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Dead Men's Eyes

by Montague Rhodes James

(Adapted book. Elementary book)

On the first day of his holiday, Mr Fanshawe got off the train at a small country station in the south-west of England. He was on his way to the home of a new friend. It was his first visit to the Hall.

A man came out of the station office.

‘Mr Fanshawe?’ the man asked. ‘Mr Richards is sending a car for you. It will be here in two or three minutes.’

But it was a sunny afternoon in June and Fanshawe had his bicycle with him.

‘Will you send my bags to the house in the car, please?’ Fanshawe asked the man. ‘It’s a lovely day and it was a long, hot train journey. I think that I’ll go to the Hall on my bicycle.’

He left his bags in the station with the man from the office, and got on his bicycle.

‘Which way is it?’ he asked.

‘Go up this road for half a kilometre,’ the man answered. ‘Then turn left at the top. After another kilometre, turn right. That road will take you to the Hall.’

‘Thank you,’ said Fanshawe.

It was not more than three kilometres to his friend’s house. The sun was warm and the birds sang in the trees. Fanshawe enjoyed the journey.

The house was large. It wasn’t old and it wasn’t new. It stood in the middle of a park of tall trees.

‘I’m going to like it here,’ Fanshawe thought. ‘It’s a good place for a quiet holiday.’

Henry Richards was outside the front door of the house when he arrived. He was a big man, about sixty years old. He had a red face and grey hair.

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‘Fanshawe, my dear friend!’ he said when he saw his visitor.

‘Hello, Henry,’ said Fanshawe. ‘It was a long journey, but this is a beautiful place.’

Richards smiled. ‘Tea is ready in the garden,’ he told Fanshawe. ‘Patten, my servant, will put your bicycle away. I always have tea in the garden when the sun shines.’

It was a lovely warm afternoon. They sat under the trees and had their tea.

‘This is wonderful,’ said Fanshawe.

When it was nearly six o’clock, Richards said, ‘Let’s walk up the hill. You can see a long way across the country from the top. We can leave here now and be home before eight o’clock. Would you like that?’

‘Yes,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I’m ready now. But have you got any binoculars?’

Richards thought for a minute. ‘Yes, I have,’ he said. ‘I never use them. I can’t see anything through them, and they’re old and very heavy. You can carry them.’

Fanshawe laughed. ‘All right,’ he said.

They went inside the house. Richards walked into one of the rooms and across the room to a cupboard. He took out a box, but he didn’t try to open it.

‘The binoculars are in there,’ he said to Fanshawe. He looked at the box for a minute. ‘But I can’t remember... Can you open it? There is a way. Do you want to try?’

The box was heavy. Fanshawe put his fingers on each end and pushed. Then he pushed harder.

‘Aagh!’ he cried.

‘What’s wrong?’ said Richards. ‘Oh, you cut your hand on the box! But it’s open now.’

‘Yes, look - I did cut my hand!’ said Fanshawe. ‘And it hurt! But here are the binoculars.’ He took them from the box. ‘They are heavy, but I can carry them.’

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‘Are you ready then?’ said Richards, ‘Lets go out through the garden.’

They walked through the garden and into the park. Then they began to climb the hill.

‘The binoculars came from old Mr Baxter,’ said Richards. ‘He was a watchmaker in the village, but he enjoyed looking for old things. He found the floor of a Roman building near here. A lot of other things, too. He’s dead now. When he died, I bought his papers and those binoculars. He made the binoculars.’

‘Did he? Then he was a clever man,’ said Fanshawe. ‘But why are they so heavy? It’s strange.’

‘Baxter was a strange man,’ said Richards. ‘He often closed his shop for two or three days and walked round the country near here. He made notes about interesting places. People use his notes now and they often find old tilings in the ground.’

‘That’s interesting,’ said Fanshawe.

‘And you’re right, Baxter was a clever man,’ said Richards. ‘But I didn’t like him. Not many people did. But I can’t talk about him now, Fanshawe. I can’t climb this hill and talk at the same time.’ There were some trees at the top of the hill. The two men sat down under them and looked across the country.

‘You were right,’ said Fanshawe. ‘You can see a very long way from up here.’

‘And everything looks very beautiful this evening,’ said Richards. The tops of some of the hills were green and open; other hills had trees on them. There were little grey houses below, and Fanshawe could see the white smoke from a train.

