



University
of Glasgow

Scottish Literature in the Classroom

Crossover Short Story Collection

National 5 and Higher English:

Kirsty Logan's 'Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our
House'



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Using the Teaching Materials

The Scottish Literature in the Classroom project aims to support teachers of secondary English by providing resources on the new Scottish Set Texts at National 5 and Higher.

This teaching guide is part of a series focused on the Crossover Short Story Collection for National 5 and Higher. Each guide provides contextual information on the story and author and a detailed reading of the given text, as well as discussion prompts and practice exam questions. Other online resources that may be helpful to teachers and students are also listed here.

Teachers are encouraged to utilise and adapt materials to best suit their own classrooms, combining with their own activities on, for example, narrative structure and literary analysis.

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Teaching resource written by Jennifer Farrar. Thanks also to Rhona Brown, Maureen Farrell, Corey Gibson, Pip Osmond-Williams, Ronnie Young, and teacher colleagues across Scotland for their guidance and support.

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Context

Story overview

'Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our House' is a short story narrated by a character called Rain, who is renovating an old house once owned by the now-deceased grandmother of Rain's wife, Alice. As the couple clear and clean their way through the different rooms of the house Alice has inherited, they unearth a selection of strange objects that are all connected to dark secrets from Alice's grandmother's past, and which are all rooted in Scottish folklore.

The story is structured cumulatively around the discovery – and horrifying impact – of each object on Rain and Alice's lives as they slowly recognise they are being haunted by a Kelpie, a malevolent, shape-changing, aquatic spirit of Scottish legend. Things get so bad that the young couple finally gather the objects together in a box, drive several hours to the coast to fling the contents into the sea in an attempt to rid themselves of the Kelpie's negative influence. The story ends ambiguously, with the couple returning home to find they may not have been successful in banishing the negative spirit from their new home.

Author background

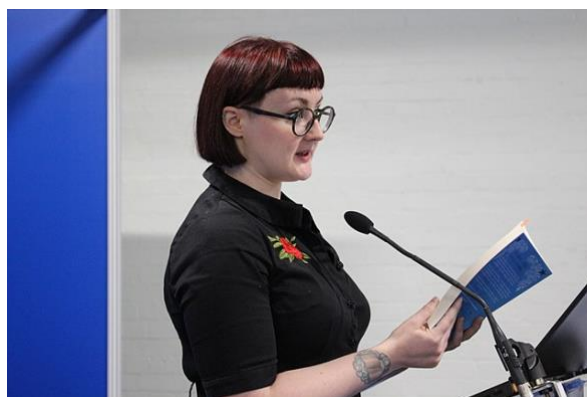


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Kirsty Logan is a writer of novels and short stories who lives in Glasgow. Her novels are *Now She is Witch* (2023, Vintage Publishing), *The Gloaming* (2019, Vintage Publishing) and *The Gracekeepers* (2016, Vintage Publishing). Among her story collections are *No & Other Stories* (2025, Penguin), *A Portable Shelter* (2016, Vintage Publishing) and *The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales* (2014, Salt Publishing), which won and was nominated

for several awards, including the 2015 Polari First Book Prize, awarded each year to a writer whose debut work explores LGBT experience.

Publication details

‘Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our House’ appears in Logan’s 2019 short story collection, *Things We Say in the Dark* (Vintage Publishing), which features 20 stories arranged into three parts: The House, The Child and The Past.

The stories in the collection have been praised by reviewers as gripping, dark and shocking. They deal with supernatural themes and are often located in contemporary settings, with a focus on women’s fears and the menace that lies beneath the veneer of many domestic scenarios.

Online resources

Logan’s website includes a blog where she lists the favourite books she has read each year: <https://www.kirstylogan.com/>

The Bottle Imp, the online journal, has a useful article on kelpies: [Scots Word of the Season: 'Kelpie' - The Bottle Imp](#)

The version of 'Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our House' printed here and [published on the SQA website](#) is the one that will be used in exams, valid from session 2025–26 onwards. (The story itself is not covered by the CC BY-NC-SA license.)

'Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our House'

by Kirsty Logan

1. A RING

And isn't that sweet? Isn't it just too perfectly sweet, like it's a message of hope left for me and Alice, a blessing for our life together?

I caught the ring with the edge of the broom as I was sweeping out the kitchen. It scraped along the tiles and made a hell of a racket. At first I thought it was just rubbish, all clarty with grot and bugs, but when I rinsed it under the tap it came up lovely. A little circlet of glass, green as a summer sea, bright on its surface but with shadows at its centre. I thought maybe Alice's granny had left it for us on purpose. Maybe she wasn't so bad after all.

This was her house, before, and it's not that she didn't know that we were together, but it was complicated. She called me Alice's friend, and I could hear the way she put inverted commas around it, even after Al and I had lived together for years and we'd both visited her a thousand times in this musty old house that always smelled like the sea even though it was miles from water.

I slid the ring onto my wedding finger then raced through the house, calling for Alice, and found her in the spare bedroom with her arms full of floral duvets.

'These are going straight to the tip,' she said. 'Can you smell that? They're damp. Damn, I hope it's not in the walls.'

'Look, Al!' I held out my hand, queen-like. 'Isn't this pretty? Your gran must have left it.'

She peered at it. 'Is it plastic? It looks like it came out of a vending machine. Throw it away, there's enough junk in this house already.'

'It's sea-glass. I found it in the kitchen. Do you think it's a good-luck charm from your gran? To wish us well?'

Alice threw the musty duvets into the hall. 'Trust me, Rain. My gran didn't wish anybody well.'

2. PAPER

The folded page fell when we bashed the frame of the front door trying to carry the old bath out. I know, I know, we should have hired someone, but to be honest what little money we had was tied up in the house.

Turns out, just because you inherit something, doesn't mean you get it for free. Alice tucked the paper in her pocket and then, when I was driving to the tip, the bath awkwardly wedged between the boot and the back seat, she pulled the paper out and unfolded it. It was as yellow as old bones and smelled musty-sweet.

'What does it say?'

Alice didn't reply.

I stopped the car at a red light.

'Hello! Are you listening?'

'It says ...' she said. 'No, it's nothing.' And she balled up the paper and put it in the glove compartment.

'Al, stop being weird! What does it say?'

'KELPIES TO HELL,' she said.

I wasn't sure whether to laugh. 'What's a kelpie?' Alice didn't reply, so added: 'Call me a Sassenach if you like, just tell me.'

'A kelpie is a mythical creature,' Alice said, frowning. 'Lives in lochs. It's a horse and also a beautiful woman. If it doesn't like you, it drags you into the water and drowns you.'

'O...kay,' I said. 'But why would your gran want to tell us that?'

'Jesus, Rain, would you drop it with the secret messages? My gran was losing it towards the end. She didn't know I was going to get the house. She didn't know I was going to live here with you. None of this means anything, okay?'

So I drove the rest of the way to the tip in silence, and together we lifted the bath where Alice's granny had had a stroke and drowned, and we threw it away.

3. A HORSE

Alice found this one. It was the size of a thumb, wedged into the skirting board under the bed. She brought it to the kitchen as I was making tea and said: 'Rain, I can't find my glasses. Can you read this?'

I rubbed the tiny horse's haunches, feeling the symbols etched into the copper.

‘It’s not words,’ I said. ‘It’s runes or something. Maybe it’s an old Highlands superstition, and your gran left it to protect us from being trampled by — well, not a horse, but — life? Sadness? Money worries?’

Alice raised her eyebrows. ‘Well, my mum always did say my gran was a witch. She stole my grandad from another woman — did I ever tell you that?’ Alice took the horse from my hand. ‘He was married to someone else when they met. A woman always dressed in green, who wore strange jewellery, rings made of glass she found washed up on the beach. She had green eyes and long black hair — black as a winter night, black like it was always wet.’

