

CHICKEN

By Daisy Fleetwood, age 10.

PING! My phone. I'm sure I put that on silent. Engrossed in my online shopping whilst sipping my iced coffee, I didn't appreciate being disturbed. As I scanned the message, my eyes rolled. My primary school nemesis, Reese Collins? What did he want from me now?

'Ready 2 go yet or R U still chicken LOL'

I'm Nancy Williams. I'm 14 and I attend Kingswood High. Mum and I live at 14 Victoria Close, Melrose. I have auburn hair, hazel eyes (with gold flecks) and a fascination with chess.

The message. I knew exactly what Reece was talking about. The derelict house up the road. What had become of the last occupants? Why had the house been abandoned, just left to rot? Shunned by the neighbourhood, shrouded by its own heavy gloom? No-one knew.

For years I've endured Reece; calling me chicken, mocking my hair colour, saying that I should just disappear and telling me that Dad left because he never even loved me.

I decided to show Reece once and for all that he would never break me, that I was strong, and I knew exactly how to silence him. Photo evidence of me doing what he couldn't.

I left a note for Mum saying that I'd be back soon. I packed my school bag with my phone and a torch. It was my Hello Kitty torch from 2011 but...well...never mind.

As I shut the door behind me doubt started to creep in. What if..? I pushed all intrusive thoughts away and with a deep breath I headed down the winding path.

Daylight was fading fast, I had to hurry up. I turned the last corner and in front of me stood the house. A foreboding cold air of unhappiness enveloped me, no laughter or joy, just deadly silence. I shoved the spiked iron gate, releasing a slow spine-chilling screech, like dead metal awakening, it opened. "Wow that needs some WD-40!" I thought to myself.

Inside the gates, brambles and nettles sprawled out, engulfing what must've once been a pretty family garden. I knew each step I took brought me closer to the door. I passed a dying oak tree with blackened ivy wrapped tight suffocating it, a broken swing tied to one of its rotting branches. A distinct dank smell in the air made my nose scrunch up.

SNAP! The definite sound of a twig splintering. I spun around. Nothing?

Was that a shadow? A movement in the corner of my eye? No, my mind must be playing tricks, deceiving me. My pulse raced and I could see my own nervous breath, but I was nearly at the door. There was no turning back.

Reaching the steps, I stretched out my hand, touching the rusted lion knocker and took a selfie with the other. I sent it to Reece, ha! It was over! I couldn't wait to leg it. Stepping off the porch, I felt so triumphant, but then I heard it...

The door behind me opened.