The men sat quietly for some minutes. Then Richards said, ‘Now use the binoculars, Fanshawe, and look over there. Can you see Fulnaker church? Look over that wood...’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I can see it. That’s a fine, tall tower! I’d like to go there. How many kilometres is it from here?’

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‘A tower?’ said Richards. ‘I don’t remember a tower. Perhaps you’re looking at Oldbourn Church. But I don’t call that a fine tower.’

‘Where is it?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘Oldbourn? It’s about fourteen kilometres away,’ said Richards.

Fanshawe moved the binoculars from his eyes. ‘I can’t see the tower without them,’ he said.

‘Now look over there to the left,’ said Richards. ‘Use the binoculars again. Can you see that hill with the thick wood on the top of it?’

Fanshawe looked through the binoculars again. ‘Yes, I can see it. And I think I know its name.’

‘Do you?’ asked Richards. ‘What is it? What do you think?’

‘Gallows Hill,’ answered Fanshawe.

‘You’re right! How did you know that?’

‘It’s easy. There’s a gallows on it.’

‘A gallows?’ Richards said. ‘No, no, there’s only a wood on the top of that hill.’

‘You’re wrong,’ said Fanshawe. ‘There isn’t a wood. There are no trees. It’s open on the top, with the gallows in the middle. Who put that there? And I think that there’s something on the gallows... No, perhaps there isn’t. Perhaps I’m wrong.’

‘You are wrong, Fanshawe,’ said Richards. ‘There’s no gallows on that hill. There’s a thick wood, but that’s all. Give the binoculars to me. I can’t usually see anything with them, but I’ll try again.’

Fanshawe gave him the binoculars and Richards put them up to his eyes.

‘No, I can’t see anything through them,’ he said.

Fanshawe looked at the hill again. It was five or six kilometres away.

‘It’s very strange,’ he said. ‘There is a wood when I look at it without the binoculars.’ He took the binoculars from Richards and looked through them again. ‘But now I can see the gallows. And there

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are people on the hill. But when I take the binoculars away, I can only see trees. Perhaps the evening light is playing games with my eyes. I'll come up here earlier in the day tomorrow when the sun is on Gallows Hill.'

'You saw people up there?' said Richards. 'What are they doing there at this time of the day? Look again, Fanshawe.'

Fanshawe looked through the binoculars again. 'Yes, there are some people.'

'What are they doing?' asked Richards.

'They're walking away now. And now - oh!'

'What is it?' asked Richards.

'There is something on the gallows. Is it... a man? These binoculars are very heavy. I'll have to put them down. But I was right, Richards, there's no wood on the top of the hill. Only open ground and the gallows.'

Fanshawe thought for a minute, then he said, 'Do you have a map at the Hall?'

'Yes,' said Richards.

'Good,' said Fanshawe. 'I'll use it tomorrow. I'll go up there.' Richards sat quietly for some time. He looked unhappy about something. Then he got up and said, 'Let's go back. It's nearly time for dinner.'

He spoke very little on the way to the house. When they went in, the servant, Patten, was waiting for them in the sitting room. He, too, was unhappy about something. He had the binoculars box in his hands.

'Excuse me, Mr Richards,' he said. 'I found this open, and-'

'It's all right, Patten. I gave the binoculars to Mr Fanshawe. He used them on our walk today,' said Richards.

'Oh,' said Patten. 'That's all right then. I only said something because the box is always in that cupboard. And you remember, Mr Richards...'

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Fanshawe couldn't hear any more of the conversation because the servant began to speak quietly to Richards. After a minute or two, Richards answered Patten with two or three words and a short laugh. Then he turned to Fanshawe again.

'Come and see your room now, Fanshawe,' he said, and they went upstairs.

Later, the two men had dinner. They didn't discuss Gallows Hill again that evening. After dinner, they talked for a short time, then went to bed.

* * *

That night, Fanshawe had a dream. In the dream, he walked in a garden of flowers. After some time, he stopped in front of some old grey stones - from a church* perhaps. The stones were on the ground between the flowers, and one of them had pictures on it. Were they pictures of people? Fanshawe didn't know. He pulled the stone out of the ground.

A note fell by his feet, and he read the words on it:

Don't move this stone. J. Patten.

The ground was open under the stone. Fanshawe moved nearer and looked down. Something moved. Suddenly, a hand came up out of the ground! Slowly, the hand got bigger and bigger. It was thin and dirty, and it had hair on it. It moved nearer to Fanshawe's leg.

