened to Charlie all those years ago. Liam, well... let's say he was still a bit sceptical of what Joe was telling him and hoped that his

friend was not having him on! But then you couldn't really make that story up, and Joe had told him about the builder called Charlie Mason before they had even gone to the cemetery and found the grave!

Liam wished he could see what Joe could see. Perhaps he could get Charlie to move a brick or something so that it looked as if it was flying in mid air! That would make him believe! But hadn't they just been discussing the meaning of a 'Doubting Thomas' in a recent lesson? So there was no option but to go along with everything for the present time.

At last both boys walked up the drive to the vicarage and rang the bell. The door was opened by a lady, who looked quite surprised to see them standing there.

"May we see the vicar, please?" Joe asked.

"Do you have an appointment?" she answered with a smile.

"No, but we are doing some research at school and wondered if he could help us out with some information," Joe smiled back.

She showed them into a study and went to get the vicar.

"How can I help you?" the Reverend Burns asked as he entered the room. "My wife says you are doing research."

"Yes, that's right," said Joe as he took out a sheet of paper from his bag. "We recently had

a school trip to the cemetery as a history lesson. We noticed that there was a grave belonging to the Mason family and wondered if you knew any more information." Joe looked at his notes before continuing, "It says that Charlie Mason died 'tragically at work'. Do you know how he died?"

"It's before I came here but I have heard of the Mason family, they were builders."

Joe heard Liam swallow loudly.

Reverend Burns continued, "In fact, the only surviving person related to them is a cousin of Charlie's. That's Mrs Annie Summers, she would be able to shed a bit of light on that for you. I know Annie, she helps with the flowers in the church. I can give her a ring and suggest that you meet her here one day if that's what you would like?"

"Yes please!" said Joe in an excited shaky voice.

So a meeting was arranged with Annie Summers for the following afternoon after school.

CHAPTER 8

It was weird seeing Charlie at the house while knowing that in a few hours they would be talking to his cousin and in a funny sort of way Joe felt as if he was betraying him by not mentioning this fact. But he had to confirm things first and knew that soon it would be time to tell Charlie all that he had found out.

Mrs Summers was introduced to Joe and Liam by Mrs Burns, the vicar's wife. She had a nice warm smile which made the boys relaxed and comfortable in her company.

"Call me Annie," she insisted, "everybody does, I've never got used to being referred to as Mrs Summers. It does sound very old!" The boys smiled.

"So you want to know about my cousin Charlie Mason."

Joe nodded at her and mumbled a quiet "Yes."

"Well if I'm going on too much then just tell me and you can ask questions instead."

Annie told them how Charlie had been the only child of her mum's sister Polly and her husband Alfred. Alfred had started a little building firm

and so was delighted when his son and heir Charlie came along.

Annie continued, "We were very close in age, Charlie and I, so spent a lot of time together when growing up . I had a brother but he was ten years older than me so the age gap was quite significant. My Aunt Polly was glad that he and I were able to play out together."

Annie explained that Charlie was always a proper lad and that nothing seemed to frighten him. He would swing from trees and many a time he would have to rescue her from the shed roof that he had made her climb.

The boys found the story of Charlie's early years captivating and urged Annie to go on after she stopped due to wondering if they were bored. She was happy to continue, especially with such a captive audience.

"At sixteen Charlie started to work for his father, he loved the outdoors and was happy to learn the trade from his dad. He was a quick learner and like Uncle Alfred could turn his hand to most things." Annie's voice then softened and the smile faded from her face.

"Everything was going well, business was booming. Alfred had acquired a piece of land not far from here and they started to build a house. It was going to be a great family house, Alfred had said, one that would stand out from the rest with plenty of space".

Joe moved a little nearer to the edge of his seat, waiting to hear what was coming next.

"It had started to rain lightly with a forecast of heavy rain later...they had to get the roof watertight. Charlie was up there putting the felt on when the wind started to pick up." Annie's eyes filled with tears. "We think he must have lost his balance with the gust of wind and fell to the ground. It was terrible for Alfred, he heard the thud and saw his son lying there unconscious."

