**[Xiaorui](https://vmwedu.com/members/raymondh/)**

“A letter? For me?” Ray says when his parent gave him a shiny blue envelope.

“Yep. It specifically asked for you to open and read it.” his parent says. [Could you come up with a more exciting way to say ‘says’?]

The letter is about how this nice old man-or ~~though~~ [so] he thought- [lovely foreshadowing here] wants to see him. In return, he will make any of Ray’s wildest dreams come true. Ray believes in science, not magic. Although he doesn’t believe his word, his interested nature means that he needs to go. [I like that you make Ray sceptical, this is a great horror convention!]

It was on a rainy night [pathetic fallacy- fab!] when Ray’s parent is out and decided to go to a house in the forest to answer the shiny letter someone sent days ago. Since he had never been to the forest himself, he needed some help. [Be a bit careful that you don’t change tense throughout the story, as it can get quite confusing!] So he asked Tom, a good friend of his and a great tour guide for the forest because of his large knowledge of the forest’s formation and the path in it.

“A big house? Oh yeah, there is only one house in the entire forest,” Tom replied,” an adventure eh? This is going to be fun!”

And so they went on a journey to find the house the sender of the message described. [Very nice, I can see where this is heading!]

“Are you sure it is this way?”Ray asked.

“Of course! I have been on this path ~~for~~ more than a billion times!”Tom answered.

After a long time of walking, Ray isn’t so trusting of his friend ~~no~~ [any] more.

“Hmm...This doesn't seem right.”Ray says.

“Don’t be afraid! Just keep going forward and we will reach it.”Tom replied. [I really like Tom’s optimism, and how we know that it’s probably about to get shattered]

So they walked and walked, [in the same way as the word ‘said’, can you come up with a more exciting way of saying ‘walked’? Maybe ‘bounded’, or ‘ambled’, depending on how they’re walking] until they heard a quiet noise nearby.

“What was that?” Ray asked.

“I don’t know. A crow, probably. Don’t worry I know there is nothing dangerous in this forest.”, Tom replied.

So they kept walking. And soon enough, they reached the house.

It ~~is~~ [was] [careful on tense again] a huge house next to a graveyard. But there is no sign of life anywhere. There were no birds, no frogs, no ants, and it was unreasonably quiet. [I like this use of listing, showing how desolate it was] The passway to the house is invisible, and they could only see a huge swamp with no way of getting across in sight.

That is until a man showed up. He is very thin, much thinner than a normal person. His skin is white, much whiter than a normal person.[Lovely repetition of ‘much… than a normal person’, suggesting that he may be a supernatural being] “A guest of Mr.Resmodious, I see.” The man says. “What are you looking at? Climb aboard!” And so Ray and Tom stepped on the boat without daring to say a single word, and spend all their time on the boat staring at each other. “From here, you are on your own.” the boatman says.

“Are you sure the homeowner is just a nice old man?” Ray finally comes up with the courage to ask the boatman. He is very timid of very little things, not to say about the very house that stands in front of him.

“He is our leader, a very loved man. Anyone who meets with him has some kind of ability, and from their first meet ~~starters~~ [starts] working for him.” The boatman says.

“Em...~~How~~ [What] does he look like?”Tom interrupts.

“He never shows his faces and uses his real voice. No one knows. And no one will ever know.”

“Dude are you sure the homeowner is a nice old man?”Ray asked. [I like that Ray is questioning it repeatedly, as it builds the tension a lot]

“Well, it should be...I mean...Yes...I think so.”Tom said, with a very depressed tone.

“There is no turning back huh,” Ray remarked.

Before Ray has the chance to argue, a voice comes out of nowhere. “Ah yes. I have predicted your arrival a long time ago. Would you mind as to come in?” [Brilliant ending: I love the cliff-hanger!]

**What Went Well:**

-You built up the tension to well throughout this story, Xiaorui! I love that you used foreshadowing at the start to show that something bad was going to happen, and then showed a deterioration in the confidence of your characters, right up until they see the old man at the door.

-I like that you use a lot of great literary techniques, such as pathetic fallacy (‘It was on a rainy night’), and a really lovely cliff-hanger that leaves the reader wanting to hear more. You also use some great rhetorical questions from Ray to show his building anxiety.

-It’s always nice when the reader knows more than the characters do, and I feel this throughout the story, as you make comments such as the questioning of the boatman’s humanity. These just add a sense of panic and unease, as we may know something the characters don’t, but still have to watch them make the wrong choices.

**Even Better If…:**

**-**Just be very careful with your tense, as it tends to slip between past and present. To combat this, you can make sure to plan which tense you’re going to write in, and then proof-read at the end to make sure that it stays consistent.

-I would absolutely love to see you pushing yourself a bit more in your writing, using imagery and some higher-level language. For example, when describing the boatman, could you say he was ‘pale as the driven snow’, or maybe the house itself is ‘a gateway to the Underworld’. Also, as I’ve said above, replacing words like ‘walked’ and ‘said’, with more exciting vocabulary really adds sophistication to your writing. These small details will elevate the standard a lot and are so worth thinking about for next time.

-I like your choice to write in the third person, but I feel that you could have got more emotional charge into the story, had you written in the first person, maybe from Ray’s point of view. Your story is amazing as it is, but I just think that we would really feel a connection to your characters and want them to be safe and sound even more than we do, if it was in first person. You could then also explore the five senses slightly more. This is just something to think about for next time, but don’t feel you have to change that!