He gave a cry - and woke up.

'It's all right,' he thought. 'It was only a bad dream.'

But Fanshawe couldn't sleep for some time after that. He tried to remember the pictures on the stone, but he couldn't. There was something not right about them, but what was it?

* * *

Fanshawe didn't get up very early the next day. He was on holiday, of course, but he couldn't stop thinking about the dream. Who were the people in the dream? What were the pictures on the stone? He couldn't remember them.

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After some time, he went downstairs to breakfast.

‘I’ve got some books about the country’ and the villages near the Hall,’ Richards told him after breakfast. ‘Are you interested, Fanshawe?’

‘Yes, I am,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I’d like to see them.’

‘I’ve also got Mr Baxter’s notes,’ said Richards. ‘Sometimes he wrote for magazines, too. When he found things on his journeys near here, he liked to write about them. You’ll find some of his pictures with his papers.’

For two hours that morning, Fanshawe looked through the books, magazines and papers. One of Baxter’s pictures was of a fine, tall tower, and it was not the tower of Oldbourne church.

Later that day, Richards asked Fanshawe, ‘What are you going to do this afternoon?’

‘I’ll go out on my bicycle,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I’ll go to Oldbourne and then go to Gallows Hill. That will be about twenty-five kilometres. Is that right?’

‘Yes,’ said Richards, ‘I’ll give you the map. You’ll go past Lambsfield and Wanstone. Go and see them. They’re very interesting places.’

‘All right, I will,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Can I take your binoculars with me?’

‘Of course,’ said Richards. ‘I want to get some better binoculars. These really are too heavy. Perhaps I’ll go into town today and find some.’

‘Why?’ asked Fanshawe. ‘You say that you can’t see anything through binoculars.’

‘I know,’ said Richards. ‘But perhaps with some new’...’ He stopped, then spoke again, ‘Patten doesn’t like Baxter’s binoculars. He knows a story about them. Something about the binoculars and the old watchmaker. This morning he said, “After last night. I’ll have to tell you the story.” He’s going to tell me later.’

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‘He said “after last night”?’ said Fanshawe. ‘I had a very bad dream last night. Did he have a bad dream, too?’

‘He didn’t sleep well,’ said Richards. ‘He looked very old and tired this morning.’

‘I’d like to hear his story too,’ Fanshawre said. ‘Perhaps he can tell us when I come back.’

‘All right, I’ll ask him,’ said Richards.

* * *

It was nine o’clock that evening when Fanshawe arrived back at the Hall.

‘You were a long time,’ Richards said. ‘What happened?’

‘I’m sorry I’m late,’ answered Fanshawe. ‘I had problems with my bicycle. I had to push it for the last three or four kilometres. It wasn’t easy.’

Richards called to his servant. ‘Patten, get Mr Fanshawe a large drink.’

‘Yes, Mr Richards,’ said Patten.

Richards turned again to Fanshawe. ‘Have a quick bath and then come down to dinner.’

They had dinner and Fanshawe told Richards about his journey.

‘I arrived in Lambsfield without any problems, and I went into the church there,’ he said. ‘The windows were very interesting, but I couldn’t read some of the writing on them.’

‘Did the binoculars help?’ asked Richards.

‘No,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Not inside the church. Not inside anywhere. But I took a photograph of the window’. Perhaps I can make the picture bigger and read the words later.’

‘Where did you go then?’ asked Richards.

‘I went to Wanstone,’ said Fanshawe. ‘That was an interesting place. And after that I went to Fulnaker and Oldbourne. It’s very strange about the tower. I saw a tower through the binoculars from the top of the hill yesterday evening - do you remember?’

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‘Yes, I remember,’ said Richards.

‘But Oldbourne church is very different,’ said Fanshawe. ‘And there are no buildings more than ten metres tall in Fulnaker now. But it did have a tower. I read about it in one of your books.’

‘Really?’ said Richards.

‘Yes, and I didn’t tell you about Baxter’s picture of Fulnaker,’ said Fanshawe.

‘Baxter’s picture?’ said Richards. ‘A picture from one of his notebooks?’

‘Yes,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Yesterday, when I saw that tower from the hill, I saw the tower in his picture. But why did Baxter do a picture of something when it wasn’t there?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Richards. ‘Tell me about Gallows Hill.’ He turned to his servant. ‘Patten, come and listen to this. Mr Fanshawe saw something on Gallows Hill. I told you about it earlier today.’