My eyes were wide. ‘What happened?’

‘My gran went round to talk to her, to say, basically, I want your man and there’s nothing you can do about it, and she must have been pretty convincing because the next day the woman was gone. She left the village — went for a job down south or something. But you know the strange thing? No one ever saw that woman again.’

‘Oh my God!’ I said. ‘Did your gran — do you think she — could she have done something?’

Alice laughed. ‘Come on, Rain! What, you think my wee old granny was a murderer?’

‘Why not? Every murderer has a family.’

‘It’s just a silly story,’ Alice said. ‘Gran obviously didn’t kill anyone. She was the other woman, so she had to make up stories about my grandad’s ex. Make her into a spooky witch, a baddie, not a poor lass who’d had her man stolen. If the first wife was the villain, then Gran was the hero, and she could feel better. Simple as that. And she —’ At this Alice jerked her hand and dropped the horse. It thudded to the floor and skittered away.

All I could do was stare at the blistered outline of the copper horse burned into Alice’s palm.

4. PEARLS

It was boring, dirty work, doing up the house. Alice’s gran hadn’t touched anything in years — aside from hiding weird things in grubby corners, apparently. There was so much to do that Alice and I always ended up working late into the night, holding off the dark as best we could. Alice’s blistered hand was healing, but slowly, and I’d got a nasty scrape up my calf from a cluster of nails left inexplicably spiked through a cupboard door.

When I found the long string of pearls on top of the wardrobe, I stripped off all my clothes and stepped into the shower — then stepped back out and wrapped the pearls around my neck. They were as long as a bridle; I looped them three times and they still

covered my breasts. I stood under the hot water until I couldn't see for steam, then I walked, still dripping, into the kitchen where Alice was fixing the radiator.

'What do you think I should do with —' she said, and then she saw me and dropped the spanner. We made love on a clean dust sheet on the kitchen counter, and afterwards, Alice whispered in my ear: 'That's how you catch a kelpie, you know. With a string of pearls around its neck. My grandad told me — he caught a kelpie once. You catch it, and then it has to love you forever.' She rolled on top of me and kissed me hard, so hard the pearls pressed red circles into my sweat-damp skin, so hard my teeth nicked bloody on the inside of my mouth.

5. HAIR

We'd plumbed in the new bath, and I christened it that night with candles and bath oil. I never felt clean in this house; we'd scrubbed every inch but still kept catching this smell, rancid and salt-heavy like old seaweed. Although I hadn't said anything to Alice, I was worried that there was damp in the walls, the house rotten to the core.

I filled the bath full of the hottest water I could stand and slid right down, my nose the only dry part. I felt my muscles relax into liquid and heard my heart boom, boom, boom, steady as footsteps, steady as hoofbeats — And then there was nothing holding me up, and I was underwater, water in my nose, water in my mouth, and I couldn't breathe, and I couldn't find the sides to pull myself out and I felt water in my throat, water in my lungs, and I sank down into the darkness.

Then Alice was pulling me out and I was crouching on the bathroom floor, coughing up water, breath rasping, and there was something wrong with my hand, something tight and tickling, and I reached for Alice, and my fist was wrapped all around with layers of hair. Long black hair, black as a winter night, and as long as a horse's mane.

6. A GLASS JAR

At first, I couldn't tell what was inside. When I pulled it out of the dim hidden place inside the bathroom wall, I thought it was jam. Beneath its jacket of dust, it looked plum-dark and sticky. My tongue tingled; I thought about toast and tea and the sweet smear of berries, sitting in the sun with Alice, the sound of her laugh. But that was silly: it was too late for sun, and Alice hadn't laughed for a long time.

I shook the jar and felt the thing inside smack off the glass, the wet press of meat. I gave the jar to Alice. She went to unscrew the lid, then thought better.

She looked at it for a long time. 'It's a liver,' she said.

