

# DEDDINGTON WRITING COMPETITION 2009

## Junior Writing Competition

Secondary Section (age 16 and under)

**Story. Theme: "The Secret" - Entries: 17**

**Winner**

### The Secret

**By Maria Chetskya**

**of Oxford**

...I stood in the garden listening, but I could hear only silence. You could hardly call it "garden" now. It more looked like a jungle, a piece of wilderness in town which was forgotten by God.

I suddenly remembered how I used to spend every summer here when I was little. In those days this massive garden was full of wonderful flower-beds with beautiful pansies, tulips, hyacinths..

There was a green lawn in the middle of it surrounded by trees and bushes where I loved to play. Somewhere behind those trees there were old, iron swings painted in green. I wondered what they looked like twelve years later!

But now there was none of it left. Only trees, nettles and bushes of enormous sizes.

You could easily get lost in here!

However I continued my way to the house. You could hardly see the path now (or at least something that used to be the path). Finally I made it. I stood in front of enormously big house made out of grey stone. Its' walls were covered in ivy. Huge windows with whiter window frames looked dark and dusty. Once this house belonged to Mrs Davies – an old lady who used to babysit mew while my dad was away. She never had her own children, this is why I was like a daughter to her and she like a mother to me. I was very upset when I heard that she died. I was even more upset when I couldn't come to the funeral. It was our first year after we moved to Canada.

All those memories flooded my head as I looked back at the garden. This place was somehow separated from the outside world. You couldn't hear the traffic or any other sounds. A territory of mystery...

I stepped on the porch: one, two, three, four, five...stop. There was a big wooden door in front of me, it was made out of solid wood and had a golden knocker,

door knob and a letter box on it. Only the key hole was iron and it was covered in rust. But I ignored it, I was anxious to get in. The only problem was that I didn't have a key. I went back to my memories again and then I remembered a scene from my childhood. I saw like Mrs Davies lifted up a flower pot which stood next to the path. She picked up something silvery and shiny.

I didn't think for very long. Straight away I jumped off the porch and headed towards the pot. I lifted disturbing a bunch of woodlice which were hiding from the bright July sun, yes there it was a small old but shiny key. I picked it up and happily darted back towards the door. And then I stopped. A thought came to my head which erased all my happiness. Why was this house in exactly the same condition as I left it twelve years ago? Why had nobody sold or inherited it? Was Mrs Davies really that lonely and what secret was hiding there behind those doors?

I shock my head. "No that's not right. I shouldn't give up. Entering the house is the only way to understand what is there..."

With my trembling hands I inserted the key into the keyhole. I turned the key and the heard a click. Another turn-another click. I pulled the key out and slowly pulled the door. Next second I stepped into the darkness, shutting the door behind me.

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It was dark like in a grave. I was trying to remember where was the switch but I couldn't. I moved further, searching the wall with my hand when suddenly I realised that there was something on the floor. It felt like a pile of papers. There it was I found the switch! I pressed on it and a dim light bulb shone over the room. On the floor something that I though is a pile of papers, turned out to be a pile of envelopes. I chucked them back on the floor and moved further into the house.

I was the first person in the last 12 years who entered the house. This though made me shiver. However I remembered the house very well. Especially the sweet-floral smell which you could smell all over the house.

The further I went the less I was sure that I wasn't dreaming. There was something secret in this house which was attracting me like a magnet.

Finally I got to the third floor. There was only one single door. I pulled it and it opened with a creak.

This was my room.

The room where I spent most of my childhood. It had light blue walls and looked very modern comparing to the rest of the house which was literally stuffed with antique furniture. There was a desk by the window and a chair. I pulled the curtains apart and the bright beam of sunlight burst into the room. You could now

see almost ever particle of light dancing in the air. I turned back to the room and looked and the bed where I used to sleep and.... gasped in horror.

There was a little child lying on the bed. A little girl I would say she was about seven or eight. She stared at me with her bright blue eyes, her face was perfectly composed, not childish. I stared back in horror and pity. She was pale and looked ill.

“You came finally” – she whispered.

“Who are you?” I asked knowing that the question sounded stupid.

“You reminiscence. A piece of you soul which was left here twelve years ago. I was growing as long as you remembered this place. Then you mind changed and I became the prisoner of this house. But not any more...”

She took my hand and I suddenly felt like my head started spinning and I was sinking deeper and deeper into the unconsciousness.

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The competition judge, author Dennis Hamley, commented:

*This is excellent. It's a story of return, of memory, of emotional identification and finally of a subtle mixture of comfort at homecoming and terror at its implications. The atmosphere engendered is tangible: strange, even ghostly, full of understanding of the passage of time – how it can both stand still and yet move inexorably forward simultaneously – and with a wonderful evocation of the past. The ending with the little girl is ambiguous in the best sense: is it a final resting place, comfortable and satisfying for the narrator or a dreadful oblivion with no escape? There is so much to this story – it has layers of meaning and implications very rare for a writer of this age to tackle so sophisticatedly. I suspect that the writer her/himself might not have understood all the implications but that doesn't matter: few even of the greatest writers know exactly what they have written and it's a good rule that if the reader sees something the author didn't, then it's there none the less. There are a few slips in expression and use of language but they don't detract from the total effect.*

About the overall standard:

*I've much enjoyed reading all these stories and been impressed by their high standard. Assigning a final order and deciding prize-winners has been very hard.*

Dennis Hamley