‘I remember, Mr Richards,’ said Patten. ‘And I know that – ‘

‘Yes, all right, Patten,’ said Richards quickly. ‘Your story can wait. Let’s hear Mr Fanshawe’s first.’ He turned back to Fanshawe. ‘So did you come back through Ackford and Thorfield?’

‘I did, and I looked inside their churches,’ said Fanshawe.

‘Did you find them interesting?’ asked Richards.

‘Yes, they were very interesting,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Then I looked at the map and found the way up to Gallows Hill. I pushed my bicycle up to the top. And there was the wood.’

‘Did you hear that, Patten?’ Richards said to his servant. ‘Mr Fanshawe saw the wood. No gallows, only the wood. I was right.’

‘You were right and I was wrong,’ said Fanshawe. ‘There was a wood. I can’t understand it. It’s a thick wood, and I pushed my bicycle in front of me to get through the trees. Then I began to have problems with the bicycle. “I’ll come to open ground in a minute and see the gallows,” I thought. But I didn’t. I walked and walked. And I’ll tell you something, Henry. I didn’t like the place. I really didn’t like it.’

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‘Did you hear that, Patten?’ Richards said again. He turned to his servant. ‘Mr Fanshawe didn’t like Gallows Hill.’

‘He isn’t the only person, sir,’ said Patten. ‘Not many people want to go -’

‘I know, I know,’ said Richards quickly. ‘What happened next, Fanshawe?’

‘I walked through the trees and pushed my bicycle in front of me,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Two or three times I thought, “There’s somebody - or something - behind me.” Then there was a hand on my back.’ He stopped.

‘A hand?’ said Richards. His eyes opened wide.

‘Yes,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I looked round quickly, but there was nothing there.’

‘Nothing?’ said Richards.

‘Nothing,’ said Fanshawe. ‘Then, later, I thought, “There’s somebody above me.” I looked up - and fell over a stone. The stone was big and square and open at the top. There were two more of them. Do you have some paper? I’ll do a picture for you.’

Patten found some paper and a pen, and Fanshawe did a picture of the stones.

Richards and Patten looked at the picture.

‘Can you understand that?’ asked Fanshawe. ‘Why are they there? Do you know?’

Richards wasn’t happy. ‘I think I do,’ he said. He looked up at his servant. ‘Sit down, Patten.’

The old man sat down next to Richards. ‘Did you stand between the stones, Mr Fanshawe?’ Patten asked.

‘Did you?’ Richards asked his friend quickly.

‘I did not,’ said Fanshawe. ‘It was a bad place, and I was afraid. I think it was a graveyard] I wanted to get away from there as fast as possible.’

‘I can understand that,’ said Richards.

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‘I took my bicycle and ran,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I fell down five times, but then I got out of the wood and onto the road. I couldn’t use my bicycle, so I had to carry it. The walk to the Hall took me an hour. Is it four kilometres from that hill, or is it more?’

‘It’s about eight kilometres when you come on the road,’ Richards told him.

‘That’s my story,’ said Fanshawe. ‘What’s your story - and Patten’s?’ ‘My story?’ said Richards. ‘I haven’t got a story. But you were nearly right about the graveyard. There are a lot of graves up there. Isn’t that right, Patten?’

‘Yes,’ said Patten. ‘That’s right.’

‘You heard Mr Fanshawe’s story,’ Richards said to him. ‘Now tell us. Is your story about Baxter?’

‘Yes, it is,’ said Patten. He was quiet for a minute, then he spoke again. ‘I knew him very well, but he was a strange man. People often ask me, “How did he die?” But I can’t tell them because I don’t really know.’

‘People in the village knew very little about him,’ Richards told Fanshawe. ‘He didn’t have a wife or any children.’

‘When Mr Baxter found old things, he often showed them to me,’ Patten said. ‘Some of them were from Roman times.’

‘He knew about the Romans,’ said Richards. ‘I’ll show you the Roman floor near here before you go home, Fanshawe.’

‘Thank you,’ said Fanshawe.

‘Baxter never went to church, and people talked about that,’ Patten said. “‘And what does he do at night?’” they asked. “‘Where does he go?’” Men often saw him when they were on their way to work in the mornings. They saw his eyes, open wide and afraid, and he never spoke a word to them. He always carried a bag, and he always came down the same road.’

‘He was a strange man,’ said Richards.

