

From *Buddy* by Nigel Hinton

Even in the daytime number 56 Croxley Street looked sinister. It was built of dark stone that had been stained darker in places where rain had dripped down from the broken gutters. From the grey slates of the roof down to the ground there was no lightness or colour anywhere. The trees and bushes in the garden were a miserable dark green that seemed to swallow up the light. Buddy noticed that where the branches of one of the bushes leaned against the stone of the house, the leaves had died as though poisoned by its touch.

The worst thing of all was the boards on the windows. They were what made the whole place look so gloomy and lifeless, and anyone could be inside peering out through the cracks.

From *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

THERE WAS A HAND IN the darkness, and it held a knife.

The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately.

The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet.

The street door was still open, just a little, where the knife and the man who held it had slipped in, and wisps of night time mist slithered and twined into the house through the open door.

The man Jack paused on the landing. With his left hand he pulled a large white handkerchief from the pocket of his black coat, and with it he wiped off the knife and his gloved right hand which had been holding it; then he put the handkerchief away. The hunt was almost over. He had left the woman in her bed, the man on the bedroom floor, the older child in her brightly coloured bedroom, surrounded by toys and half-finished models. That only left the little one, a baby barely a toddler, to take care of. One more and his task would be done.