

ALICE JONES

THE HAUNTED WALL

A SHORT STORY BY SARAH RUBIN

Alice has got another mystery on her hands – have you got what it takes to be a junior sleuth and solve the case?

Sammy Delgado Jr found me by the bike rack after school. He was a quiet kid, with dark eyes and dark circles beneath them.

‘I want to hire you,’ he said. ‘I think my bedroom is haunted. Every night, I hear something moving between the walls.’

I sighed. ‘It’s probably just a squirrel.’

Sammy shook his head and handed me a crumpled piece of paper filled with untidy notes.

‘I thought of that,’ he said. ‘But my dad said the walls only have three centimetres between them. That’s not enough room for a squirrel. See?’

I squinted at his calculations. He was right.

‘I like the way you think, Sammy. I’ll take the case.’

Sammy’s family had just moved into one of the old mansions by the river. His room was full of unpacked boxes, its wallpaper old and peeling. Great cracks ran from floor to ceiling and cobwebs clung in the corners. No wonder Sammy was spooked. If ghosts did exist, this was exactly the kind of place they’d live.

I walked the length of the room counting my steps – fifteen – and pressed my ear to the wall. Nothing.

‘I only hear it at night,’ Sammy explained, shuddering.

‘What’s on the other side of this wall?’ I asked. Maybe something over there was making the noise.

The guest room next door was the same length as Sammy’s – fifteen steps – but looked bigger because it was completely empty. There wasn’t even any wallpaper. The walls had been stripped and primed, ready to be painted. The noises weren’t coming from there. I frowned. I didn’t like the way this case was going.

I paced up the long hall outside the rooms, counting my steps to help me concentrate. Thirty-six steps.

From Sammy’s calculations, it seemed clear that squirrels weren’t the culprits. But then what was making the noise? There had to be a logical solution.

I turned around and paced back down the hall, still counting steps. As the number grew, I began to realize what wasn’t adding up.

I stopped, a smile spreading across my face.

‘Sammy, you don’t have a ghost,’ I said. ‘And I can prove it!’

Have you cracked the case?
Check out the solution on
Sarah Rubin’s website:
sarahrubinbooks.com/solution



ALICE JONES: THE IMPOSSIBLE CLUE is out now. Look out for ALICE JONES: THE GHOST LIGHT in January!

