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Opening extract from
**Goth Girl and the Ghost of a
Mouse**

Written by
Chris Riddell

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For Morwenna



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Goth Girl

and the Ghost of a Mouse

CHRIS RIDDELL

MACMILLAN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



THIS BOOK CONTAINS FOOTNOTES BY THE STEYED
FOOT OF A FARMERS WIFE WHO LOST THE
REFOUNDENED FOOT AT THE BATTLE OF
BADEN-BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG-BADEN





Chapter One

Ada Goth sat up in her eight-poster bed and peered into the inky blackness.

There it was again.

A sigh, soft and sad and ending in a little squeak.

Ada looked across the bedroom as she held up the candle and stepped out of bed.

'Who's there?' she whispered.

Ada was the only child of Lord Goth of Ghostly-Goem Hall, the famous cycling poet. Her mother had been a beautiful tightrope walker from Thessalonika, whom Lord Goth had met and married on his travels. Unfortunately Parthenope had been killed when Ada was still a baby, while practising on the roof of Ghostly-Gorm Hall during a thunderstorm.

Lord Goth never talked about that terrible night. Instead he stayed at home in his huge house,

shut away in his study writing extremely long poems. When he wasn't writing, Lord Goth spent his time riding his hobby horse Pegasus, around the grounds and taking potshots at the garden ornaments with a blunderbuss. Before long he had acquired a reputation for being mad, bad and dangerous to gnomes.

Since the accident, Lord Goth had taken to believing that children should be heard and not seen. He insisted that Ada wear big, clumpy boots whenever she walked down the corridors and passageways of Ghastly-Gorm Hall. That way, he could hear her



Lord Goth

footsteps approaching and avoid seeing her by ducking into his study where he wasn't to be disturbed.

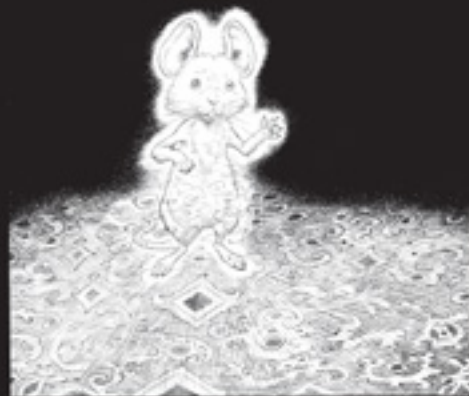
This meant that Ada didn't see much of her father, which sometimes made her sad, but she understood. Once a week, when she took tea with him in the long gallery, Ada would see Lord Goth's expression change whenever their eyes met. His look of intense sadness was enough to tell Ada that he was being reminded of her mother, Parthenope, the beautiful tightrope walker, and the terrible tragedy that had occurred. With her black curly hair and green eyes, Ada looked just like her. (Ada knew this because she had inherited a locket with a miniature portrait of Parthenope inside.)



'Who's there?' Ada whispered, a little more loudly this time.

'Only me,' came a small voice from somewhere in the shadows.

Ada slipped her feet into the black leather pumps beside the bed. They were her mother's



tightrope-walking slippers, a little big but very comfortable and, most importantly of all, very quiet. Ada liked to wear them to creep around Ghastly-Goem Hall. Exploring was her favourite thing to do, especially at night when everyone else was sleeping. Because, even though Ada had lived there all her life, the Hall was so big there were still rooms she had never been into and outbuildings hidden in overgrown parts of the grounds that she had yet to explore.

Ada stepped on to the faded Anatolian carpet, holding the candle out in front of her. There, just visible on a faded patch in the centre, was a small figure, white and shimmering and slightly see-through.

Ada's eyes opened wide.

'You're a mouse!' she exclaimed.

The mouse shimmered palely and gave another sigh that ended with a soft squeak.

'I used to be,' it said with a shake of the head, 'but now I'm the ghost of a mouse.'

Being so old and so big, Ghastly-Gorm Hall was home to quite a few ghosts. There was the white nun who sometimes appeared in the long gallery on moonlit nights, the black monk who occasionally haunted the short gallery and the beige curate who slid down the banisters of the grand staircase on the first Tuesday of each month. They usually mumbled, wailed softly or, in the case of the curate, sang in a high-pitched lisping voice, but they never actually *said* anything, unlike this mouse.

'Have you been a ghost for long?' Ada asked, putting the candle down and sitting cross-legged on the carpet.

'I don't think so,' said the ghost of a mouse. 'You see, the last thing I remember was scuttling along the corridor of a dusty, cobwebby part of the house I'd never been in before.' The mouse shimmered palely in the candlelight.

'I'd been visiting a shrew in the garden and lost my way on my return journey. I have a cosy mouse

hole in the skirting board of your father's study – at least, I did have . . .'

The mouse paused and let out another little sigh before changing the subject.

'You must be the daughter,' it said, looking up at Ada. 'The little Goth girl. The one that stomps around in those big boots.'

'That's right. My name's Ada,' said Ada politely. 'What's yours?'

'Call me Ishmael,' said the ghost of a mouse. 'Anyway, I was keeping to the shadows, head down, when I picked up this delicious scent wafting down the corridor towards me. Well, I couldn't resist. I followed my quivering nose and it led



THE BEIGE CURATE

me to this lump of cheese – yellow with bluish bits and a smell like a stable boy's socks ...'

Foot
Note

'Blue Gormly' is one of the lesser-known cheeses of England. Together with Somerset Stalk, Maudslott and Cheddar are so-called Gormlys. It is also considered one of the ugliest. Especially if you think it smells like...



Ishmael closed his eyes and his entire body flickered appreciatively.

'Sounds like Blue Gormly*,' said Ada.

There were several trundles in the kitchen larder the last time Ada looked. Not that she went to the kitchen very often. It was run by Mrs Beat'em, who was very large and very loud and far scarier than any ghost. She spent her time inventing recipes and writing them down in an enormous book while shouting at her kitchen maids and making them cry. Her food was extremely complicated and often difficult to eat, needing twenty-three different knives, forks and spoons at breakfast and lunch. Even more cutlery was required at dinner. Her rhinoceros-foot jelly and baked scatter pie in a reduction of scullery maid's tears was Lord Goth's favourite dish, though Ada preferred

a soft-boiled egg and soldiers herself.

'Blue Gormly?' said Ishmael. 'It smelled delicious, whatever it was. I reached out to take it when ... SNAP!

Everything went black.' He gave a little shudder.

'The next thing I know, I'm white and see-through and hovering in the air looking down at myself caught in a horrible mousetrap.'



AND EIGHT ON