'A what?' I asked, because I'd heard but I wished I hadn't. In Alice's shaking grip, the purplish thing in the jar quivered.

‘It’s what the kelpie leaves,’ Alice said, and her voice didn’t sound right. ‘It drags you to the bottom of the loch and eats you, every single bit of you except your liver. If you find a liver on the shore, that’s how you know the kelpie has eaten someone.’

7. A KNIFE

I wasn’t surprised when Alice and I found the long thin silver knife wrapped in blackened grot beneath the floorboards. It wasn’t easy: to find it we’d had to pull up just about every rotting, stinking board in the house, our hands slick with blood and filth. Alice had told me that a silver knife through the heart is the only way to kill a kelpie, so if Alice’s gran really had killed it, the knife was likely to be there somewhere. Her mistake, her haunting, was in keeping the thing. As proof? A memento? We’d never know. Then again, we knew that her bathtub drowning was due to a stroke. So I guess you can never really know anything.

Alice and I gathered up the ring and the paper and the horse and the pearls and the hair and the glass jar and the knife, and we put them all in a box. We drove for hours until we got to the coast, to the town where Alice’s gran and her grandad and the first wife had all lived, and we climbed to the highest cliff and we threw all the things into the sea.

Together we drove back to the house, holding hands between the front seats. A steady calm grew in our hearts; we knew that it was over, that we had cleansed the house and ourselves, that we had proven women’s love was stronger than women’s hate.

8. MORE

Approaching the front door, key outstretched, hands still held, hearts grown sweet, Alice and I stopped. Our hands unlinked. The doorknob was wrapped all around with layers of long black hair.

Full analysis

Narrative voice

The story is narrated in first person by a character referred to as Rain by her wife Alice, the other key character in the story. Rain adopts a conversational style from the outset, with the first line of the story beginning midway through a sentence that chattily involves the reader in what is unfolding.

Rain's personality becomes visible through her description of the strange discoveries within the house: she seems imaginative, romantic and immediately inclined to wonder if there is a 'secret message' behind each object. Rain's tendency to fictionalise reality could render her completely unreliable as our narrator, but her perspective is given some balance through her reporting of her wife Alice's far more pragmatic responses to the sequence of mysterious objects.

Title

Logan makes interesting use of pronouns in the title to set up expectations of power and identity. The use of 'my wife and I' at the start presents a united front – a team – with positive echoes also of the phrase traditionally uttered by a proud newly-wed during their wedding speech: 'On behalf of my wife and I...'. The placement of 'our' in front of 'house' also establishes possession and strength, given the rest of the story will be about the couple's struggle to retain control over the house.

Structure

The story is structured into eight sections, each with a one-word title that refers to the sinister object being discovered. The one-word titles read like a list, suggesting a measured and pragmatic attempt to sort and make sense of information. This becomes ironic as the story goes and the situation becomes harder to comprehend. The sections are vignette-like: each is written with an immediacy that captures the moments surrounding the object's discovery and impact without providing elaborate plot, setting or character development. Yet the structure of the object stories means they work together

cumulatively, providing a drip-feed of clues to help readers make connections back, forth and between the sections/ objects that intensify as the overarching story progresses, that also helps to build tension.

1. A RING

The story opens with Rain, the narrator, discovering a green sea-glass ring as she sweeps up the ‘grot’ from the kitchen floor. Her immediate response is positive: such a discovery is heralded as ‘too perfectly sweet’, and Rain instantly assumes that the ring must have been deliberately left in the house by Alice’s grandmother as a ‘message of hope’ to bless the couple’s life together in the new house.

Yet, Rain’s positive response to the discovery is surrounded with negative sounding language, foreshadowing that all will not be well. The ring is said to ‘scrape’ along the floor, ‘making a hell of a racket’, and while, once rinsed, the glass gleams ‘green as the summer sea’ we are told it also has ‘shadows at the centre’, suggesting something more sinister may be lurking.

