

Christopher Peter  
FALLING  
GIRL  
A GHOST STORY

## **Part Seven**

### **Chapter 12: The rescuer**

Two things happened almost simultaneously. The iron inner gates of the gatehouse flew open as though shoved by an invisible hand. Then a car, headlights blazing, came hurtling out of the passage like a red bullet fired from a gun. The car bore down on them with deadly speed. For a split second Ellie was frozen to the spot; then without thinking she hurled herself to one side. She rolled over on the ground, gasping, and then lifted her head to see the car slew to a halt in a spray of dust and dirt behind them.

Helen and Callum lay spread-eagled on the grass a few metres away. Ellie held her breath – and then released it as they both clambered awkwardly to their feet. She sprang up and ran over to the car, just as her Dad emerged from it, looking dazed. When he saw Ellie he stumbled forward, took hold of her and held her so tightly that the breath was squeezed from her body.

“Oh, Dad,” Ellie finally managed after prising her face away from his chest. “What are you like? Driving in here like a maniac?”

“I’m sorry, Ellie,” said Dad, wiping his eyes. “It was all I could think to do. I just had to get inside here. The doors were

locked. The Warden's key wouldn't even open them. They were stuck fast. Phone still wouldn't work, even outside. Neither would the Warden's. I thought, no ghost is going to take my daughter away from me. Or my step-son. If I have to batter the doors down, if that's what it takes, then that's just what I'll have to do."

"But – hang on – what about the postern gate? You could have got in there – didn't June tell you?"

"Yes. Except we just had a terrific storm outside – never seen anything like it – and the river bank near there was a quagmire. Couldn't get near it ... I see there's no sign of the storm in here though." He looked back at the gatehouse, then at the front of the car. "The funny thing was ... you know what, I think the front doors opened by themselves just as I reached them. I certainly didn't feel any impact. Probably a good job actually. The Warden wouldn't have been amused, and I have absolutely no idea what I'd have said in the car insurance claim."

Ellie turned to thank Sarah for what had obviously been her doing, but before she could do so James appeared from round the corner of the gatehouse and bounded across to Callum and Helen. He was grinning as he seized Callum's hand and began to pump it enthusiastically. "I say, good show Callum! Jolly well done. You moved very smartly there I must say," he said breathlessly.

"What did Callum do?" asked Ellie.

"He pulled me out of the way of the car," said Helen. "I was too slow, but he saved me." Then she took hold of Callum's spare hand, leant over and kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you."

At that moment Callum's face would have presented some serious competition to Robert Black's car in any reddest-thing-in-the-castle competition. He seemed to barely register Dad's rather awkward man-hug. "Great to see you, Callum. All right?"

"Fine," mumbled Callum.

Dad turned to Helen. "Look, I'm so sorry. I could have killed you. I'm really sorry."

“Please, don’t mention it,” said Helen (though she was looking a little flustered by now – from kiss or near miss, Ellie wondered?) “Finding Ellie and Callum was the only thing on your mind; and you didn’t know the doors were going to just spring open like that, did you? That’s probably the only reason you were going so fast.”

“Yes – well, thank you, but even so ... it was pretty idiotic ...” Embarrassed as he was, Ellie could clearly see a mischievous little smile light up her dad’s face as he glanced sideways at his step-son. “Callum, aren’t you going to introduce me to your ... friend here?”

“Shuddup,” mumbled Callum.

Suddenly Ellie felt a pang of fear that Sarah Grant might have disappeared; and for a second the ghost was nowhere to be seen. But then she was there, a little nearer the chapel steps, and her eyes seemed drawn once again to the keep. As Ellie and Helen moved closer she spoke without looking at them. “Well, that’s that, isn’t it? I suppose you’ll be going now?”

“Thank you for opening the doors, Sarah,” said Ellie.

“I suppose that must mean I’m not such a self-centred monster after all am I?” Sarah faced them, and smiled a sad and empty smile. “What’s left then?”

“The chapel,” said Helen.

“Yes. You do keep banging on about that don’t you? And you’re so annoyingly right.” She straightened up, tossed her hair and laughed. “Well, Martin used to say you must look your fears square in the eye. He always did. I’ve never been so good at that myself. But, well, the chapel ... on one condition. Please will you come with me, you two?”

“Of course we will,” said Ellie. Great, she thought, there goes my mouth again. What’s going to happen now?

Sarah nodded, turned and began slowly to climb the chapel steps. Ellie called back, “See you in a minute Dad. There’s something we have to do now.”

