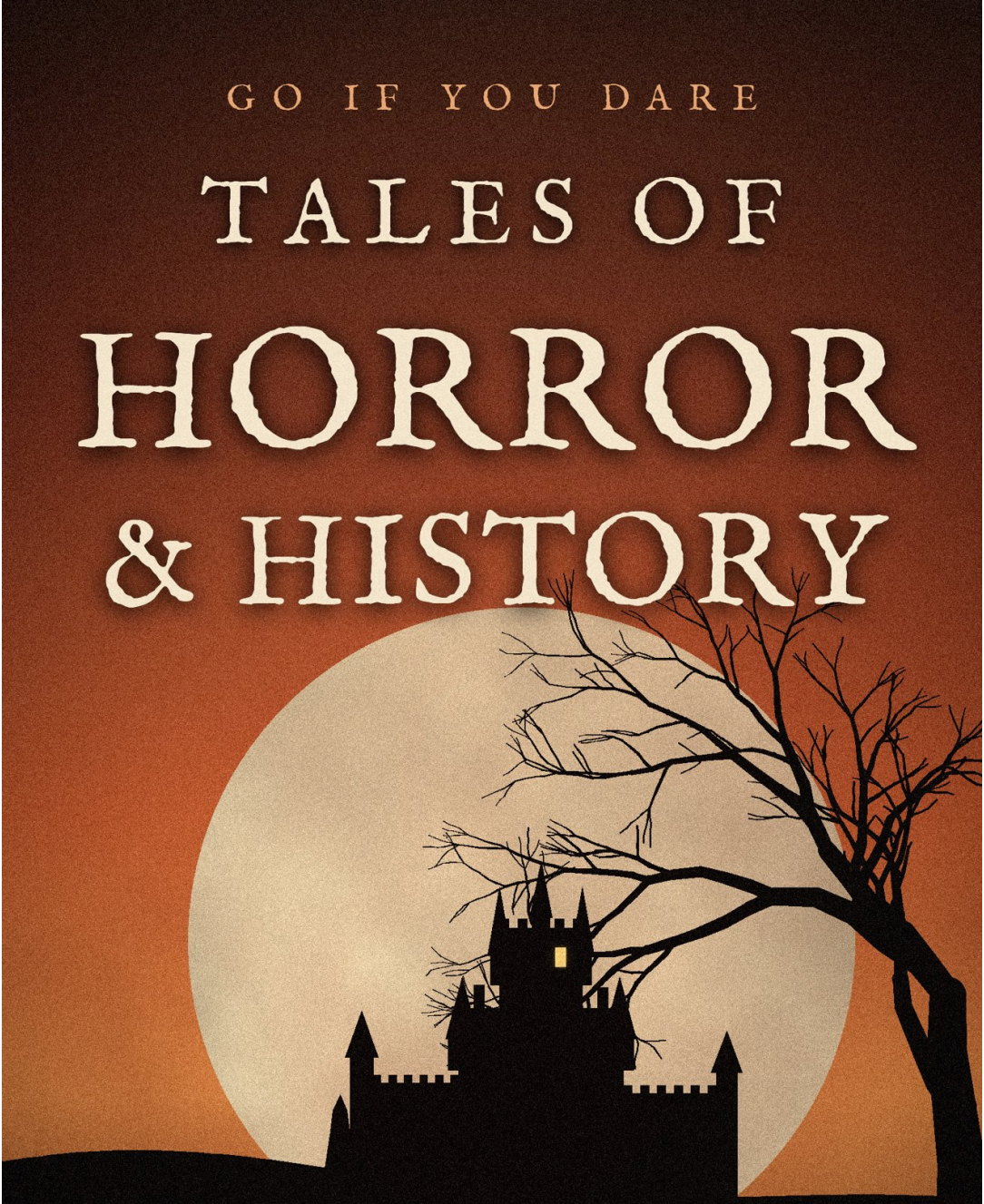
GO IF YOU DARE

TALES OF HORROR & HISTORY



Ten true stories from the dark side of history

JULIAN DELPHIKI

Tales of Horror and History



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This is a work of nonfiction. The legends, sightings and ghost stories it retells are presented as they have been reported. Where the historical record and the legend part ways, the text says so. Sources are listed at the end of each chapter.

Tales of Horror and History / Julian Delphiki

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Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing, doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal
ever dared to dream before.

— Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven* (1845)

Contents

Introduction: The Truth in the Dark 1

One The Window Without a Rag 5

Two The Guardians of the Mission 17

Three The Tent Cut from Inside 29

Four The Thing on Bray Road 41

Five The Barnes Mystery 51

Six The Street Without Drums 63

Seven The Countess in the Walled Room 73

Eight The Ship That Sailed Itself 83

Nine The Vampire of Carrer de Ponent 93

Ten The Faces in the Kitchen Floor 101

Afterword: What the Dark Remembers 111

Timeline 113

Glossary 117

About the Author 121

Also by Julian Delphiki 123



INTRODUCTION

The Truth in the Dark

EVERY FRIGHTENING STORY STARTS SOMEWHERE. Before it is told around a campfire, retold by a tour guide or turned into a film, it begins with something that really happened: a death that was never explained, a room that no one could find, a crime so terrible that the community around it needed a way to talk about it without saying it plainly.

Over time, those real events collect a second skin. Details are added and lost. Dates slip. A name is misheard. A rumor becomes a fact by being repeated often enough. The original event does not disappear, but it becomes harder and harder to see beneath the legend that has grown around it.

This book is an attempt to look beneath that skin. Each of its ten chapters takes a famous story of horror, a haunted castle, a fortress guarded by ghosts, a mountain that killed nine people, a creature on a country road, a murder in a quiet London suburb, a town that lost its children, a countess accused of unspeakable crimes, a ship found sailing with no one aboard, a so-called vampire in the slums of Barcelona and a kitchen floor that grew faces, and follows it back to the history that created it. Some of these legends turn out to rest on solid ground. Others dissolve when you touch them. Most fall somewhere in between,

and that in-between territory is where the most interesting questions live.

The stories in this book come from ten very different places: a Scottish castle, a Texas mission, a Russian mountain, a country road in the American Midwest, a London suburb, a German market town, a Hungarian castle, the open Atlantic, the slums of Barcelona and an Andalusian village. They span more than seven hundred years. What they share is a moment when something happened that the people around it could not fully explain, and a long afterlife in which explanations multiplied. In each case, the people who lived through these events were real. They deserve to be remembered as people, not just as characters in a ghost story.

"The legend is never just a lie. It is the shape that fear gives to the truth."

Why do we keep telling these stories? Partly, of course, because they are thrilling. Fear in a safe place is one of the oldest pleasures we have. But horror stories also do serious work. They help communities remember events that were too painful to discuss directly. They give a shape to anxieties that are hard to name: about death, about power, about what we owe the vulnerable and what happens to people who are hidden away. And they test our relationship with the truth. Every time we hear a ghost story, we decide, consciously or not, how much of it to believe.

That decision is the thread running through this book. You will not be asked to believe in ghosts, monsters or curses, and you will not be told that everyone who reported them was a fool. The aim is simpler: to set the legend and the record side by side and let you see both clearly.

How to read this book

Each chapter follows the same pattern, so that you can find your way easily:

Case File opens each chapter with the essentials: place, period, key figures, the legend and the record.

Historical Notes explain a concept or a piece of background in a few lines.

Fact or Legend? boxes look closely at a single famous claim and test it against the evidence.

The Verdict table at the end of each chapter sorts the main claims into documented, disputed, likely and legend.

For Reflection offers three questions to think about, or to discuss with others.

Key Concepts and Sources close each chapter with a short glossary and the books and documents behind it.

Read the chapters in any order. Read them in daylight, if you prefer. But when you have finished, the next time someone tells you a ghost story, you may find yourself asking a new question: not only *is it true?* but *what really happened here, and why do we need to remember it this way?*



CHAPTER ONE

The Window Without a Rag

Glamis Castle, Angus · 1372–1905

CASE FILE	
PLACE	Glamis Castle, in the valley of Strathmore, Angus, Scotland
PERIOD	1372 – 1905
KEY FIGURES	Janet Douglas, Lady Glamis · Alexander Lindsay, "Earl Beardie" · Claude Bowes-Lyon, 13th Earl of Strathmore
THE LEGEND	*A hidden room, a secret passed from earl to heir, and a 'monster' who should have inherited it all*
THE RECORD	A child born and buried on 21 October 1821; a noblewoman burned in 1537; a century of gossip

THE GAME BEGAN, THE STORY goes, on an afternoon when the men were away. It was 1850, or near enough, and the countess had a house full of guests and a castle full of rumors. Somewhere inside the walls of Glamis, everyone whispered, there was a room that did not appear on any plan, a room only the earl and his heir were allowed to know about. So she proposed a simple experiment.