Part 1 also contains some helpful context to help locate the story and characters without a great deal of description, bringing us up to speed quickly within the short story format. We learn that Alice and Rain long faced resistance and discrimination from Alice’s grandmother, who would only refer to Rain as ‘Alice’s friend’, rather than acknowledging their same sex relationship. We also learn that despite this, Alice and Rain were good to the older lady, visiting her ‘a thousand times.’

Rain races through the house to show Alice her find and to ask whether she also thinks it might be a ‘good-luck charm’. In contrast to Rain’s romantic vision, Alice describes the ring as ‘junk’, suggests it ‘came out of a vending machine’ and tries to puncture Rain’s idealistic vision of her Gran as benevolent benefactor: ‘Trust me, Rain. My gran didn’t wish anyone well.’

The first of many references to the sea and water can be found in Part 1: aside from the sea-glass ring itself, we are told by Rain that the house ‘always smelled like the sea even although it was miles from the water.’ When Rain finds Alice, she is throwing out ‘musty’ duvets from the spare room and expresses worries that the house might have damp in its walls.

2. PAPER

The second section or vignette begins in the car. As part of the renovations, Rain and Alice have removed the old bath and are taking it to the tip. We are told that the bath was where Alice's gran had a 'stroke and drowned'. As the couple wrestle the old bath tub out of the house and into the car, they bash the front door and cause a piece of yellowing paper to become dislodged from around the frame. Once in the car, Alice reads it to herself and is initially reluctant to read it out loud to Rain, suggesting the note has unsettled her in some way.

The note, which reads, 'KELPIES TO HELL' causes Alice to explain to a confused Rain that kelpies are mythical creatures who are said to drown people they dislike by dragging them deep into bodies of water. It seems we are to assume the note was written by Alice's gran.



Image: Falkirk Kelpies, based on the mythological creature.
Photograph by Daniel Kraft, licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Still hooked on the idea that Alice's gran might have hidden secret messages around the house for them to find after her death, Rain speculates about the note's meaning. Alice's response is pragmatic but also frustrated, causing tension between the pair: 'My gran was losing it towards the end... She didn't know I was going to live here with you. None of this means anything, okay?' After Alice's outburst, the rest of the trip to the tip takes place in silence.

Since ancient times, doors and doorways have been regarded as symbolic threshold spaces that provide connections not only to physical but to magical worlds. Many traditions and cultures have rites and traditions to protect doorways (and therefore homes) from evil spirits and forces. Might the note have been wedged into the doorframe as a curse to prevent kelpies from entering the house? Is it significant that the act of removing the bath (where Alice's gran drowned) from the house caused the note to become visible for possibly the first time since it was hidden there, given it is 'yellow as old bones and smelled musty-sweet'? (Note also the word choice of 'musty', which connects back to the damp smell of the old duvets in the first part of the story, and the spooky connotations of 'old bones' used in the simile.)

3. A HORSE

The next item to become visible is a 'thumb' sized copper horse that Alice found lodged between the skirting board and bedroom wall, a curious unit of measurement. She hands the object to Rain for a closer look, who finds there are 'runes or something' engraved on the copper surface. Rain immediately wonders if the horse has been hidden away as 'an old Highlands superstition' intended to protect the pair from '...well, not a horse, but – life? Sadness? Money worries?'

Rain's suggestions prompt Alice to disclose some further information about her gran's past. We learn that gran was described as 'a witch' by her own daughter, Alice's mum, because 'she stole my grandad from another woman.' The labelling of Alice's gran as a witch is interesting in the context of the story for several reasons, as it not only introduces the idea of witchcraft and magic as a possibility alongside the kelpie myth, but also highlights the sexism inherent in the assumption that the 'other woman' in a relationship must have used some kind of 'magic' to ensnare the man who remains blameless.

According to Alice's family lore, grandad's first wife was 'always dressed in green [and] wore ... rings made of glass she found washed up on the beach. She had green eyes and long black hair.' After gran had paid a visit to the first wife to tell her 'I want your man and there's nothing you can do about it', the woman in green disappeared, rumoured to have travelled south for work, and was never seen again.

