

THE CHRISTMAS GHOST

PROFESSOR BRIAN
THRUPIECE

FOREWORD BY
MRS AMANDA J THREADBONE

BRENDA
WILL
DIE!



THREADBONE GHOSTLY CLASSICS

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PRAISE FOR PROFESSOR THRUPIECE'S
THE CHRISTMAS GHOST

*"Scarier than a marshmallow and as clever as a box of
rice crispies"* DORSET GROCERS MONTHLY

"I nearly shat myself and that's a fact"
LAXITIVES AND DIURETICS WEEKLY

*"Classics of their type, these stories stand as testament to a
much over-rated genre"* GENRES 'R US MAGAZINE

*"The perfect complement to a small glass of sherry and a
packet of walnuts and one to read when there's nothing
on TV".* DORSET RADIO TIMES

BRIAN PEMBERTON CHARLEYWOOD THRUPIECE
was born on 1st April 1940 and educated first at The Grammar School Batcombe (Dorset) and later at Magdalene College, Cambridge, from which he graduated in 1961 with a 3rd class degree in Biochemistry.

Being outstandingly bright by the College's standards, he was encouraged to undertake research under the influence and patronage of Dr Kenwood Cheffe, Cambridge's leading bio-ethics pioneer. Brian gave an able defence of his thesis "Household fluff: a viable dietary staple in times of conflict" (monetarization of his findings via The thrupiecediet™ provided the basis of his later wealth) and he was awarded the PhD degree in 1964.

After Cambridge he taught in various institutions, bringing a strong physical presence and an even stronger sense of bemusement to generations of students first in the The Technical College of Danang (Demonstrator and University Assistant Lecturer 1964-1968); and later at the Polytechnic Institute of Yazd (University Lecturer 1968-1984); the University of Cobija (Senior Lecturer 1984-1996) and the Institute for Advanced Research Toormakeady (Tuar Mhic Éadaigh) (Ciaran Pierre-Wok Professor of Culinary Bioethics 1997-2004). He was a founder member of the Royal Society of Culinary Bioethics (RSCBE).

PROFESSOR BRIAN THRUPIECE



Professor Thrupiece's Horribly
True Pieces

with a FOREWORD by

MRS AMANDA J THREADBONE

THINGS THAT BUMP AND GRIND IN THE NIGHT

It gives me huge pleasure to bring before a new reading public the collected ghost stories of Professor Brian Thrupiece. It is good that these quality tales - overlooked and under-rated when first published - now have the opportunity to undergo that same dispiriting evaluation all over again.

Might I confess that I am not myself a huge fan of the *genre*? All that uping and downing and screaming and weeping under a bed sheet are far too close for comfort for someone who experienced Mr Threadbone and his night terrors at their worst [or should I say Mr Threadbone *the* night terror at his worst? I jest!] Many the disturbed night I experienced at the hand of that man before the blessed Enrique de los Chicos Perdidos stepped in and took the brunt. I digress.

Though not known for his ghost stories *per se* [he was more of a long-form diarist and novelist than a literary miniaturist] the Professor brought the same sterling qualities to these minor shavings from his artisanal bench as he did to his better known works. The intelligent reader will note the same wit, the same sense of irony, the same colourful use of metaphor, the same precision of both grammar and syntax to be found in - for example - the Professor's celebrated *Androcles and the Brian* or *North by South-East*, or the semi-autobiographical "*All Quiet on the Western Gazette*".

It is good too that this new Threadbone Press edition of the stories is published in time for the yuletide season when families gather around the fireside to tell tales of yore and in doing so get loved ones into wholly intended trouble. As Ms Sizemore once told an assembled crowd of inquisitive reporters, "*Anyone would be pleased to find a little bit of Thrupiece in their stockings*" and I am sure you will agree. I wish you a Merry Christmas and happy reading.

Mrs Amanda J Threadbone
Christmas 2019

THE CHRISTMAS GHOST

When I was a child, I spake as a child [oops - wrong narrative turn] ... When I was a child, I was scared of the dark. In the dark, every noise was amplified [a matter of physics, acoustics and psycho-sensory factors too complex to explain in a short story]. As a consequence I heard voices... strange voices [*“Oh for f**k’s sake Alf go to sleep I’m tired and you’ve had it twice this week already”* or *“Have you taken your pills, I don’t want you up in the night”*] as well as strange noises [sometimes a little like at the buzzing of a nasal clipper - though an unworldly one at that - and sometimes more like a long eruption of air from a tight passage]. They were not necessarily evil, but neither were they familiar in a wholesome, child-friendly way and so they scared me. It was not uncommon in the middle of the night for me to wake up and hear “whispers” [*“Do you think the little buggers’ asleep yet?”* or *“Stop that now, I think he can hear us”*]. I would ask my mother about them the next day but she would deny all knowledge, saying that she and my father had slept soundly and had been up to almost nothing at all. She told me they were just *“bumps in the night”* and typical kids’ [and sometime’s wives’] nightmare material. [For an explanation of nocturnal phenomena and their extra-sensory origins see Professor Brian Thrupiece [1969] *“Towards an explanation of nocturnal phenomena and their extra-sensory origins”* The Threadbone Press.] I tried often to explain to my mother that it was more than that; that these sounds sounded different - sometimes excited, sometimes wild, more often dutiful and resigned. On some nights I would get so scared from these “whispers” that I would sleep in the bathroom. It was an added bonus that I could wet myself with my late-night tinkles without too many

disastrous downstream consequences. Upright on the toilet became one of my favourite sleeping postures. I found that I learned to sleep, tinkle without shame and formulate theories about the nature of the universe all at the same time.

