

II. AJ ŤUK +BIL Laura Vilmošová The old lady who finds a ghost

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Once upon a time in a faraway land there was an old lady named Mildred. She was that type of a neighbour you don't invite to a garden party. Why? Well...Simply because of horrifying stories your brother was telling in order to scare you when you were little and I have to admit, I really am a chicken.

You are probably visualising scary old granny without teeth, but I have to disappoint you. The reason why Mildred was so closed and unfriendly was her beloved husband Matthew who passed away years ago. He was not only her soulmate, but best friend as well. You could see them in the garden smiling, laughing and drinking tea on the bench under the tree together. They were such a lovely couple aging together. But after her husband passed away, she has completely changed. Who wouldn't right? Mildred closed herself from the outside world and she only talked to her black cat Pumpkin. Her house and garden were waste and sad, as Mildred herself. People only saw her curtains move from time to time. She wasn't scary, she was sad. And I can truly understand her situation.

Despite everything there was one thing that could make her happy (except Pumpkin, of course). That one day of the year when every single kid would go from door to door dressed in spooky costumes yelling: „TRICK OR TREAT” Yes, you are smart as a whip. It's Halloween.

Years ago, Mildred and her husband Matthew enjoyed this feast together. They redecorated whole house and garden as well, prepared candies and chocolates for children. Matthew was like a little boy, dressed in spooky zombie costume which Mildred hated, but in the end of the day she was laughing until she cried as she observed him haunting kids. Kids were laughing at him as he was walking very slowly in zombie costume cursing because of his back ache.

Time has changed and Mildred would rather sue the whole street and every kid in spooky costume. „Don't they have anything else to do rather than buy some cheap costumes so their kids can yell in the streets all night?!” thought Mildred. After brushing her teeth you would probably think she was just about to go to bed as any other old lady, but reality was a bit different. As it was the night before Halloween she had to be armed and prepared.

At first she would leave out Pumpkin's leftovers on the front porch. Oh that smell. Next thing was a very specific sign in big bold letters saying: „BEWARE OF THE BIG DOG”.

Did Mildred have a dog? No, she didn't, but imagine a sign saying: „BEWARE OF THE BIG PUMPKIN”. Next step was to get rid of all the candies and sweets in the house. Those kids can smell them from miles away. And last, but not least the most important step – lock the door. When a kid wasn't scared of the sign or the terrible smell, closed door is the only thing left that could protect her. Mildred loved her door. Not the door but the locks. She had four kinds of locks on her door and she used every single one. She could rest properly after she secured the house and garden.

Next morning Mildred woke up. This time she didn't sleep at all. The whole night she was thinking about Halloween and how she used to spend it with her husband years ago, but that wasn't the only thing that kept her awake during the night. At midday she heard some weird noises in the attic. It felt like someone was there walking around.

The day went by pretty quickly. No unwanted visitors. It was just Mildred and Pumpkin in the locked house watching TV, eating leftovers and taking naps.

After she was sure that the trick-or-treating hours are done she finally went outside and cleaned up the front porch.

In the afternoon she made herself her five o'clock tea turned on the TV and then out of nowhere. The sounds. Again. And louder, much louder. Now she was sure it wasn't just a dream or a sign of madness. Someone was actually up in the attic.

„What now?”, asked Mildred herself. „Should I go check?”, asked Mildred once more like she was expecting an answer. She looked at Pumpkin but cat was nowhere to be found. He was probably sleeping on the couch. Mildred finally decided: „I have to go check!”,

She took the stairs to the attic very, very slowly until she finally reached the door. She put her hand on the handle. „Come on Mildred, just a little squeeze and a quick look inside, said the inside voice. „Ok Mildred, you can do this. You're a grown woman and you have nothing to be scared of !”, said Mildred to herself again and then finally opened the door. And what she saw behind that door was unexpected. Like really unexpected. Something that Mildred never thought she would see. I think no one has ever thought they would see this. Because, behind that door, there was a... „, GHOST! “ screamed Mildred at the top of her lungs. „AAAAA, GHOST!!”, screamed Mildred in even higher voice. She looked at the ghost, it was hiding behind old boxes so she couldn't see it's face properly.

„Who are you?”,

„Umm...?”,

„Umm, what? Get out of my house you beast. You're supposed to be in a horror movie not in my attic!”,

,I...I'm s...so...sorry, miss.,

,What? You're a ghost you're not supposed to be sorry!,

,I...I have to. Have to tell ...you some...something, miss?.,

,What? What is so important that the god had to send me ghost to tell me? Huh?

,I...I'm so...s..sor....,

But before he finished his sentence, Mildred stepped closely. It seemed like she was about to hit the ghost

,Don't say that you're sorry or I swear I will hit you! Now I'm going to count to three and when I'm done you better not be here. Understand?!,

,MILDRED!.,

And after that scream Mildred started realising to whom she was talking to or better said at whom she was yelling, but she was too scared to admit it.

,What are you doing? How are you behaving?.,

,Umm, excuse me you broke into my attic, so what are you talking about?.,

,I'm not finished! I'm talking about the whole time I wasn't here. I am talking about every single time you have frowned at a kid. Or every single time that you would rather walk around the whole town just to avoid contact. I am talking about every single time you've thrown away flowers someone has sent to every single time you have hung up on your own children just to avoid talking to them! And don't let me even get started on what you were doing on Halloweens!.,

,How do you know all this?.,

,Oh please did you really think I would just leave you here? I was watching you. The whole time.,

It was starting to make sense. The whole time she was recognizing the voice, the way it was talking to her. It wasn't saying: ,Miss., It was saying: ,Mill., She should have realised it earlier. That moment it hit her, she said: ,Matthew!.,

The ghost turned around so that Mildred could see him better.

,Mill! Oh my dear Mil!.,

,What are you?...How are you?.....,

,I know you might be in a little shock.,

,A little? My dead husband just appeared in front of me.,

,Yes, good point but we don't have a lot of time. I have to go away soon, so you have to listen to me!.,

,What? Go where?.,

,That is not important but you have to listen now!,
,Fine. I'm listening.,
,Mildred, promise me this will change.,
,What, change? Change how?,
,You have to become the person you used to be. The Mildred that I married, the Mildred that I used to sip my tea with, the Mildred I loved.,
,But Matthew it's me! The same old Mildred.,
,We both know that is not true but we also both know that deeply inside, you're still the same. You have to promise me that you will change. Please.,
,I will my dear but why? I am perfectly fine like this.,
,No, you're not and you know that. If you don't change you will leave as forgotten and no one will remember you.,
,You're right. I will change for you. But how? What am I supposed to do so that everyone would forgive me?,
,You can start by calling our children, talking to people and forgetting about this stupid tradition on Halloween! Now I have to go but you have to promise me that you will change!,
,I promise., said Mildred, but she didn't even get to finish her sentence and her husband was gone.

The next day Mildred woke up with a smile on her face. She was ready to change. She was ready to open herself up to new adventures. She called her kids, cleaned her porch, made it look a little nicer, she threw away her sign to keep the kids away. She talked to a neighbour. The next Halloween she was greating kids in the old zombie costume. Everyone was in shock. Since that day Mildred stopped being that old lady that you try to avoid. She changed completely and really was happier.

,See, I kept my promise Matthew., said Mildred as she looked to the sky.

The end.