Alice continues her story about her gran's past, including the disclosure that her gran must have made up 'silly stories' to make the woman in green look like a 'spooky witch, a baddie' in order to make herself feel better about breaking up a marriage. As she speaks, the copper horse she cradles in her hands becomes unbearably hot. Alice drops the object and finds the heat has blistered her hand.

The paragraph break at the end of part 3, line beginning 'All I could do was stare ...', helps to emphasise the shock both women feel at their encounter with this particular object, the most extreme in impact so far, given it has caused physical harm.

As a metal, copper has long been thought to have both healing and protective powers, raising questions as to whose object this was, why it had been wedged into a skirting board, and what it was intended to achieve.

4. PEARLS

The cleaning of the house continues, and it seems like a few days have passed as we learn that Alice's burned hand is recovering. We also learn that Rain has cut her leg on a 'cluster of nails left inexplicably spiked through a cupboard door'. For centuries, people have believed that iron could ward off supernatural forces, suggesting that the cluster of nails might have been sunk into the door as some form of defence against evil.

Rain notes that the house is demanding an enormous amount of work, with both women frequently working until late 'holding off the dark as best we could.' In a literal sense, the phrase 'holding off the dark' could mean working tirelessly to make use of every scrap of daylight for DIY purposes. Symbolically, it could suggest the women are aware of the presence of negative energies within the house and are working hard to keep them at bay.

While cleaning on top of a wardrobe, Rain finds an incredibly long string of pearls. Looping them around her body, she surprises Alice and they have sex in the kitchen. Afterwards, Alice recalls that her grandad had once told her he had once caught a kelpie and refers to the fact that it had a 'string of pearls around its neck.' The couple then share a kiss that causes Rain's teeth to 'nick bloody on the inside' of her mouth, an ominous foreshadowing.

According to folklore, kelpies wear a bridle when in the form of a horse and can be taken captive if their magical bridles are taken away. This could suggest that the string of pearls is in fact a magical bridle kept hidden from the kelpie to prevent them from regaining their full powers.

At this point in the narrative, as clues continue to stack up through the different vignettes, several questions begin to emerge: was the lady in green a kelpie? Had grandad originally captured her by taking away her bridle (the string of pearls) and thus forced her to ‘love him forever’? Why did the string of pearls remain in gran’s house so long after the exile of the woman in green, and the death of her husband? Does this suggest something else about who or where the kelpie might be? What is the connection – if any – between the copper horse and the string of pearls?

5. HAIR

Having worked hard to renovate the bathroom, Rain treats herself to a hot bath. She notes that she has ‘never felt clean in this house’ and reminds us of the damp, sea-like smell – ‘rancid and salt-heavy like old seaweed’ that continues to pervade the atmosphere, despite all the cleaning and scrubbing. Confiding in the reader, Rain worries that the house may be ‘rotten to the core’ with damp in the walls – a fear Alice had also expressed earlier on in the story.

What happens next – Rain’s account of what happened in the bath – is one of the most closely described parts of the story, with foreshadowing, imagery and interesting sentence structure. Sinking into the hot tub, her ears below the surface of the water, Rain describes how she can hear her heartbeat sounding ‘steady as footsteps, steady as hoofbeats’, a simile that also foreshadows the kelpie’s imminent arrival. The hyphen that follows the word ‘hoofbeats’ creates a drawn-out pause, followed by a sentence that starts with ‘and’, which then plunges headlong into description of the panic Rain feels as the kelpie attempts to drown her in the bath: ‘And then there was nothing holding me up, and I was underwater....’. The rest of the sentence that follows is long, complex, with repeated use of phrases starting with ‘and’ adding to the sense of desperation Rain feels as she attempts to fight off this unseen, unknown foe within the water.

