

Ghost by the Cliff

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(Based On The First Episode Of *Round the Twist*)

“Kids,” called Tony up the stairs. “Can you come here for a moment?”

“Bronson,” began Linda, Pete’s twin and Bronson’s older brother. “Go and tell Dad we’ll be down in a minute.”

Bronson mumbled something and walked out the door of Pete’s room.

“Pete, hurry up,” said Linda half a minute later and left the room. Pete chucked a book-mark in his book and headed downstairs.

“There you are, Pete,” said Tony. “I’ve bought it.”

“Bought what?” asked all three kids at once.

“The Lighthouse you wanted, of course,” said Tony, sounding a little surprised.

“YES!” shouted Bronson, “My very own bedroom!” He ran out into the kitchen.

“Thanks,” said Linda, grinning. “We thought it would take longer for you to think about it!”

Pete was at the table drawing a map of where he would put his stuff in his new room. Linda sat down and began to do the same. Bronson came in and put his first ever ginger-bread-man biscuit on a plate. It looked more like a 3D ginger-bread-snail than a man. He began to look for a special thing to put it in.

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Tony stopped the ute outside the lighthouse and the three kids jumped out. They looked around. There was the Lighthouse itself with a fence near. Over the fence there was a little cottage, the light-house was very near the edge of a cliff, and there was also an outdoor dunny.

“Cool,” said Bronson. “Open the door, Dad.”

“I can’t,” said Tony, getting out of his ute, grinning. “Miss Trinken’s got the key.”

“Who Miss Trinken?” asked Pete.

“Our next door neighbour,” said Tony. “She wants us to call her Nell.”

The door opened and an old lady came out. “You’re here I see,” she said. “Tony, these your kids?”

“Yep,” answered Tony. “Pete, Linda and Bronson.”

“Hi,” continued Nell. “Here’s the key, Tony, and if you need any help moving your furniture in, I’ll be next door.” She waved and went through the gate into her garden.

The furniture van drove up the long dirt drive-way.

“You the Twists?” asked the driver.

“That’s us,” called Tony. The driver and his partner jumped out of the van. The driver opened the doors around the back of the van.

“Well, it’s peaceful,” said Tony. Half-a-second later, a car, music blazing rounded the corner.

Pete had to shout over the noise. “Yeah, real quiet, ‘ey!”

Bronson had headed down to the dunny and didn’t see three people getting out of a car. He could hear someone in there so he waited outside. The door suddenly swung open and the toilet was empty. Bronson ran up to the house, scared.

“The toilet’s haunted!” he puffed out to Tony.

“What?” asked Pete. “Funny dunny?”

“Jokey jocks?”

“Or loony loo?” finished Tony.

“No,” said Bronson. “There was someone in there and then they were gone!”

“Harold!” Tony said, changing the subject because Mr Harold Gribble didn’t seem to like the one going on. “Come in.”

Mr. Harold Gribble walked into the combined Kitchen, eating area, and lounge room, followed by his wife, Celia Gribble, a matron at the local hospital, and his son, James.

James saw Bronson and decided to try and scare him. He said, “Dead Ned died on that dunny down there!”

Pete came over to listen.

James continued without looking up at Pete.

“Nell was overseas, and Dead Ned was looking after the place. But when Nell came back, all she found was a skeleton on the dunny! They say that on a windswept night...”

“Gee!” Bronson whispered, sounding scared. “I’m never going down there again!”

He ran up the stairs to find himself a room. He walked into the second-to-bottom room and yelled, “This is my room!”

Meanwhile, Tony, Mr Gribble, Mrs Gribble, and Nell had entered the top room. Mr and Mrs Gribble took one look and walked out again.

“This is all my family’s old stuff,” said Nell. “I’ll be cleaning it out soon.”

“Oh, there’s no hurry,” said Tony generously.

“Thanks,” said Nell. “I appreciate that.”

She walked out. Tony followed.

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Pete, Linda and Bronson woke up the next morning wondering where they were. But soon they remembered and leapt out of bed to go down to breakfast. They all entered the kitchen at the same time all grinning.

