

# The Gentleman of Easternham Cumbershire

*By Kirsten Bakstran*

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The gentleman awakes with a start at nie 3 o clock. He is usually quite a sound sleeper, honk shoo-ing straight through the night and rising with nary a wrinkle or crease in his polka dotted nightcap. But not tonight. And he new exactly why. No, it wasn't the frightening prospect of the Almighty's terrible power nor even his reoccurring frightening dream of women wearing pants. No, it was because it is November 6th. The spookiest day known to mankind.

The previous November 6th, which had been a Wednesday... or was it a Thursday? No definitely a Wednesday. He knew it was a Wednesday because he always dined on meatloaf on Wednesdays and he remembered having meatloaf that night. That Wednesday his new wife died a grim, untimely death (unlike the gentleman's mother, who had died a comical and timely death when, at the age of 82, she was trampled to death by a brigade of ponies). The gentleman's wife on the other hand, had thrown herself from their manor's roof on their wedding night.

Now exactly one year later as the clock chimes the same hour, the gentleman sees his chamber door creak open, seemingly of its own accord. "Hello?" he cries. But the only response is the soft fall of footsteps advancing from the door towards his bed. The gentleman pulls his sheets up to just under his eyes, which are darting back and forth at a quite a pace. The steps stop at the foot of his bed, where suddenly the ghost of his wife appears.

She shrieks and points at the gentleman, whose teeth begin to chatter like the teeth of someone who is just so gosh darn scared. "My darling!" he finally manages to utter. "Are you here to seek revenge? Simply because I threw you from the rooftop and told everyone you killed yourself because you couldn't live as ugly as you were? And then when people said that you weren't remembered as being ugly, I drew a mustache and unibrow on you with ink and had an open casket funeral for all the town to see? And then, even though I gained millions from your dowry, I still buried you amongst all the ponies whom I shot for trampling mother, just because I didn't want to pay the gravedigger the measly sum required for digging a fresh grave. And then I had your grave stone engraved as 'As foul as a fart, yet thankfully gone from our midst far quicker?' Surely your wrath could not stem from such a inconsequential event as that? Could it?"

The wife begins to turn her head, as if to say no, but the head continues to turn, going all the way around with a wicked crunch. The gentleman, now paralyzed with horror, can do nothing but stare as his wife's head turns and turns and turns. It gains speed going faster and faster. Her skin stretches out from her face like a hound dog until finally it frees itself from her face, splattering the surrounding walls, the bed, and the gentleman's silk nightgown. And yet the head spins on until all that is left is bone.

"What ghastly horror is this!" The gentleman screams, jumping from his bed and stepping right in his very full chamber pot (Thursday's are also meatloaf night). The wife's skull separates from her body, spinning straight through the window. As the glass shatters, the wife's body lunges across the bed, grabbing the gentleman in a vise grip that even his silk sleeves can not slip from. The headless body throws him out the now open window where he plummets to his death.