Alice rescues Rain just in time, and it is only after she has started to recover on the bathroom floor that Rain realises, she is clutching a handful of black hair ‘as long as a horse’s mane.’ From burning Alice’s hand, to attempting to drown Rain in the bath, the kelpie’s efforts to attack the couple have increased in their intensity. The malevolent presence of the kelpie seems to centre in the bathroom, a room of core importance to any house, with a series of pipes that take water to and from the house into the external world. We also know that Alice’s gran was said to have drowned in the bath after experiencing a stroke, but does the attack on Rain while in the new bath now cast that story into doubt?

6. A GLASS JAR

The next vignette recounts the discovery of a grot-covered jar hidden within the bathroom wall. It is hardly surprising that recent events in the house have placed Rain and Alice under pressure. Rain notes that Alice had not ‘laughed for a long time’, and, when Alice speaks, Rain reflects that her voice doesn’t ‘sound right.’

After shaking the jar to help identify what might be inside, Rain describes hearing ‘the wet press of meat’ against the sides of the container, a horribly gruesome image that draws on assonance and sibilance to achieve its effects. Having peered at it closely, Alice uses her remaining childhood kelpie knowledge to declare that the jar contains a liver: ‘It’s what the kelpie leaves... if you find a liver on the shore, that’s how you know the kelpie has eaten someone.’

The vignette ends with this dark revelation but with no further suggestion as to whose liver this might be, and why it might have been hidden inside gran’s bathroom walls. Indeed, Logan’s use of the verb ‘quivering’ to describe the ‘purplish thing in the jar’ could suggest the liver may still be alive.

The jar is said to be covered in a ‘jacket of dust’, suggesting it has been hidden in the walls for some time, but as Rain and Alice have been renovating the house, could the dust have been created more recently?

7. A KNIFE

The discovery of a ‘long thin silver knife wrapped in blackened grot’ does not come as a surprise to Rain, who had started to suspect they would find ‘proof’ that Alice’s gran had killed a kelpie. The silver knife lies beneath a floorboard – we are not told which room – but we are told that the couple actively searched for more evidence by pulling up ‘just about every rotting, stinking floorboard in the house, our hands slick with blood and filth.’ This suggests the terror the women now feel about what may be present within the house and their desperation to locate its source. We are not told whose (or what) blood slicks the hands of Alice and Rain, but the act of ripping up old, splintered floorboards would certainly lead to cuts and mess. Rain’s use of ‘rotting and stinking’ indicate her intensifying feelings against the house.

For thousands of years, silver has been prized as a strong defence against supernatural forces, particularly in relation to vampire myths. Alice tells Rain that a ‘silver knife through the heart is the only way to kill a kelpie’, though other kelpie myths recommend the use of a silver bullet.

Here, Rain wonders whether Alice’s gran made a mistake by keeping the knife used to kill a kelpie as ‘proof, a memento’ because it had somehow led to ‘her haunting’. It seems that Rain as narrator is prodding us towards a particular version of the story: that Rain’s gran had killed the woman in green after realising she was a kelpie and then spent the rest of her life trying to ward off the evil spirit from entering her house to seek revenge. But then Rain reminds us that we know gran’s ‘bathtub drowning was due to a stroke. So, I guess you can never know anything.’ Here, what is known (e.g. the facts of Alice’s gran’s death) mingle uncertainly with what can never be known, casting further confusion at this pivotal point in the narrative.

In an attempt to rid themselves of the presence of evil, Alice and Rain gather all the objects together and drive for hours to the town by the sea where Alice’s grandparents and the woman in green had originally lived. Climbing to the ‘highest cliff’, they throw everything back into the sea as a way to ‘cleanse the house and ourselves.’

As the couple drive home holding hands, Rain describes the ‘steady calm’ that descends in the car and proclaims with confidence that ‘we knew that it was over’. Rain is also particularly thankful for the fact that they had ‘proven women’s love was stronger than women’s hate.’ Both claims cause readerly tension to spike at such a late stage in the story.

