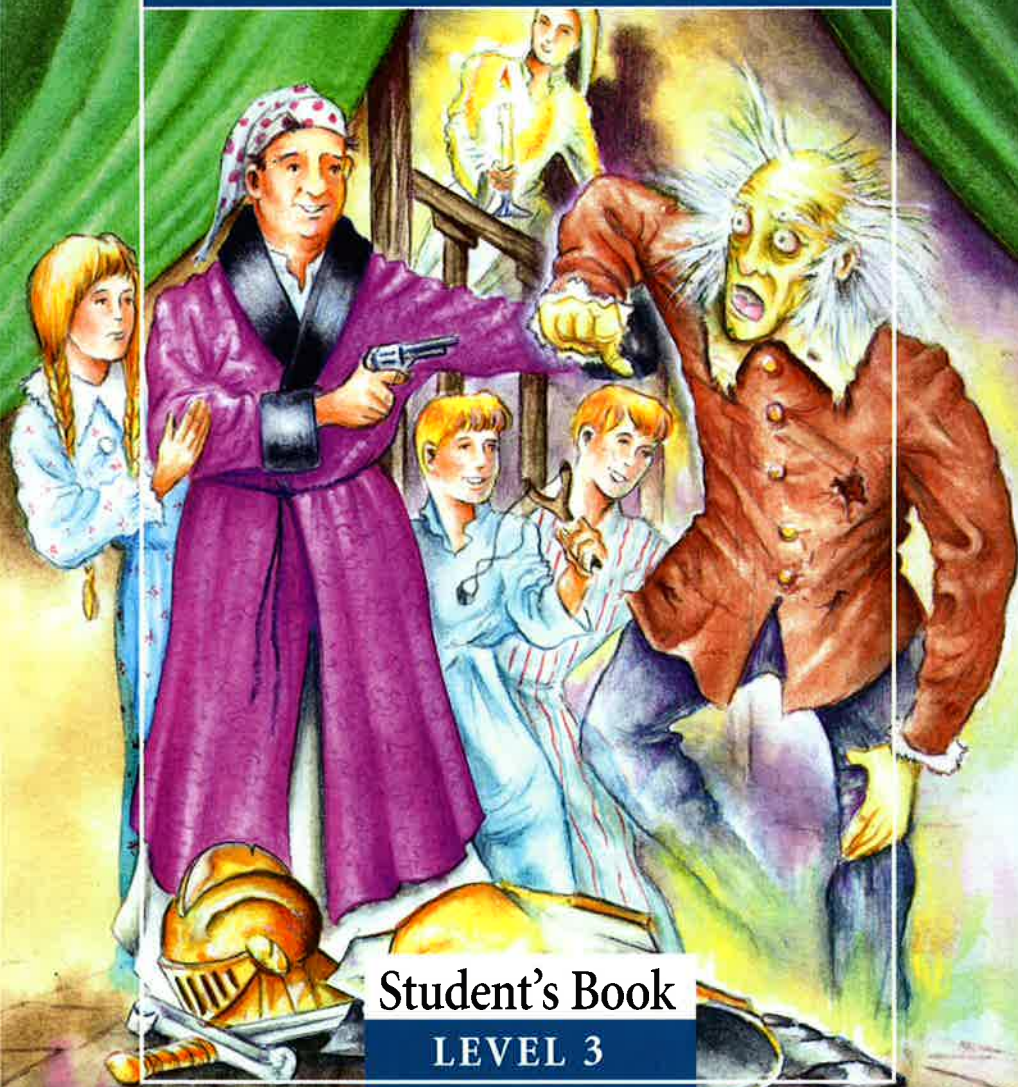


GRADED READERS

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

OSCAR WILDE



Student's Book

LEVEL 3

mm
publications

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CHAPTER I

Mr Hiram B. Otis was the new American ambassador in England. He needed a house for himself and his family. When he saw Canterville Chase, he liked it and wanted to buy it. Everybody thought that this was very foolish, because everybody believed that Canterville Chase was haunted.