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‘After those nights,’ said Patten, ‘Baxter never opened his shop the next day. A woman worked for him in the shop, but she had to stay at home on those days. He didn’t want her there with him.’

‘Why not?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘I don’t know,’ said Patten. ‘But one day, at about three o’clock in the afternoon, there was a noise from inside the shop. There was a lot of smoke. It came out of the windows and people could hear Baxter’s shouts.’

‘What happened next?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘Three or four men broke down the back door and ran inside,’ said Patten. ‘One of them told me about it later. “There was a really bad smell in the kitchen,” he told me, “from something in a cooking pot. There was an accident and it went over Baxter’s legs. We sat him on a chair and one of the men went to the pot. Baxter shouted at him, but-”’

‘What was in the pot?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘The man looked into it, but he could only see old bones,’ said Patten.

‘Animal’s bones? Men’s bones?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘I don’t know,’ answered Patten. ‘Somebody went out and found the doctor.’

‘Dr Lawrence?’ said Richards. ‘He’s a good man.’ •

‘Yes,’ said Patten. ‘But Baxter didn’t want the doctor to go into the kitchen. “Carry me upstairs before he comes,” he shouted. His legs were really bad. After that day, it was nearly two months before Baxter left his shop again.’

‘Why didn’t you tell me all this before?’ said Richards.

Patten looked at the floor and said nothing.

‘Dr Lawrence told me about his visits to Baxter,’ said Richards. ‘One day he was in Baxter’s bedroom when he saw a little black mask. He put the mask on his face. He wanted a smile from Baxter, but Baxter shouted at him from the bed. “Put it down! Do you want to look through

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a dead man's eyes?" "What do you mean?" Lawrence asked him. "It came from a dead man," Baxter said.'

'A dead man?' said Fanshawe.

'Those were his words,' said Richards.

'What did he mean?' asked Fanshawe.

'I don't know,' said Richards. 'Later, Lawrence said to me, "I think Baxter made that mask from the bones of a dead man's head." He didn't really know, of course. But let's hear your story, Patten.'

'Yes, Mr Richards,' said Patten. 'All this happened some years before Mr Baxter died. When he was well again, he started to find a lot of old things again. But near the end of his life he began to make those binoculars. But he couldn't finish them. He wanted something for them and he didn't have it.'

'What did he want?' asked Fanshawe.

'I don't know,' said Patten. 'I saw the binoculars one day and I said to him, "Mr Baxter, why don't you finish these?" He said to me, "When I do that, you'll hear about it, Patten."

'Then, one summer evening, I went past his shop and he was outside. He smiled at me. "I finished my best work today," he said. "I'll go out with them tomorrow." "Do you mean the binoculars?" I asked. "Can I see them, Mr Baxter?" "No, you can't," he said. "They're in bed for the night. And when I show them to you, you'll pay, Patten!" And those were his last words to me. •

'That was June 17th. A week later, something strange happened. George Williams lived in the house next to Mr Baxter's shop. And that night, George heard noises.'

'Noises?' said Richards. 'What noises?'

'Somebody fell, George thought,' said Patten. 'George got out of bed and went to the window. He looked down into the street, but there was nobody there. Then he stood and listened. The noises came from Mr Baxter's shop. He listened, and he heard Mr Baxter on his stairs. It was a very slow walk. Then Mr Baxter's front door opened.'

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‘George looked out of the window again and saw Mr Baxter in his hat and coat. Mr Baxter’s mouth opened and closed. Then he moved his head to the right and to the left. “And then he walked,” George said, “but he didn’t want to walk. Do you understand? Somebody or something pulled him. But there was nobody there.’

‘Nobody?’ said Fanshawe. ‘That can’t be right. Perhaps it was too dark, and your friend George couldn’t see them.’

‘No, Mr Fanshawe,’ said Patten. ‘George saw everything. Somebody or something pulled Mr Baxter, but there was nobody there. Then Mr Baxter’s hat fell onto the road.’

‘George opened the window and heard a shout from Mr Baxter. “Please, sirs, don’t do this!” George heard. “Are you ill, Mr Baxter?” George called down to him. “I’ll get Doctor Lawrence.” “Go back inside!” came the answer. But did Mr Baxter say it, or was it another person? George never knew. “The sound was strange” George said. “But there was only Mr Baxter in the road.”