8. MORE

This final part is the shortest of all. Unlike the other section titles, which all involve nouns, 'more' is a quantifier, suggesting that the situation continues; in other words, there is more horror yet to come.

The women arrive home from their trip to the sea, 'hearts grown sweet', a word choice that recalls Rain's positive exclamations at the very start of the story ('And isn't that sweet!') and also suggests the renewed strength and resilience of their relationship.

Yet upon reaching the front door, the women find the 'doorknob was wrapped all around with layers of black hair' in much the same way that Rain's fist had been 'wrapped all around with layers of hair' after her near drowning in the bath. The story ends here, on a cliffhanger, with the women's hands now 'unlinked', suggesting their strength has already dissipated. The profusion of black kelpie hair ('wrapped all around'; 'layers') also suggests the formidable strength of the force they face once again.

Discussion Prompts

Introductory

- What does this story make you think, feel and wonder?
- Who is our narrator in this story? What can you discern about them? How are we positioned by Logan to feel towards them?
- What are kelpies? Where can stories about kelpies be found? What might kelpies symbolise?
- What is the role of stories about mythical creatures within different cultures, past and present, including Scotland's?
- What actually happens in the story?
- How do you think you would respond to an experience like this?

Techniques

- What are the characteristics of Logan's writing style?
- What genre do you think this story belongs to? Is it a ghost story? Horror? How can you tell?
- How reliable is Rain as a narrator?
- What is the effect of the list-like structure of the story?
- How is tension built within the story? See if you can map out the ways that tension rises and falls across the narrative.
- Logan has hidden lots of clues for readers in the narrative, just as Alice's gran seemed to have hidden objects around her house. What effect do these clues have on how you read? What knowledge do you think readers need to have about myths and magic in order to make sense of what the characters are experiencing?
- What is the role of symbolism in this story?
- How effective is the ending, in your view?

Themes

- Does this story contain a message? If so, what is it?

- Does this story make you think of any other texts you have read, listened to or watched? What are they, and what connections exist?
- What questions does this story raise for you? Are there questions that remain unanswered?
- How do the love lives of Alice and her gran compare in the story?
- If there was a way for Alice and Rain to escape this family history, what do you think it would look like?
- In part 3, Alice talks about how people, like her gran, must have made up stories about the past to make themselves feel better. To what extent does Logan's story explore this idea?

Practice Questions

Note that 2- and 4-mark exam questions will refer to specific excerpts. The practice questions below have been written with the whole story in mind. They can be applied to a given excerpt or to the whole story.

National 5 Questions

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how the writer makes it clear that Alice and Rain face unexpected dangers in the house. (4 marks)

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain what we learn about the character of Rain. (4 marks)

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how Alice's thoughts and/ or feelings about the haunting are revealed. (4 marks)

By referring to this story and to at least one other from the short story collection, show how the writers build tension. (8 marks)

Higher Questions

By referring to **at least two** examples, analyse how the writer's use of language creates a sense of danger. (4 marks)

By referring to **at least two** examples, analyse how the writer's use of language conveys a clear impression of Rain's character. (4 marks).

Analyse how the writer's use of language conveys the relationship between Rain and Alice. (4 marks).

By referring to **at least two** examples, analyse how the writer uses language to build tension across the text. (4 marks)

By referring to this story and to at least one other from the short story collection, discuss how the writers use the figure of the narrator to explore central concerns. (10 marks)

NB. Stories that Kirsty Logan's 'Things My Wife and I Found Hidden in Our House' might be compared with for the 8-mark question (National 5) or the 10-mark question (Higher) are:

- 'A Voice Spoke To Me At Night' by Helen McClory
- 'Andrina' by George Mackay Brown
- 'Death in a Nut' as told by Duncan Williamson

Connections / Comparisons

The visual below highlights connecting themes that may be useful to consider for the 8- or 10-mark exam question. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list – you may wish to explore beyond these categories and consider how different themes might overlap or contradict one another within and between texts.