Lord Canterville, the owner of the house, told Mr Otis about the Canterville Ghost. "My family and I have not lived there since the ghost terrified my aunt, the Duchess of Bolton," said Lord Canterville. "One night, she was dressing for dinner when she felt two skeleton hands on her shoulders. She had a fit and has never completely recovered. After the Duchess's terrible experience, none of our younger servants wanted to stay in the house. I must tell you that other people in the family have also seen or heard the ghost. My wife and I could not sleep because of the strange noises that came from the corridor and the library."

"Well," said Mr Otis, "I will take the house, the furniture and the ghost. I come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can buy. I think that if there was a ghost anywhere in Europe, one of our bright young men would find it, take it to America and put it in a museum."

When Lord Canterville heard this, he smiled and said, "I can assure you that the ghost exists. Perhaps he is a little cleverer than the bright young men from America. He has been in the house since 1584. He usually appears before the death of a member of the family."



Mr Otis laughed and replied, "So does the family doctor, Lord Canterville. I do not believe in ghosts, and you can't convince me that they exist."

"All right," said Lord Canterville. "If you don't mind having a ghost for company, I will sell you the house with pleasure." So Mr Otis bought the house.

A few weeks later, the Otis family were ready to move into their new home. The family consisted of Mr Otis, his wife, their three sons and their daughter. Mrs Lucretia Otis was a good-looking middle-aged woman. The oldest son was a handsome fair-haired young man. His name was Washington, and he was very sensible. The daughter, Virginia, was a beautiful girl of fifteen. She loved horses and rode them very well. Virginia met the young Duke of Cheshire at a race. He fell in love with her immediately and asked her to marry him. Of course, this could not happen, because they were both too young to get married. The two younger boys were twins and loved playing tricks on people.