‘George wasn’t happy about it, but he closed the window. He went and sat on his bed. He could hear Mr Baxter outside on the road. After a minute, he stood up again and went to the window. He looked out again.’

‘What did he see?’ asked Richards. He wanted to know, but he was afraid to hear the answer.

‘He saw Mr Baxter, on his way up the road with the same strange walk,’ said Patten.

‘Somebody or something pulled him?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘Yes... I don’t know. There was nobody there, only Baxter,’ said Patten. ‘George remembered one more thing. Mr Baxter didn’t stop for his hat when it fell onto the road. But later it was on his head again. Somebody - or something - put it there.’

‘And after that, nobody saw Mr Baxter for a week or more,’ said Patten. ‘Then, one evening, Will Fakes came over the hill to the village. “I saw hundreds of black birds above Gallows Hill,” he told people. “I

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never see birds up there.” So Fakes and Doctor Lawrence and five or six more men went up the hill. They found Mr Baxter dead on the ground. He was between those three stones.’

After Patten finished his story, nobody spoke for some time. Then Patten looked at Fanshawe and said, ‘Excuse me, Mr Fanshawe, but did you take those binoculars out with you today?’

‘Yes, I did,’ said Fanshawe.

‘And did you use them?’ asked Patten.

‘Yes. I wanted to look at something in Lambsfield church,’ said Fanshawe. ‘But I couldn’t see anything through them. And now I remember. When I came back here, I left them outside on my bicycle.’

‘That’s all right,’ said Patten. ‘I’ll get them in the morning. Perhaps you can try them again then.’

‘Yes, I’ll do that,’ said Fanshawe.

After a little more conversation, he and Richards went to bed.

* * *

The next morning, before breakfast and after a good sleep, Fanshawe took the binoculars into the garden. He looked through them at the hills, but he couldn’t see anything. He tried again and again and then went inside the house. He found Patten and Richards.

‘I can’t see anything through them!’ he said.

‘Did you break my binoculars?’ said Richards.

‘No,’ said Fanshawe. ‘I didn’t do anything. But they don’t work.’

After breakfast, Richards took the binoculars out into the garden.

‘I’ll try,’ he said.

He looked through them but he couldn’t see anything.

‘They’re too heavy!’ he said.

‘Be careful!’ said Fanshawe.

But before Richards could catch them, the binoculars fell from his hands to the ground. They broke, and something wet and black came from inside them. And with it came a very bad smell.

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Richards jumped back. ‘Ah!’ he said. ‘Now I understand. Now I know about his cooking.’

‘What do you mean?’ said Fanshawe. ‘Are you talking about Baxter?’

‘Yes,’ said Richards.

‘What did he cook?’ asked Fanshawe.

‘Remember Baxter’s words to the doctor,’ said Richards. ‘He said, “Do you want to look through dead men’s eyes?”’

‘Yes, I remember,’ said Fanshawe. ‘What did he mean?’

‘He cooked bones in his pot - remember?’ said Richards.

‘Yes,’ said Fanshawe.

‘And what did he do with the water from those cooked bones?’ said Richards. ‘Those old, dead men’s bones? He put it in the binoculars.’

Fanshawe’s mouth fell open. ‘And...’

‘And when you look through the binoculars, you look through dead men’s eyes. But the ghosts of those dead men were angry,’ said Richards. ‘They didn’t want him to take their bones from the ground.’

‘So... it was the ghosts of those men... began Fanshawe.

‘Yes,’ said Richards. ‘Those men died on the gallows, and their ghosts carried Baxter away and killed him on Gallows Hill.’ He looked at the binoculars. ‘I don’t want to see these again. We’ll put them back under the ground. It’s the best place for them.’

‘Yes, you’re right,’ said Fanshawe. ‘But what happened to them? Why couldn’t I see through them today?’

‘You took them into a church,’ Richards said. ‘I think that’s important. After you visited the church, you couldn’t see anything through them. After you visited the church, you couldn’t look through dead men’s eyes’

‘Yes, you’re right,’ said Fanshawe.

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‘But Baxter had the binoculars for a week after he finished them,’ said Richards. ‘What did he see in that time? What did he see through those dead men’s eyes?’

‘I can’t answer that,’ said Fanshawe. ‘But do you remember his picture of Fulnaker church tower?’

‘Yes,’ said Richards.

‘There was a tower in the past,’ said Fanshawe. ‘But it isn’t there now. And it wasn’t there when Baxter lived here...’

- THE END -

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