

Pam Lays Her Ghosts

The Grand,
Sandhythe
Saturday, 8th

Dear Marge,

We had a good journey here to Sandhythe. Pam is fine. I know after finding the remains of Rose Pemberton – what was it? five years ago – she said she never wanted to come back here. But, as you know, she suddenly took it into her head that she would like to return and see where Rose was buried. She said she wanted to lay the ghost of the past. I'm not sure what she meant by that. At any rate she wants to see where they laid Rose to rest and visit her grave.

But Pam did not want us to book in at Beach View Hotel. She said it gave her the creeps. She did get those mysterious letters there, didn't she? I cannot believe they were really written by Rose's ghost – is that the one she's talking of laying? - there must have been some other explanation. But it was all very mysterious.

Anyway, we've booked in at the Grand. It certainly looks as though it lives up to its name. We shall see.

I'm sorry you and Jim could not come with us; but I could see Jim was in no state to travel. How is he getting on? Getting better, I hope.

Yours,
Mabel.

Halchester,
Tuesday 11th

Dear Mabel,

Thank you for your letter. I am glad to know that the journey was good and that you and Pam have settled in at the Grand. I understand why Pam did not want to go back to Beach View Hotel; it would have brought back memories of the discovery of Rose Pemberton's bones and of those strange letters she received when we were with her there.

I don't know either what ghost exactly it is that Pam's wants to lay. It may be Rose's; but I wonder if she's thinking of Bob's ghost. I know he was a rotten husband and a serial adulterer and – of course – he murdered poor Rose. But I think she still loved him in an odd way, perhaps just out of duty as his wife. I know she was both relieved *and* upset when Bob was hanged; she never got over that properly. Perhaps she thought the fifth anniversary of the discovery of those bones would be a time to come to terms with things.

But enough of these morbid thoughts. Thank you for asking about Jim. Yes, I am pleased to say he is much better now. He still cannot walk properly, but he is more cheerful in himself and his appetite has returned, which is surely a good sign!

Give our love to Pam. I hope you both enjoy your holiday in Sandhythe.

Yours
Marge

The Grand,
Sandhythe
Tuesday 11th

Dear Marge,

Mabel has told you where we are. I couldn't face going back to the Beach View Hotel; the thought of those letters gave me the creeps, and I want to enjoy this break if I can. Tomorrow I

intend to go to see where they have laid poor Rose to rest; I want to visit her grave. Perhaps it will help put my mind at rest just to sit awhile there and think and say a prayer or two for the repose of her soul.

To think it is five years ago that you and Jim were here with me. I am sorry you both cannot be here this time. I hope Jim is on the mend.

The weather has been fine and I think is set fair for the remainder of our holiday.

Yours

Pam

Beach View Hotel

Sandhythe

Tuesday 11th

Dear Mrs Bowen,

I fear I owe your many apologies. It was not, of course, Rose Pemberton who wrote you those letters five years ago. Bones cannot write and, as far as I know, ghosts do not write letters that are delivered through the post. I have to confess that I wrote them.

I had known Rose while she was here fifteen years ago. I had been one of your late husband's "conquests", though at the time I did not know he was married. He had promised all sorts of things to me and that we would get married. But when he found out that I was pregnant, he disappeared very quickly. I was very young, not quite sixteen at the time and I had to have my baby adopted. It was all very upsetting and I was very bitter about it all.

I won't tell you all that happened to me after that. But fifteen years ago I had a holiday job here in Sandhythe. Imagine my surprise when I saw you husband dating young Rose Pemberton. He did not recognize me. I suppose he's had so many affairs, he simply does not remember them all.

But I was hurt that I meant nothing to him, particularly in view of all the distress he had caused me. I hated him then and, to be honest, glad that he did not recognize me. I tried to warn Rose about him; but she was besotted – I am sure you know what a charmer he was.

Rose was a bit upset when your Bob said he had to leave Sandhythe. I was glad when he went. Then a week later Rose disappeared. I was always suspicious about this; but no one listened. It was assumed here that she had had some message from home and gone back there, though no one seemed to know where "home" was. As she was over 21, the police did not take the disappearance seriously and seem to think my suspicions were because I hated Bob Bowen.

But, as I said, I always had my suspicions. Underneath all his charm, I could feel there was something nasty.

By the time you came here five years ago, I had become employed as a chambermaid at the Beach View Hotel. The very day before you arrived, I happened to come across those bones when I walking a neighbour's dog up near the golf course. It gave me quite a turn, especially as I notice a brooch I knew Rose had worn. I suppose I should have informed the police straightaway; but I was still annoyed with them because they had not taken me seriously when Rose disappeared – and I still hated your husband and, I am sorry to say, hated you because you stuck by him. So I wrote those letters.

You may wonder how I knew certain things about your domestic circumstances. I'm sorry to say that as a chambermaid, I made sure I did your room and while I was there, I read the letters Mabel had written you. I feel quite ashamed now. I should not have treated you like that.

After Bob was hanged, the hatred lessened. What is the point of hating a dead person? The hatred was eating me up; now it has gone, and with it any hatred I had for you. I now realize that the whole thing, finding Rose's body, the trial and your husband's hanging must have been very

upsetting for you. I see now that we were both victims of that terrible man – though poor Rose was an even greater victim.

Dear Mrs Bowen, I am very, very sorry for the upset I caused you with those letters and I am very ashamed. Please forgive me.

Your very sincerely,
Mary Rogerson

The Grand,
Sandhythe
Wednesday, 12th

Dear Marge,

I am glad to learn that Jim has got his old appetite back – he must be on the mend!

But what a day we've had today. First, Pam got an unexpected letter in the post this morning. No, it was not from Rose Pemberton or any dead person. It was from a chambermaid called Mary Rogerson who works in Beach View Hotel. Apparently it was she who had written those mysterious letters five years ago. She had been seduced by Bob many years before that when she was only a fifteen year old child; and Bob had dropped her like a hot potato as soon as he found out that she was pregnant. I wonder how often Bob had done that.

Anyway, the poor girl was abandoned and forced to have the child adopted, which naturally left her very bitter. But I think it is better if we explain everything in full when we get back to Halchester. But Mary was very apologetic in the letter she wrote to Pam; she finished by writing “I am very, very sorry for the upset I caused you with those letters and I am very ashamed. Please forgive me.”

At first Pam was shocked and a bit peeved. But eventually, when she re-read the letter she began to feel very sorry for this girl. Then, as I wrote in my last letter, Pam was determined to visit Rose's grave; so we set out together.

We got to the cemetery and discovered where the grave was; but when we got there we found someone else at the graveside, apparently praying. It turned out to be Mary Rogerson. She visits Rose's grave regularly, it seems, to keep the grave tidy, renew the flowers and to pray for Rose's soul.

There was a lot of hugging, forgiving and crying. I felt that I was *de trop* and made an excuse to leave them together.

When Pam got back to the hotel later that day, she seemed happier than I've known her for a *very* long time. It seems she and Mary Rogerson both felt a common bond with Rose in that all were victims of Bob Bowen in their various ways, and that they all shared in the pain and hurt he caused. “I've laid my ghosts at last,” she said.

Yours
Mabel.
