



The Girl from the Well

By Rin Chupeco

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I am where dead children go.

Okiku is a lonely soul. She has wandered the world for centuries, freeing the spirits of the murdered-dead. Once a victim herself, she now takes the lives of killers with the vengeance they're due. But releasing innocent ghosts from their ethereal tethers does not bring Okiku peace. Still she drifts on.

Such is her existence, until she meets Tark. Evil writhes beneath the moody teen's skin, trapped by a series of intricate tattoos. While his neighbors fear him, Okiku knows the boy is not a monster. Tark needs to be freed from the malevolence that clings to him. There's just one problem: if the demon dies, so does its host.

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Editorial Review

Review

""[A] Stephen Kinglike horror story...A chilling, bloody ghost story that resonates." " - Kirkus"

"The writing is beautiful. Descriptive in a poetic way, which just makes everything even creepier...I don't even know how to properly praise her [Chupeco], but she has to be one of the most talented writers to be published recently." - Paperback Wonderland

"The "Girl from the Well" is part The Ring, part The Grudge and part The Exorcist...A fantastically creepy story sure to keep readers up at night... Okiku is one of the most interesting YA characters to date. 41/2 Stars-TOP PICK!" - RT Book Reviews

""A dark novel that will appeal to horror fans, lovers of Elizabeth Scott's 'Living Dead Girl.'"" - School Library Journal

"Chupeco makes a powerful debut with this unsettling ghost story...told in a marvelously disjointed fashion from Okiku's numbers-obsessed point of view, this story unfolds with creepy imagery and an intimate appreciation for Japanese horror, myth, and legend." - Publishers Weekly starred review

"Rin Chupeco does a fine job of integrating folklore and culture with J[apanese]-horror elements..It hit all the right horror notes with me, and I absolutely recommend it to fans looking for a good scare. " - The Book Smugglers

"This horror mystery has just the right blend of contemporary teenage life and the fantasy of a ghost story. It is well written and fast paced, and the characters both dead and alive are developed and engaging...well worth having in a teen collection that caters to fantasy and horror lovers." - VOYA Magazine

"There's a superior creep factor that is pervasive in every lyrical word of Chupeco's debut, and it's perfect for teens who enjoy traditional horror movies...the story is solidly scary and well worth the read.
" - Booklist

"This gorgeously written story reads like poetry--despite the demons." - Brazos Bookstore

About the Author

Despite uncanny resemblances to Japanese revenants, Rin Chupeco has always maintained her sense of humor. Raised in Manila, Philippines, she keeps four pets: a dog, two birds, and a husband. She's been a technical writer and travel blogger, but now makes things up for a living. Connect with Rin at www.rinchupeco.com.

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CHAPTER ONE

Fireflies

I am where dead children go.

With other kinds of dead, it is different. Often their souls drift quietly away, like a leaf caught in the throes of a hidden whirlpool, slipping down without sound, away from sight. They roll and ebb gently with the tides until they sink beneath the waves and I no longer see where they go-like sputtering candlelight, like little embers that burn briefly and brightly for several drawn moments before their light goes out.

But they are not my territory. They are not my hunt.

And then there are the murdered dead. And they are peculiar, stranger things.

You may think me biased, being murdered myself. But my state of being has nothing to do with curiosity toward my own species, if we can be called such. We do not go gentle, as your poet encourages, into that good night.

We are the fates that people fear to become. We are what happens to good persons and to bad persons and to everyone in between. Murdered deads live in storms without season, in time without flux. We do not go because people do not let us go.

The man refuses to let her go, though he does not know this yet. He is inside an apartment that smells of dirty cigarettes and stale beer. He sits on a couch and watches television, where a man tells jokes. But this man who wears a stained white shirt, with his pudgy arms and foul vapors, this man does not laugh. He has too much hair on his head and on his face and on his chest, and he is drinking from a bottle and not listening to anything but the alcohol in his thoughts. His mind tastes like sour wine, a dram of sake left out in the dark for too long.

There are other things inside this apartment that he owns. There are filthy jackets of shiny fabric (three). Empty bottles (twenty-one) dribble dregs of brown liquid onto the floor. Thin tobacco stalks (five) are grounded on a tiny tray, smoke curling over their stunted remains.

There are other things inside the apartment that he does not own. Small, pale pink scratches of cloth snagged against nails in the floorboards (three). A golden strand of hair, smothered within the confines of wood (one).

Something

gurgles,

from somewhere nearby. It is a loud and sudden noise, and it penetrates through the haze of his inebriation, startling him.

The Stained Shirt Man turns his head to a nearby wall and shouts, "You better fix that fuckin' toilet tomorrow, Shamrock!" mistaking one problem for another. If he is expecting a reply, he does not receive it, but he does not seem to care.

He does not look my way because he does not see me. Not yet.

But she does.

I can tell she has not been dead long. Her long, yellow hair hangs limply around her waist, her skin gray and brittle and bloated. The man drowned her quickly, so quickly that she does not realize it. This is why her mouth opens and closes, why she gulps at intervals like a starving fish, why she is puzzled at the way she does not breathe.

Her blue eyes look into mine from where I lie hidden, shrouded in shadow. An understanding passes between us for I, too, remember that terrible weight of water. Her prison had been of ceramic, mine wrought from cobbled stones. In the end, it made little difference to either of us.