Joe and Liam gasped!

Annie looked at them, her face filled with sorrow. "You see, the fall broke his neck and he died instantly...he was only twenty three...that's all he was!" She paused to compose herself before carrying on. "Uncle Alfred never got over it, blamed himself, said *he* should have been the one up on the roof. And poor Aunt Polly, she was destroyed with grief, her only child dead!"

Annie told them that six months later, Alfred decided to finish the house. It was also the last house he ever built! His wife Polly became ill soon after and died two years later.

"My mother said that she died of a broken heart," said Annie, "and that only a mother would understand that! I never had children but I certainly knew the grief of losing my best friend."

Annie opened her bag and pulled out a photograph. "This is Charlie taken not long before the accident."

Joe looked at the photo and there, smiling back at him, was Charlie, the *exact* same Charlie who was working on *his* house and who wore the *same* clothes! Joe couldn't help looking astonished, even though deep down he knew that it was going to be the same Charlie! He passed the picture to Liam, who said, "*That's* what he looks like!" as he studied it hard.

"Was it called 'Nosam'....the house they were building?" Joe asked Annie.

She looked a little astonished. "Yes it was...how did you know?"

"Just a guess really, we've bought the house and it's being restored for us." Joe was uncertain how much more to tell her.

"I had heard that someone had bought it and were doing it up," she said. "I'm glad that it will be lived in again, it wasn't nice seeing it go to rack and ruin. Mr and Mrs Slater, they were the previous occupants, had bought it from Uncle Alfred all those years ago. They had heard of the accident and decided to call it 'Nosam' after Charlie, which pleased my Uncle."

"What does it mean....Nosam?" enquired Joe.

"Nosam," smiled Annie, "is the reverse of his surname M A S O N!"

“Wow, that’s quite clever!” Liam said as he looked at Joe, who still had his mouth open with surprise.

All three of them walked down the drive from the vicarage.

“Don’t forget, Joe, when your house is finished I would love to come and look round it!” Annie said.

“I won’t forget, Annie, and thanks again for telling us the story of ‘Nosam’. I will ask Mum and Dad to keep the name of the house; it *can’t* be called anything else!”

CHAPTER 9

That night Joe lay awake, going over in his mind the story that Annie had told them. He felt sorry for Charlie dying so young and found himself wondering what it would be like to be dead. He shivered a bit, must stop thinking about death, he thought. It did make you feel a *bit* afraid at night and he wished that it would soon get light.

He must have drifted off to sleep because the next thing he knew, Mum was putting her head round his bedroom door.

"You getting up yet? Come on, don't dawdle, you'll be late," she said.

"Mmmm, coming," he replied, feeling really tired. It took him a few minutes to realise that it was Friday. Yes! A lie-in tomorrow, he thought as he yawned and stretched.

He had to forgo his toast, only having time for cereal, and started to run up the stairs to grab his bag. He could hear Dad telling Mum that the builders would be finishing tomorrow.

Oh no! Joe thought, that doesn't give me much chance to talk to Charlie.

He ran out of the house, checking that Charlie was still there as he made his way to school. He was, so that meant that the talk would have to be when he got back later today.

"Oh, bother having to go to school!" Joe said, feeling a little impatient.

Liam said that he would come back with Joe after school. He wanted to be there when Joe asked him if he was a ghost. He *couldn't* miss that!

Joe wasn't too keen - he would rather have confronted Charlie on his own.

"You've dragged me round a cemetery and I've listened to Annie's story. Oh no, I'm going to see this through to the end!" Liam told him.

"Do you think he would do something that..." He paused, choosing his words carefully. "...that would prove to me that he *is* a ghost?"

Joe rolled his eyes. "So you don't believe me?"

"Yes I do....I think!"

"Right!...I'll ask," Joe said quickly, sounding a bit annoyed.

At last, the bell sounded for end of school.

"Slow down!" said Liam as they ran down the road, trying to get to the house as quickly as possible before the builders left.

"Come on, we haven't got time!" said Joe, who was also gasping and panting. They ran into the driveway of 'Nosam'.

