

The Secret in the Attic

It was nearly midnight when Emma heard the first creak above her head. She froze beneath her blanket, her book slipping from her hands. Their new house had always made noises — groaning pipes, whispering windows, the occasional rattle of branches against the roof — but this was different. It was deliberate, like someone walking across the attic floor.

She told herself it was just the wind, but the sound came again, slower this time:

creak... creak... creak.

Emma slid out of bed, her heart beating faster than her footsteps on the carpet. Her parents had laughed when she'd said the house felt "alive." They'd called it "character." But tonight, the house didn't feel alive — it felt awake.

She tiptoed to the landing and stared up at the attic hatch. The thin cord hung like a waiting snake. She reached up, tugged it down, and the ladder unfolded with a sigh. Cold air spilled down, carrying the scent of dust and something faintly sweet — like old flowers.

"Just a quick look," she whispered.

The torchlight cut through the shadows as she climbed. The attic was crammed with trunks, old furniture, and yellowed books stacked like miniature towers. A cracked mirror leaned against the wall, reflecting the trembling beam of her torch.

Something shimmered near the back — a box wrapped in faded blue ribbon. It was the only thing that wasn't covered in dust. Emma knelt and brushed her fingers over the lid. Inside lay a stack of letters tied neatly with a strip of lace. The top one was addressed in elegant handwriting:

"To my dearest sister, Eleanor."

Emma frowned. Her mum's name was Eleanor.

She unfolded the letter carefully. The paper was thin and smelled faintly of lavender.

The writing was old-fashioned but neat:

If you are reading this, my dear sister, then I fear I have been forgotten. The house remembers me still, though others do not. Listen for the creaks — they are not to frighten you but to remind you I am here.

Emma's hand shook as she lowered the letter. The air in the attic seemed thicker now, as if someone was standing just behind her. She turned — the mirror caught

the movement, and for a moment, she thought she saw a figure smiling faintly in the reflection.

Then the attic light flickered and went out.

A soft voice, almost like the rustle of silk, whispered: "Thank you for remembering."

By the time her parents found her the next morning, Emma was asleep on the attic floor, a smile on her face and the letters folded carefully in her lap.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the main reason Emma goes up into the attic?

- A) She wants to find her old toys.
- B) She hears a strange noise and wants to investigate.
- C) She is looking for her mother.
- D) She is hiding from her parents.

2. When the text says “*the house didn’t feel alive — it felt awake,*” what does this suggest about Emma’s feelings?

- A) She feels comforted by the house.
- B) She thinks the house is friendly.
- C) She feels that something mysterious or unsettling is happening.
- D) She believes the house is completely ordinary.

3. The box in the attic is described as “*the only thing that wasn’t covered in dust.*” What can we infer from this detail?

- A) The box has been cleaned recently.
- B) The box is new and was bought by Emma’s parents.
- C) Someone, or something, has touched or moved it recently.
- D) The attic never gets dusty.

4. What does the word “*faintly*” mean in the phrase “*smelled faintly of lavender*”?

- A) Strongly
- B) Barely or lightly
- C) Unpleasantly
- D) Suddenly

5. Which sentence best shows that Emma is brave?

- A) "She froze beneath her blanket."
- B) "She told herself it was just the wind."
- C) "She reached up, tugged it down, and the ladder unfolded with a sigh."
- D) "Her parents had laughed when she'd said the house felt 'alive.'"

6. What is the most likely reason the ghostly voice thanks Emma for remembering?

- A) Emma had discovered something important about the spirit.
- B) The ghost was angry with Emma.
- C) The ghost wanted Emma to leave.
- D) Emma had accidentally caused the house to collapse.

Answers

1. B)

Emma goes up because she hears a strange, deliberate noise. The story clearly says she “slid out of bed” after hearing the creaking — this shows curiosity and concern.

2. C)

“Awake” gives a sense of unease — as though the house is alert or aware. Emma feels something unusual or possibly supernatural is happening.

3. C)

If the box is the only item without dust, it implies recent movement or attention — suggesting a mysterious presence in the attic.

4. B)

“Faintly” means lightly or barely noticeable — a soft scent rather than a strong one.

5. C)

Climbing the ladder into a dark attic despite fear shows bravery. The other options either show fear or disbelief.

6. A)

The ghost's words — "Thank you for remembering" — suggest gratitude. By finding the letters, Emma has acknowledged and remembered someone long forgotten.