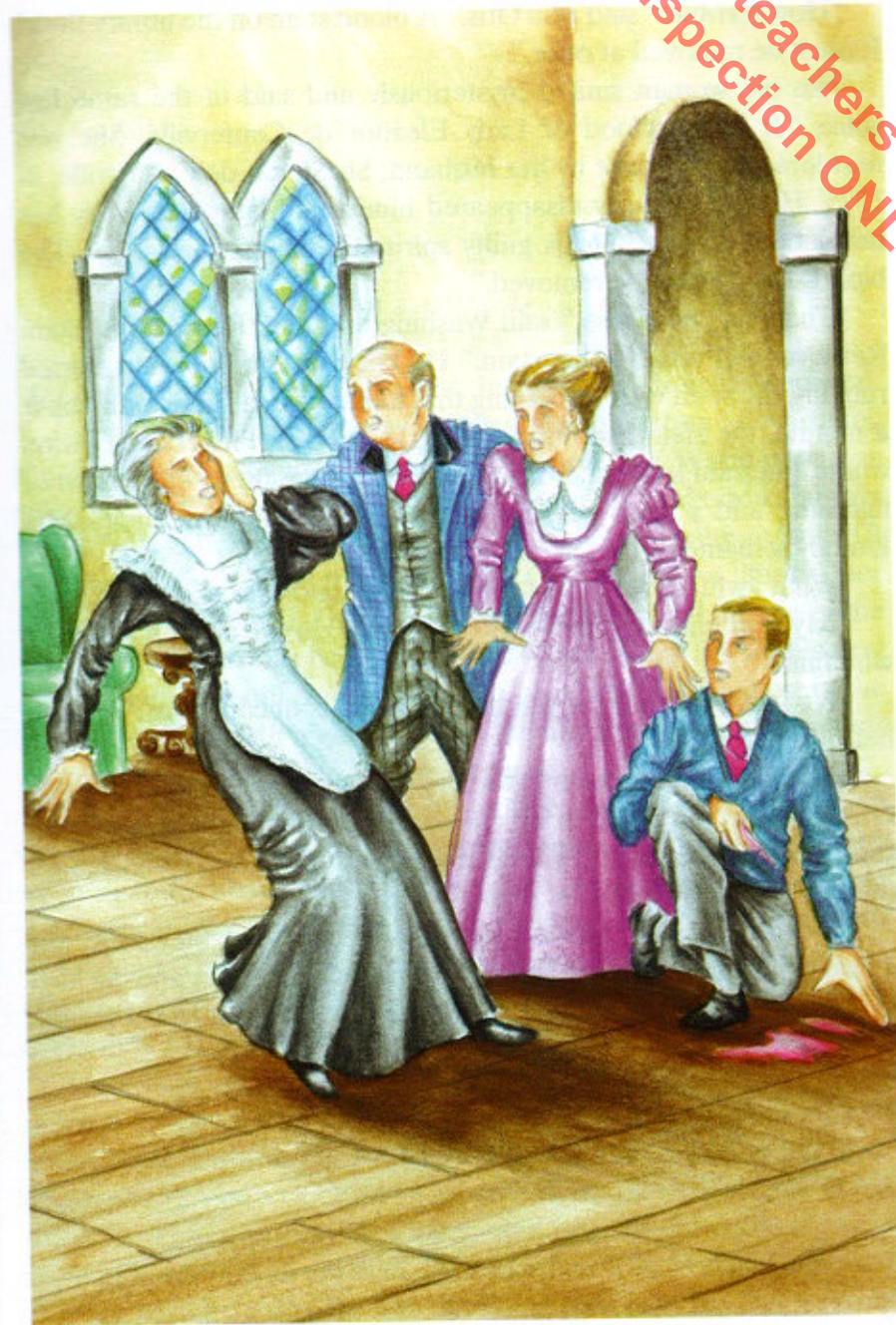
CHAPTER 2

Canterville Chase was seven miles from Ascot, where the nearest railway station was. Mr Otis and his family took the train to Ascot and hired a carriage to take them from the station to the house. They had a very pleasant journey. It was a lovely July evening. The air was fresh and smelt of the pinewoods. As they were driving, they could hear the sweet song of wood pigeons. They also saw squirrels and rabbits running among the trees and a couple of pheasants behind the bushes. As they approached Canterville Chase, however, the sky suddenly became cloudy. A flock of large black birds flew silently over their heads. When they arrived at the front door, some large drops of rain started falling.

An old woman was waiting on the steps outside the front door. She was Mrs Umney, the housekeeper. She was dressed in a black silk dress and wore a white cap and apron. She was standing there to welcome the family to their new home. As they got out of the carriage, she bowed and said, "Welcome to Canterville Chase". They followed her into the house. They went through a great hall into the library. This was a long room with a large stained-glass window. The Otises took off their coats, sat down and began looking around, while Mrs Umney served them some tea.

Suddenly, Mrs Otis noticed a large red stain on the floor beside the fireplace. She pointed at it and said to Mrs Umney, "I think something has been spilt there."

"Yes madam," replied the housekeeper in a low voice, "blood has been spilt there."



"How terrible!" said Mrs Otis. "A blood stain on the library floor! It must be removed at once."

The old woman smiled mysteriously and said in the same low voice, "It is the blood of Lady Eleanor de Canterville. She was murdered on that spot by her husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, in 1575. He mysteriously disappeared nine years later. His body has never been found, but his guilty spirit still haunts the Chase. The blood stain cannot be removed."

"That is all nonsense," said Washington Otis. "Pinkerton's Stain Remover will remove that stain." He knelt on the floor and started rubbing the stain with something that looked like a lipstick. In about a minute, the stain had disappeared. "I knew it. Pinkerton's always works," he said looking at his family. Just then, there was a flash of lightning and a loud peal of thunder made them all jump. Mrs Umney screamed with terror and fainted.

"What awful weather this country has," said Mr Otis calmly.

"My dear Hiram," cried Mrs Otis, "what can we do with a woman who faints?"

"We won't pay her for the time that she is unconscious," replied her husband.

Mrs Umney opened her eyes. She was very upset. She said to Mr Otis, "Be careful. Some trouble is coming to the house. I have seen some terrible things, sir. Things that would terrify anybody. Things that have kept me awake at night."

Mr and Mrs Otis told the old housekeeper that they were not afraid of ghosts. Then they talked to her about her salary and decided to give her a rise. Mrs Umney thanked them and went to her room.