"There he is!" Joe said, a bit out of breath.

Charlie was in the garage tying his shoe lace.

"Charlie!" said Joe. "I need to talk to you...well! ask you something, really"

Charlie smiled and turned a bucket upside down to sit on.

"Wowww!" said Liam as his eyes looked at the bucket that moved without anyone touching it. "It's true! You are a ghost!"

Joe looked angrily at Liam. "Hey! I'm supposed to say that!" He turned to Charlie. "You *are* a ghost, aren't you?"

"I don't think of myself as a ghost...more a restless spirit," he said.

Charlie told them how he had known that they had followed him 'home' one evening and that they had spoken to his cousin Annie - in fact, he knew everything!

Joe looked a bit sheepish after this revelation.

Charlie said, "It's alright, Joe, it was always my intention for you to know before I left here."

"But why *are* you here?" he asked.

"To see that what I started was finished. My Dad was so enthusiastic about building this house...and I let him down because of my...my carelessness! I *should* have known better and

not taken such a risk. But what's done is done. Anyway, your family buying the house eventually gave me the opportunity to see it through, just a few touches left for tomorrow and then it's all yours!"

Liam had been listening all the time to Joe and he was having a hard job not to burst out laughing. To everyone else it looked as if Joe was talking to an upturned bucket! But he didn't dare laugh just in case Charlie decided to play tricks on him. He didn't want him coming to *his* house at night and making things move in *his* bedroom!

Joe promised Charlie that he would show Annie round 'Nosam' very soon. "She misses you, Charlie."

"I know, I caused a lot of sorrow but soon it will be time for Annie to pass over to the other side."

"What's it like...over there?" queried Joe with a facial expression of wanting to know and at the same time *not* wanting to know.

"I can't tell you that, Joe, we all have to find out for ourselves."

Joe assured Charlie that the house would still be called 'Nosam', especially now they knew the story of the name. Besides, Mum said she rather liked it anyway and had already ordered a new 'Nosam' name plate.

CHAPTER 10

Joe bounced out of bed at 8.00 o'clock, forgetting all about the promise to himself of a lie-in. Mum and Dad were very surprised at seeing Joe up so early.

"You can tidy your bedroom this morning," Mum said.

Joe curled his lip up at one end. He'd learnt that it was easier to do rather than to complain where his parents were concerned. Anyway, he wasn't in the mood to argue today.

He gathered a few things from the floor and shoved them under the bed. The larger items were thrown into the wardrobe. "There, that didn't take long," he thought, surveying the empty floor as he closed the wardrobe door with a bit of a bang.

Joe found Charlie in the garage. It didn't look as if he had moved since yesterday; he was still sitting on the upturned bucket.

"Hi there!" Charlie said.

Joe raised his hand to Charlie as he leant against the wall with the sole of one foot flat against it.

They were talking about football when Dad put his head in, saying, "Everything all right? Thought I heard you talking."

Joe was startled and had to think quickly. "Yeah, just practising some lines for Monday's assembly," he lied.

Dad opened his toolbox and grabbed the hammer, saying, "Going to put up the new sign, so I'll leave you to it then" as he disappeared to near the front door.

Joe explained to Charlie that they had all been given a football medal.

"I'll just go and get it," he said as he turned to go and find it. He raced back down the stairs and dashed into the garage. "Here it is!"

Joe stood still.....where was Charlie?

"He's gone...Charlie's gone! He never even said goodbye!" he said in a low, disappointed voice.

Joe made his way to the cemetery, the medal still in his hand - he knew exactly where he had gone. He'd gone 'home'.

"I know you had to go back, Charlie," he said, looking at the headstone, "and that you didn't want to say goodbye. But I'm glad we bought the house...we'll always look after it for you."

Joe was about to leave when he realised he was still holding the medal.

"Oh, and we keep winning with our new goalie... you'll never guess what...its ME! But perhaps you knew that all along...Bye Charlie!"

He turned and walked slowly away. As he neared the cemetery gates he took one last look.....and smiled. There was Charlie giving him one last salute!

THE END

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