The Stained Shirt Man does not see her, either. He does not notice the thin, bony arms clasped about his neck, or the manner in which her little rag dress is hiked up above her hips, her legs balanced against the small of his back. He does not notice the beginnings of decay that are ravaging a face that should have been delicate and pretty.

Many people are like him; they do not feel burdened by the weight of those they kill. A rope braid around her thin wrist is attached to another folded over the man's arm. I wear a similar loop around my wrist, though unlike her, I endure this affliction with no one else. The rope trails several feet behind me, the edges shorn.

The man talking from inside the television disappears, and the thrum of static buzzes at the Stained Shirt Man's consciousness, nagging at him like an angry bee. Cursing again, he tosses his empty bottle away and strides to the box, fiddling with the dials. After a minute, he pounds a fist down on top of it once, twice, three times. The television continues to hum, unimpressed.

He is still angry when the lights in the room wink out one by one, leaving him nothing for company but the still-fizzing box.

"Son of a bitch!" he says, kicking it for good measure. As punishment, the noises stop and the television flickers back on, but the man telling jokes is nowhere to be seen. Instead, for a few seconds, something else flashes across the screen.

It is a wide, staring

eye

and it is looking back at him.

It disappears, though the buzzing continues. The man gapes. He is afraid at first—that delicious fear steals across his face—but when the image does not repeat itself soon, he begins to think and then to argue and then to dismiss, the way people do when they are seeking explanations for things that cannot be explained.

"Must have imagined it," he mutters to himself, rubbing at his temple and belching. The girl on his back says nothing.

The Stained Shirt Man moves to the bathroom and frowns when he turns on a switch but sees only darkness. Nonetheless, he moves toward the sink and begins to wash his face.

When he lifts his head, I am standing directly behind him, but only the top of my head and my eyes are visible over his own. The face rising over the back of his skull is one I have worn for many centuries, an oddity for one who has only seen sixteen years of life. But I have little cause to see myself in reflections, and sometimes I forget the face is mine.

Our gazes meet in the mirror, and the Stained Shirt Man shouts in alarm, stepping away. But when he turns back, all he sees is his own sweating face, drenched in water and fear.

Something gurgles

again.

This time, it is closer.

The Stained Shirt Man's eyes swing toward the bathtub. It is covered in dirt and grime and thin traces of bile. A large pool of blood is forming underneath it, spiraling outward until it touches the tips of his leather boots.

Tag,

the blood is saying.

You

are

it.

And from inside this bathtub a decomposing hand reaches out, grabbing the side with enough strength that the porcelain cracks from the urgency of its grip. The Stained Shirt Man slides to the floor in shock and fright, legs suddenly useless, as

I

heave myself up and over the side of the bathtub to land in a heap of flesh before him. I am writhing. My body stiffens and contracts, tangled hair obscuring enough features that you would not know what I am, only what I am not.

I gurgle a third time.

The Stained Shirt Man crawls back into the living room swearing and screaming. In his fright, he stains his pants with his own excrement. He grabs at a phone, but the line is dead. Stumbling back onto his feet, he tries to feel his way through the dark, the sputtering light of the television set his only guide. He finds the door and tugs at it frantically, but it will not open.

"Help me! Oh God oh God...Help me!"

He begins to drive his shoulder against the wood, his efforts redoubling once he realizes

I

have followed him out of the bathroom, slithering, slithering, bone joints cracking and noisy from disuse.

"Shamrock!" His voice totters on panic. "Shamrock, can you hear me! Anybody out there! I...Jesus! Jesus Christ, help me!"

There is terrible contorting in the way the figure he sees moves. It does not crawl. It does not speak. There is only a dreadful, singular purpose in the way its fingers and feet scuttle closer, spread from its body like a human spider, though I am neither human nor spider.

The Stained Shirt Man soon realizes the futility and sinks back to the ground. "Was it the girl?" he asks then, and in his piggish eyes, dreadful realization seeps through. "Was it the girl? I didn't mean to...I never-I swear I won't do it again, I swear! I won't do it again!"

He is right. He will never do this again.

"Please," he croaks, lifting his hands as if they could shield him, and whether he is asking for mercy or wishes to be killed quicker, I do not know. "Please please pleasepleasepleasepleaseplease."

Something gurgles one last time, and it is above him. He looks up.

This is how the Stained Shirt Man now sees me.

He sees a woman on the ceiling.

Her gray feet are bare, settled against the beams.

She hangs down.

Her chin is jutted out, her head twisted to the side in a way that the only thing certain is her broken neck.

She wears a loose, white kimono spattered in mud and blood.

Her hair floats down, drifting past her face like a thinly veiled curtain, but this does not protect him from the sight

of her eyes.

There are no whites in her eyes; they are an impenetrable, dilated black.

Her skin is a mottled patchwork of abuse and bone, some of it stripped from the edges of her mouth. And yet her mouth is hollow, curved into a perpetual scream, jaws too wide to be alive.

For a long moment we stare at each other-he, another girl's murderer, and I, another man's victim. Then my mouth widens further, and I

de

tach

myself from the ceiling to lunge, my unblinking eyes boring into his panicked, screaming face.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tom Scott:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information these days can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a problem. What people must be consider while those information which is inside former life are hard to be find than now could be taking seriously which one works to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take The Girl from the Well as your daily resource information.

Lester Jaworski:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always aim to and must have the free time or they will get large amount of stress from both way of life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, typically the book you have read will be The Girl from the Well.

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