“Oh ... really?” He motioned to follow them. “Is that Sarah? I ... um ...”

“Don’t worry, Dad. I’ll be back before you know it. I promise. We’ll just be here in the chapel, that’s all.” She wasn’t intending to get herself lost again, that was for sure.

Sarah reached the top of the steps and halted before the doorway. Ellie, arriving behind her, looked at Helen questioningly as long seconds passed in the still heat. Until, as though finally overcoming some invisible obstacle, Sarah walked quickly on into the chapel.

The girls followed her, into the cool darkness again; and the three of them stood for a moment, as if wondering what to do next. Ellie had been half expecting something dramatic (and probably frightening) to happen immediately; but nothing did. Then, Helen walked over to the simple stone altar by the window at the far end, and called over to the others to join her. She began to read the John passage from her Bible again; and as soon as she had finished, Sarah dropped slowly onto her knees in front of the altar.

“I haven’t done this for such a long time,” she said, and then gave a nervous giggle. “I feel a bit silly actually.” Then she bowed her head. “Coming in here, I didn’t have a clue what I was going to pray, but I do now. I’m just going to say that I want to go home.”

Ellie didn’t know how much time passed there, in the dreamy peace of the chapel. It might have been one minute or five – she could never afterwards recall. She did remember thinking that she couldn’t understand how she had found this place frightening the last time she had been there, when she had run out and very nearly off the edge of the steps in her blind panic. But things were different now. She was not alone this time, and she had a friend who was scared and needed her help. And also, they now knew

what (or rather, who) they had brought Sarah to meet, and there was no need to be afraid.

Finally, Sarah rose to her feet a little stiffly and stood facing away from them, towards the window. Then she turned to face them, and Ellie heard a sharp intake of breath from Helen. Sarah's face was indescribable. She was smiling the widest smile that Ellie had ever seen, and her eyes were sparkling, even as tears streamed down her cheeks. There was nothing dead or closed about that face now – it was as though all the pain and grief and weariness had been washed out of it. Her form was somehow muted, almost fading away, and yet she looked more alive than she had ever seemed before. She was almost literally shining with life.

Then Sarah Grant spoke in a voice that was quiet but assured, warm and alive. Her real voice, thought Ellie.

“Thank you, Ellie and Helen. Thank you for being my friends. It means so much to me, you coming with me into here. I just couldn't have faced this on my own. I'm going to miss you, but I've got to go now. He's waiting for me, you see. I'm going home.”

And she was no longer there. No shining lights, no angelic chorus – just gone. Ellie blinked in the silvery shadows; and then she and Helen held hands and stood together in silence. It seemed the right thing to do, or more like the only thing they could possibly do.

When they left the chapel, Ellie looked around at the ancient, red-grey castle walls, their every feature standing out sharply in the late afternoon light. This place must have been so many different things for so many people, she thought, all through the centuries – a fortress, a home, a playground, a prison. So full of shadows, memories, happiness and heartbreak. Now it had given up its last prisoner, its last lost soul.

Scudding grey clouds were hurrying to blot out the sun, now low over the keep, and Ellie shivered as a chill breeze blew up. “Well, Sarah's gone, so the weather's going back to normal I

guess,” she said to Helen. But Helen wasn’t there. She saw Dad and Callum waiting by the car, and June as well, but there was no sign of James.

“Hello, love. Is Sarah all right now?” said June, back on the grass.

Ellie smiled. “Yes, she’s all right.” She glanced around again. “Where are the others?” But actually, with a sad sinking feeling inside, she already knew the answer.

“I suppose they’ve gone, love, back to their own time. The spell is broken now.”

“But we never got to say goodbye. Do you think we’ll ever see them again?”

June grinned. “Who knows? I don’t see how it’s possible, but then I never thought any of this was possible. You never know, love. You never know.”

Then the Warden gestured towards Dad. “Well, you three had better get going hadn’t you? It’s closing time now, and it’s certainly time for Lewis Hamilton here to get his car out from the middle of this ancient monument.”

Robert blushed. “I’m really very sorry. I’ll pay for any damage.”

June laughed. “Well the doors are OK at least, thanks to our ex-ghost. The grass is a bit mangled in places, but I’m sure we don’t need to worry about that.”

Callum touched Ellie’s arm. “Are you OK?” he said. His face had a rather weird look, which Ellie guessed must be one of concern. She had never seen it before.

“Yeah, thanks. What about you?”

