



## Boredom is good

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“If you’re so bored, you can help me sort out the things in the attic.” Mrs. Smith said, pushing Peter into the dark room. She had enough of his constant whining and wanted him to shut up. Peter opened his mouth to argue but attic door swung shut with a slam.

He sighed and stormed grumpily around the attic. It was an ordinary attic you could find in any house, filled with unwanted junk. There was nothing interesting.

Peter was about to drape himself dramatically across an old antique armchair when an old chest caught his eye. It reminded him of the treasure chest he had often seen in books about pirates and a tingle of excitement rushed through him. What if there were stacks of gold inside? He would become filthy rich. Peter launched himself off the armchair and approached the chest. He tried to open it but it was locked. He dug a clip out of his pocket. Finally, that was a perfect chance to use his lock-picking skills. After a few pokes, the lock turned and Peter lifted the lid.

His smile faded into a frown when his eyes fell upon the stacks of paper inside the chest. He dug through the chest in frustration and then threw out heaps of paper. An old envelope fell at his feet. Curiously, Peter opened the envelope and found a photo and a diary. He flipped through the diary. The entries were dated a century ago.

“May 20, 1912: I married Hans. We moved in together. I’m so happy.”

“May 30, 1912: I don’t feel well. Is it something I have eaten?”

“June 5, 1912: I coughed up blood today, but Hans wouldn’t let me see a doctor. He told me to rest.”

“June 10, 1912: I haven’t got any better. I have decided to leave everything to Hans if I die.”

The last entries sent chills down Peter’s spine.

“June 15, 1912: It was the cookies.”

He was never going to eat cookies again. He then glanced at the photo. A happy couple were standing in front of a large house. The young woman was wearing a wedding gown and she eerily resembled Peter’s older sister. The words, ‘Julia and Hans Baker’ were scribbled at the back of the photo.

Peter charged downstairs to find his mother.

“Mom, have you heard of a woman called Julia Baker?”

Mrs. Smith froze. “Y...Yes. I have. Why?”

“Can you tell me about her?” Curiously, I asked.

“She was your great-grandmother’s youngest sister who died less than a month after her wedding. Apparently, she had depression and took a fatal overdose of pills.” Mrs. Smith recounted the story her own grandmother told her. “They say her ghost still haunts the house she bought with her husband. The paranormal activity rendered the house vacant till now.” Peter’s mum added.

She didn’t die from a drug overdose. Look at this.” Peter interrupted and showed his mum the photo and the diary he discovered in the attic. Mrs. Smith was startled when she read the diary. “I never fathomed ... She was poisoned.”

“Where is she buried?” Peter asked. “In the grass meadow beside the local park,” Mrs. Smith mused.

“Right, thanks.” Peter took the diary and photo and then raced out of the house. The searing sun glared down at him but he didn’t stop until he arrived at the grass meadow. He spotted several tombstones in the distance. Sure enough, the oldest one had his great grandaunt’s name engraved on it. Peter took a deep breath.

“Hi, Grandaunt Julia,” he took a box of matches out of his pocket. “I found your diary. Don’t worry, we know the truth now. Rest in peace.” He ignited a flame and held it close to the photo and diary. A wisp of smoke hurled in the air as the photo and diary slowly was burnt. Peter thought for a moment that the smoke seemed to form the relieved face of a young woman. A gust of wind then blew out the flames and caressed at his ear. A tiny whisper sounded as the wind rushed past him, “Thank you.”

Peter smiled as he began the trek back home. The events that just happened were crazy enough for one summer vacation, and he wouldn’t have ever uncovered the truth if he hadn’t felt bored. Boredom accidentally solved the mystery behind a young woman’s death. Maybe boredom wasn’t so bad after all.