“Hi, kids,” said Tony, wide awake. “What’s your order?”

“What will we do today?” asked Pete when breakfast was finished. “Any ideas, Linda?”

“We could go down to the beach,” suggested Linda. “I saw a rocky path down the cliff yesterday.”

“Yeah, okay,” said Pete. “Let’s do that.”

So down they went to the beach. They stayed there all day only going up the cliff when Tony called them for tea. Bronson ate a-lot...and needed to go to the toilet soon after. But he wasn’t going on his own...

“Linda,” he said as he walked into Linda’s room. “Will you go to the dunny with me?”

Linda looked over her book. “Don’t be such a wimp.”

Bronson went down to Pete’s room. Pete had his guitar blaring so Bronson had to shout. “PETE!” he yelled. Pete turned. “Will you go to the loo with me?”

Pete decided to play a tune. “Would I go to the loo, would I go to the looooo...”

“Just wait until you want something,” said Bronson.

“...with you!?”

Bronson headed down the stairs to where Tony sat at the table.

“Dad,” began Bronson.

No answer.

“Dad,” said Bronson, louder.

Still no answer.

Bronson looked at his father’s face. He was asleep.

“Nothing,” said Bronson. Just seconds later, Bronson was...

“I’m coming down the path,” he said. “I’m going to get to the toilet soon.” He was talking as though a person was right in front of him. “There’s no such thing as ghosts,” he said to himself. He got to the toilet and heard nobody in there. He brought a book to read by torchlight. “...They fought two-hundred and fifty years ago,” he read. “Some of them still have mem-YHHHAAAAGGHH!” He ran screaming all the way up to the lighthouse. He ran in to find that his screaming had woken Tony up.

“DAD!” he shouted. “THE TOILET’S HAUNTED!”

“Slow down, slow down, Bronson,” said Tony, trying to calm Bronson. “The toilet’s haunted?”

“Yes,” gasped out Bronson.

“By a ghost?”

“Yes.”

“Bronson,” Tony said. “There’s no such thing as ghosts.”

“But—”

“When it’s dark and creepy you *think* you’re seeing things, especially in a new place.”

Just then, Linda walked down the stairs.

“Where are you going?” asked Bronson.

“To the toilet,” said Linda. “If that’s okay with you?”

“Want me to come with you?” asked Bronson, causing Linda to give him her ‘As If’ look.

Linda heard a noise behind her as she walked down the path. She looked around to see Bronson running down the path towards her.

“Bronson,” she said under her breath and then said out loud, “What are you doing?”

“Protecting you from the ghost,” panted Bronson.

A noise behind Linda made her turn around. She saw Nell’s cat, Bad-Smell.

“There’s your ghost,” she said.

Linda got to the end of the path and Bronson said, “Want me to come in with you?”

Linda scowled. “Don’t be such a drop-kick.”

“Are you alright in there?” asked Bronson. Linda rolled her eyes. “Are you still in there, Linda?” Linda shook her head in disbelief and said, “No, Bronson.”

Bronson looked under the door.

“Bronson,” said Linda disgusted. “Nick off.”

“Alright,” said Bronson as he withdrew his head from under the door. “Going. Bye!”

Linda heard foot-steps coming down the path.

“Buzz off, Bronson,” she said.

No answer.

“Bronson, is that you?”

No answer.

Linda gulped and then gasped as she saw feet appear under the door. They started to rise into the air. Linda looked up. The semi-see-through person appeared at the top of the door. Linda screamed. The man shook his head and vanished. Linda ran out, still screaming.

“What’s all the noise about?” Nell bustled up to her with Bad-Smell.

“A ghost!” said Linda.

“A ghost?” said Nell. “What did he look like?”

“Well, he wasn’t that old and he had a white hat on!”

“Ah,” said Nell, calmly. “Young Ned.” She walked past, Linda staring after her.

“Pete!” gasped Linda jumping onto Pete’s bed. “There’s a ghost we saw it. Nell said he was Young Ned.”

“Yeah right,” mumbled Pete.

“It’s not funny,” said Linda.

