

Holly and the Ivy

It had been a year to the day since the fire at the Ivy. The public house stands on the A169 between Pickering and Whitby in Yorkshire, and Holly Palmer fell in love with the place from the moment she first set eyes upon it.

She and her husband, Dave, had been on holiday and travelling across the North Yorkshire Moors, when a wrong turning had them scratching their heads in a lay-by with a map spread across the bonnet of their Audi. All had been going swimmingly until the satnav packed up ten miles down the road, and now they found themselves in the middle of nowhere. Holly looked up in exasperation and caught sight of the roof timbers further down the hill. She wandered off, leaving her husband to come up with a solution to their dilemma.

“Dave!” she shouted, suddenly. “Come and look at this!”

Her long-suffering partner sighed, folded up the map, and trudged down the road; he stopped abruptly when he saw where she was pointing.

“This is it!” she exclaimed, pointing excitedly at the ruin standing across the road. “This is just what we’ve been looking for!”

The Ivy stood before the couple, majestic in its dereliction, and Holly decided that this part of the North Yorkshire Moors was a special place. She had seen it on a map, and she had seen the agent’s address and as much of the property as she could see from the road. She had quickly worked out the route back to the car.

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It was later that evening that the first inklings of trouble began to creep into the mind of Dave Palmer. They were in the pub’s bar when one of the locals overheard Holly’s conversation with the landlord, Mike Proctor.

“The Ivy?” he asked. “That derelict on the A169?”

“Yes,” Holly replied. “Marvellous place. Lots of possibilities; just what Dave and I are looking for, isn’t it, love?”

“More fool you,” the man said. “Got a history, has that place.”

“What history?” asked Dave, brusquely, irritated at the interruption.

“Haunted,” the local replied. “You don’t want to be bothering with it.”

“That’s not good enough,” chipped in Holly. “We’re not scared of ghosts.”

Old George, as they called him at the Swan, sniffed in that way Yorkshire folk do in the face of unbelievers, sidled up the bar, and stood face-to-face with Holly Palmer.

“There’s a curse on it. Goes back four hundred years.” He paused for dramatic effect. “Old lady living on a plot of land at the back of the place fell foul of one of the locals. She gave the woman’s boy a potion for a sickness he was suffering with. Lad died a few days later and she copped the blame. They had her up on witchcraft charges, convicted her, and burned her at the stake. Just before the flames took her, she screamed out the curse. Building’s been jinxed ever since.”

There was a brief pause after Old George finished his tale, and the silence was broken by Holly’s outburst.