

# A Guest at Molrick Castle

By Richard Paul

A guest in the draughty Molrick castle,  
Shivering within its gloomiest room  
Might hear, at the witching hour, sounds of battle,  
So distant and yet so freakishly clear.  
They'll seek out the source, if they've the mettle.

Creeping down the stairs whose constant creaking  
A guest will strive to circumvent in vain,  
Through the moonlit halls they'll go on sneaking  
Whilst all others in the castle sleep on.  
Alone the sounds of steel they're seeking.

The dread echoing clash soon grows louder  
Until it can be placed behind a door,  
And the guest, lest their courage should flounder  
Shall peep round its edge and behold a sight  
Of two laughing, richly clad, shrouded sirs.

One's a younger man, nineteen if a day,  
Dressed as if for a midsummer party.  
The other is an older man, his blade  
Is red and blunted from service in war,  
As they laugh, every strike is meant to slay.

They dead pair fight with an unfettered zeal,  
Giving and taking a score of death blows,  
But with no flesh to harm nor to heal,  
It is the most harmless of all past times,  
And only mirth the duelling ghosts feel.

When their sport's done, they'll turn to face the guest  
And with grins too wide, each shall bow their head.  
Then they vanish, and silence comes to rest  
In the dreadful castle cloaked in darkness,  
A poor guest's shaken sanity to test.

As the sun breaks through the duck-cursed windows,  
Old Nansy-Cristle the maid finds the guest  
Stunned and slumped against a wall, still as stone  
And she sighs and she makes a rum-laced tea  
With a tray of her peerless sweet-pear scones.

The story of the strangeness she'll then share  
As the guest comes back to his or her wits.  
They were Father and son, that duelling pair,  
Some hundred years ago, in fairer days  
Before the war, where neither man was spared.

Yet neither to Heaven nor Perdition  
Did either's soul venture once they had died,  
And by no sign of eldritch affliction  
Seem they consigned to the castle to bide,  
Indeed they look glad of their condition.

Whenever new guests come to the castle,  
And plenty often whenever they don't,  
Someone will hear their ghostly swords rattle  
And the bravest behold their ghastly grins  
In the wake of their repeating battles.

Why do those two spend their deaths in swordplay?  
What is the tale behind their strange state?  
There's none alive now who can rightly say,  
And two mediums they somehow shaved bald;  
So Molrick Castle's mystery it stays.