“You don’t reckon, ‘ey?” said Pete. “Why didn’t the ghost go to the party?”

“I dunno,” said Bronson, “Why didn’t the ghost go to the party?”

“Because he had no body to go with,” laughed Pete.

“Ha, ha,” Linda said, her voice filled with sarcasm. “Very funny.”

“I’ll go down me self, then,” said Pete. “Go have a chat to Young Ned.”

“Don’t say we didn’t warn you,” said Linda.

“We didn’t warn you,” said Pete. “Ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“Ha,” said both Linda and Bronson(sarcastically)together.

“Yeah,” laughed Pete. “Ha times a million! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha...” He was still laughing as he walked out the door. Linda and Bronson watched Pete through the doorway.

“You there?” asked Pete as he sat on the toilet at the end of the path. “What do you call a drunken ghost?” Without waiting for an answer, he said, “A methylated spirit! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.”

The toilet door swung open to reveal a semi-see-through man in a white hat. Young Ned.

Pete was screaming. He jumped up and ran out the door and through the ghost. He ran to the door and inside. Linda followed. Young Ned seemed to be pointing at something but not using words. Linda grabbed Bronson and slammed the door. Young Ned vanished.

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“Someone’ll have to go back down there,” said Linda.

“I’m not going,” said Bronson firmly.

Linda sighed. “We’ll all go.”

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“I’m not scared,” said Pete as they walked down the path, seeing lightning and hearing thunder.

“Same here,” said Linda.

“Neither am I,” said Bronson.

Three hours later, when they were sitting on the dunny, Bronson’s watch beeped. Everyone jumped.

“Three hours and still no ghost,” said Bronson. “I think I’d better be getting to bed.”

“Off you go, then,” said Linda.

“Aren’t you coming?”

“I’m gonna see this through,” said Linda.

“Pete?”

“I’m staying,” Pete said firmly. “To watch Linda see it through.”

“I think I’ll stay too, then.”

Suddenly, the toilet paper roll holder was ripped from its old and rusty hinges. A plank of wood which was part of the back fell out. A crack that ran through the air made Linda grab Bronson, Bronson grab Linda and Pete grab Bronson. It had sounded like a crack of lightning had hit the ground just outside. Then the whole side of the toilet fell off. The other side fell. The back fell. With nearly nothing to support it, the roof collapsed. The front fell down to reveal...

“DEAD NED!” screamed Bronson, nearly deafening Pete and Linda. “Dead Ned,” he said again unsure this time.

Dead Ned held two fingers around his eye.

“Eye,” said Pete staring.

Dead Ned slouched his head to the side and looked sad.

“Unhappy?” suggested Linda. Dead Ned shook his head.

“Sorry?” asked Pete. Dead Ned nodded vigorously. He held up his hands in claw shapes and poked out his tongue.

Linda was taken aback, but said, “To be ugly?”

Dead Ned rolled his eyes.

“Scare?” said Pete. “I’m sorry to scare you.” Dead Ned nodded and pointed to a painting that had been on the toilet inside roof.

“You just wanted us to find this,” said Linda. “That’s what you were pointing at.”

Dead Ned nodded. Now that they thought about it, Nell had been talking about a painting that had apparently been painted of the light-house, its surroundings and her father.

“This is the painting Nell described,” said Linda. “The exact same one.”

Dead Ned saluted them and rose up into the air. When he was fifty metres high (the top of the light house) he turned, waved and shot off into space.

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“I reckon he was in two places at once,” said Nell as Bronson studied the painting through a magnifying glass. “One wanted to steal the painting, and the other wanted to hang around to put things right.”

Bronson handed the magnifying glass to Pete and said, “Do you reckon we’ll ever see him again?”

“Nup,” said Nell. “Wouldn’t think so.”

Pete had given Linda the magnifying glass and Linda said, “Hey, Dad, have a look at this.”

Everyone bent over to look. They saw a man sitting in the dunny. He winked. Linda grinned.

Round the Twist’s name for this story is ‘Skeleton on the Dunny’ by Paul Jennings.