I should add at this point that, when walking out of my bedroom/laboratory to go to the bathroom, one looked directly down the stairs that led to the ground floor. [My mother and father's capacious bedroom was on the third floor - a location which afforded them the space and relative privacy to set up a small yet well-equipped photographic suite. My father was a great believer in observation and liked to film their night time activities with a view to better understanding the dynamics of conjugal interaction - research which he readily shared with like-minded friends every Thursday evening in the winter months].

One night, just before Christmas, I had fallen asleep - not on the toilet as usual but rather at my laboratory bench where I was conducting what proved to be a naive and misguided experiment on some lint I had found protruding from my naval. I was toying with the idea that such materials might be capable of giving sustenance to the poor of this world but had yet to synthesise anything approaching a working product. Suddenly I awoke and felt the need to pee. I walked out from the door and distinctly heard the phrase "*Look at the camera and look as though you are enjoying it!*" and to my astonishment, a light, almost like a spotlight, crept from under my parent's bedroom door. It cast a shadow upon the wall at the very bottom of the stairs. The light appeared to have no form until suddenly it was transformed into the shape of a large banana which someone - or something - was trying repeatedly to peel. I was transfixed by it.

Being a child, and it only being a few days from Christmas, I suddenly KNEW what this light was. IT WAS SANTA!!! How

else could something that size and shape get into my house and know I was being a good boy and that I had stopped hiding my sprouts behind the sofa? I was so excited I began walking down the stairs to greet him, picking up my pace after the second step as the banana-shaped light began to creep off the wall and disappear repeatedly into some kind of dark recess.

That's when I heard them. Two voices - a woman's and very strong, masculine voice. Not at all like my father's [not to say he isn't masculine, it was just distinctly different]. They said, "*If you were gentleman you wouldn't ask me to do that*", to which the male voice replied "*And if you were a lady you wouldn't talk with your mouth full*". I listened, turned around, and what happened next I am not sure I would believe if someone had told me this same story. After groping back towards the bathroom door, I heard a very loud "*Ooooooo Darren*", followed by a strange ecstatic cry that sent me running back to my bed where I jumped straight under the covers and stayed the whole night.

When we awoke the next morning, the Christmas lights which my mother had threaded through the banisters were pulled down to the bottom of the stairs, some broken from what seemed like a forceful tear and laying in a single pile. It was as though someone had rushed upstairs in a frenzy of anticipation and without a care for the delicate filaments contained in each and every bulb. It would take all my skills with a soldering iron and some Airfix glue to repair them. In the living room, there were discarded clothes, empty bottles of wine, scattered blue pills and some "*literature*" the like of which I had never seen before. My mother could not explain it! My father claimed was worried we had been the victims of a home invasion. My sister was crying. There was nothing missing, nobody had broken in, there did not seem to be any reason this had happened. And then I saw it, and I kept quiet about it because I was so afraid that I could not force words out of my mouth.

There, on the edge of the table was a discarded rubberised banana deeply stiated, almost as if by a forceful grip. Something down there had GRABBED IT AND PUSHED IT VIOLENTLY INTO MY MOTHER'S "FRUIT BOWL". That was what all the noise had been about!

I was mortified. After that day I never heard a single voice again. I do not like to imagine what was going on in our house that night. No one - least of all my mother, father and kindly "Uncle Darren" ever mentioned it again.

After this, I had never heard another whisper, which is sad, because in some ways I would have liked to thank the mystery spirit which had somehow exorcised my mother's demons that night. This happened when I was 7. I am 87 years old now, and because of this incident I am still afraid of rubberised fruit and the dark. Especially when I hear the sound of heavy breathing, the sound of a ghostly nasal-clipper and a cry of "*Alf that's the wrong hole ... I've told you before only at the weekends when I am relaxed and in the mood*".

Some things can never be explained - even by distinguished Professors of Culinary Bio-ethics, but there is no doubting that my experience that long-ago December night launched me on a quest to become a world famous scientist without the patient endeavours of whom, culinary bio-ethics, aeronautical engineering, painting, photography, literature and horizontal jogging would never have been so utterly transformed. I called it the Christmas Ghost - for what else could it have been...

THE END

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THE CHRISTMAS GHOST
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E Tonian *A Well-Educated Ghost*

Sir Rising Tide *A Seaside Ghost*

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