“All right,” he grunted, shoving hands in pockets.

“It’s a shame the others have gone, isn’t it? I liked them. Especially Helen. Didn’t you?” Ellie raised her eyebrows, and then

couldn't resist giving her step-brother a playful punch on the arm.  
“Loverboy!”

“Shuddup,” growled Callum, slouching towards the car. “Dad – um, Rob – tell her.”

Ellie smiled at her dad. “Thank you,” she said. She didn't say what for, but it had something to do with him never wanting to let her go, and for coming back for her even though it might have cost him his life for all he knew. This imperfect man, sometimes bad tempered, sometimes weak, sometimes strong, often funny, always Dad.

“Come on Ellie,” said Robert Black, “let's go home.”

## **The End**

Previous instalments available on [www.christopher-peter.com](http://www.christopher-peter.com)

Or you can get the full version from Amazon,  
in Kindle or paperback editions.

## Note from the author: About castles

This story takes place in a medieval castle. Some terms that you might not have heard before are used to describe different parts of the castle, and these are defined below.

**Bailey (outer / inner):** The area enclosed by the castle walls. Castles often had both inner and outer baileys. The inner bailey was smaller and was usually where the keep was located, along with other buildings.

**Curtain wall:** The perimeter wall of a castle, linking the outer towers – so, like a wall ‘hung’ between towers.

**Gatehouse:** The entrance building in a curtain wall; usually one of the most heavily fortified parts of a castle because it would be one of the obvious points for an enemy to attack when trying to take the castle by force. Gatehouses tended to become larger and more elaborate in later medieval castles, from about the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

**Keep:** Fortified tower, the principal stronghold of a castle, also known as the great tower or *donjon*. It was often where the principal accommodation – for the Lord and his family – was located. It could also be the last refuge if the rest of the castle was conquered. Not all castles had keeps, but many did and it was often the largest and most impressive building – and sometimes the main or only part still surviving today.

**Portcullis:** Wood or iron grille-pattern gate which was raised and lowered by ropes or chains, usually in the gatehouse. Very few castles still have them today, but you can often see where they used to be.

**Postern gate:** Small doorway useful for entering or leaving a castle after the main gates had been closed. It could be used as a *sally-port*, for defenders to go out on an attack.

If you want to find out about castles, there are many books and lots on the Internet that will tell you more. Three websites well worth looking at are:

Castle Xplorer: [www.castlexplorer.co.uk](http://www.castlexplorer.co.uk)

Castles of Britain: [www.castles-of-britain.com](http://www.castles-of-britain.com)

English Heritage: [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Of course, the best thing is to visit some castles yourself. Just remember to be careful, and to keep watching and listening for anything strange. You might not think there could be anything out of the ordinary in an old abandoned ruin – but I don't suppose Ellie Black did either, and look what happened to her ...

## **One more thing ...**

If you've enjoyed reading this book then could I ask you to consider:

- Writing a review on Amazon.
- Rating the book on Goodreads.com.
- Telling others about it?

I would really appreciate it if you were able to do one or more of the above. It's especially helpful for first-time authors like me (this is my first novel).

Your review or recommendation doesn't have to be long or amazingly clever, but it does have to be honest – and I really do mean that. Say what you liked and what you didn't as much; basically, what you really thought of it. That sort of feedback helps other people to choose books they might enjoy reading – and avoid those they probably wouldn't.

Thank you.

## **Also by Christopher Peter: *BASIC Boy***

**You've heard of haunted houses ... but what about a haunted computer? What do you do when there's literally a ghost in the machine? When the past collides with the present and something sinister has come along for the ride?**

Cal Stubbs has big problems. It's not just that he's struggling to get used to his stepdad Rob, who's weirdly obsessed with stone-age computers (what the heck's a ZX Spectrum anyway?), while his real dad's gone to ground. It's not even that his geeky best friend has more luck with girls than he does.

No. It's definitely more the creepy nightmares and the freaky messages coming through on the laptop from some sick psycho troll.

Meanwhile, back in 1984, the teenage Rob has a dark secret. He's done something terrible ... and a kid who died but won't stay quiet is hell-bent on making him pay. And, mad though it sounds, the price might be his future stepson.

As Cal gets more disturbing messages and Rob struggles to remember exactly what happened in 1984, they soon realise that a malevolent shadow is breaking through into the present, intent on wreaking havoc. How do you fight a ghost that can program a computer? They'd better figure out how before time runs out ...

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