

The Mystery of the Raddlesham Mumps. © Murray Lachlan Young

Act 1.

Now welcome dear friend to this sinister tale

Welcome the wind and the brutalist hail

See the black mare in the blackest of plume

See the glass coach and the bleak floral bloom.

See the fine lace see the fluttering stole

See the twin coffins descending the hole

Chilling the marrow with famishing cold

Of a strange little boy: only seven years old.

Seven years old he was seven years old

Ripped like a lamb from the warmth of the fold

Britches of red with a curl in his hair

Thrust to the fore like a pig at a fair.

Down with them, down with them, down with them, down

Mother and father deep into the ground

And Crispin de Quincy de Faversham Clumps

This day became master of Raddlesham Mumps.

Raddlesham Mumps was the seat of the Clumps

As ancient and strange as the old fairy tumps

Stacked high and wide like a mound of crow feather

With rumours the wallpaper held it together.

But ask the true story of Raddlesham Mumps

And ask for the fate of the Faversham Clumps

Ask of the villagers what happened there

And meet with the murmurs of death and despair.

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'Nothing will ever go right at the Mumps

'Nothing will ever go right for the Clumps

Ever since building on sacredest ground

Paying no heed to the burial mound!

And Crispin de Quincy de Faversham Clumps

Walked off from the funeral back to the Mumps

Back to the gargoyle and crossbow-scarred door

Young master and lord of all things that he saw.

Trappings of trade and the products of power

Earth, temple, turret and brutal bell-tower

Acres of panel and parquet and stair

A mass taxidermy of tiger and bear

The ghost of rough nanny's tyrannical rule

Fresh horrors in store at his murderous school

The loss and the loneliness echoing still

In the twitching of flies on the damp window sill

The whispering corridors, tarnishing hookahs

The menacing bathrooms containing verrucas

The burnt-out craft shop, the closed petting zoo

All the things that his parents intended to do

Then a clunk then a thwack, a creaking of hinge

The croaking of oak and a whistling whinge

The door swung ajar and no longer alone

Poor Crispin fell into the darkness of home

To be met by old Kenilworth, butlering still

Aged beyond reason and green at the gill  
Thin as a spoke and tall as a cliff  
Glaring and gartered and perfectly stiff.  
Yes Kenilworth, oh such a heartening sight  
Stockinged and coated as dark as the night  
The dandruff cascade and the slight waft of mange  
The one thing at Raddlesham never to change  
‘Tea in the great hall’ the relic inferred  
Face, like a corpse and nose like a bird  
With an eye on a deeply delectable worm  
‘Proceed, my Lord Crispin, I’ll stoke up the urn.’  
And there in the hall that had not seen a ball  
Since the very last Puja before the great fall  
From the turret of Grandpapa Jim  
Who looked down from on high with his long bearded-chin.  
From his frame on the wall, high but not tall  
Surrounded by frames with his ancestors all  
  
Nine generations of disparate Clumps  
Nine belted knights at the seat of the Mumps.  
Nine noblemen that had breathed a last breath  
Whilst falling (all nine) to an untimely death.  
Yes, three hundred years of the Clumps brave and bold  
Now reduced to a lad only seven years old  
Crispin de Quincy de Faversham Clumps  
Felt his hair stand on end, his goosing of bumps

As a whispering tone met his nose and his ear  
T'was old Kenilworth, reeking of Stilton and beer  
‘Terribly sad how they all passed away  
I suppose Sir has heard what the villagers say  
‘As curses breed hearses and bullocks breed muck  
Do the Faversham Clumpses breed bloomin’ bad luck.’  
But I’ll tell you the story just so as you know  
Of how your ancestors did nobly go  
Yes I’ll start at the start as we’ve plenty of time  
For the tragical chapters that number at nine  
In front of the fire roaring-‘n’-roasting  
In front of the hounds gently ticking and toasting  
Old Kenilworth served up in neat little chunks  
The tale of the deaths of the Faversham Clumps.

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