

Owl Creek Bridge and Other Stories

AMBROSE BIERCE

Owl Creek Bridge

- 1 Peyton was a wealthy Southern landowner. He was not a soldier, but he had tried to burn down the wooden bridge at Owl Creek to stop the Union Army from using it. He had been caught by the Yankee soldiers. They had tied him to the bridge and they were going to hang him.
- 2 'A strange light shone through the trees. Peyton felt as if he were in a dream.'
'When Peyton looked up, he saw bright stars in the dark sky. But he did not recognize them.'
'He heard voices whispering in the forest. The trees were talking in a language that he did not understand.'

Beyond the Wall

- 1 Dampier had read that sometimes strange and terrible things happen three times. And then there is a death. 'Tri' means three and anything 'fatal' ends in death. That is a fatal triad.
- 2 Dampier believes this is true and he tells his friend why. He sees a girl and falls in love with her. She lives in the room next to his, so he sends her a message by tapping on the wall three times. She answers: TAP,TAP,TAP. But she does not reply to his second message. So when she taps the third time, he does not answer. Then he finds out that she is dead. Dampier feels that he has killed her. It is a fatal triad. There is another fatal triad too. First the girl dies, then Dampier's father. Then, last of all, Dampier himself.

An Adventure at Brownville

- 1 On the last day of term, the schoolmaster was going home, at sunset. He sees a man and a woman. They are talking angrily. Then the woman kneels down in front of the man. She seems afraid. The schoolmaster is worried that the man might hurt her.
- 2 The two girls, Pauline and Eva, are from San Francisco. Eva is not very well. The man, who is much older, is Richard Benning, the girls' guardian. When the girls are twenty-one, they will have their father's money. But perhaps Benning is already spending it, on the girls and on himself.
- 3 Eva is afraid of him, because she thinks he will kill her and her sister. But, at the same time, Eva loves Richard Benning.
- 4 The schoolmaster says this about Benning, after Eva has fallen from the top of a cliff and died. Her sister, Pauline, was already dead. She had died suddenly. Benning has power over the two girls and he can make them do anything, even harm themselves. So, in that sense, when they die, he has killed them.

The Damned Thing

- (a) Harker sees the oats moving in the field. He thought a big animal was coming towards him, but he could not see it. Later, he sees Morgan fighting something but he cannot see what it is. Then Morgan dies – killed by the 'Thing'.
- (b) Morgan's dog barks and looks at something that is not there. He runs after this 'something' too.
- (c) Morgan sees something between himself and the stars. Then he sees the Damned Thing's footprints near the house.
- (d) They see the frightening sight of Morgan's body. His throat was torn open and there were other injuries on his body. His clothes were soaked with blood.

One of the Missing

- 1 Private Jerome Searing was a Yankee scout. He watched the enemy soldiers.
- 2 He did this work for the Union or Yankee Army. The Union Army wanted to know where the picket line of the enemy, the Confederate Army, was.
- 3 Lieutenant Adrian Searing did not stop because he did not recognize his brother Jerome. The scout had been dead for a week. His body was buried under heavy wooden beams and there were rats too. Jerome's face and his blue uniform were covered in gray dust. So Adrian thinks that the body is that of a Confederate soldier.

The Stranger

- 1 The four men were in the desert on their way to California to find gold.
- 2 Some Apaches found them and followed them. The men climbed up into a cave but they were trapped. They had no food or water. Ramon Gallegos died first - he shot himself. Then William Shaw and George Kent killed themselves. Berry Davies must have died too.
- 3 The stranger is the ghost of Berry Davies.

Three and One Are One

- 1 Barr Lassiter joins the Union Army because he does not believe in slavery. He supported the Unionists.
- 2 Barr returns to his home near Carthage after two years away. There had been a terrible battle nearby and the Unionists were in control of that part of Tennessee again. Barr wants to see his family. He goes back to the farmhouse in the evening. He sees the three members of his family, but they do not speak to him.
- 3 The next day, Barr meets his friend, Bushrod, and walks back with him to the farmhouse. It is in ruins. Bushrod tells him that all Barr's family had been killed in the battle, the year before. Barr had seen their ghosts.

Killed at Resaca

- 1 Lieutenant Brayle behaves foolishly during a battle. He never takes cover or moves out of danger. He sits on his horse where the enemy can see him.
- 2 (a) At first, the men think that he is very lucky.
(b) Later, they think that he is brave and foolish as well as lucky.
- 3 (a) You can say he is lucky, because he is not hit until his horse stops at the stream. He is brave, because he always rides his horse towards the enemy. He looks after the captain's body too. But you may think he is foolish because he takes his horse when the general tells him not to. Brayle dies with a smile on his face. Is that brave or foolish?
(b) Marian does not care about the letter from her lover. She throws it on the fire when she sees blood on it. Perhaps she does not care about Herman Brayle. But she wants to know that he died bravely. Then she can say that a brave man had loved her.
(c) The writer is honest and he tells the truth about Brayle. He is proud of him too. The writer knows that Marian never loved Brayle, so he lies about her lover's death. Then she can't tell everyone that her lover was a brave man.