The Mansion of the Hill

A thick fog descended. The children, who had been running joyfully through their village, stopped abruptly. A house loomed in the shadows at the end of a gravel path, like a wolf observing its dinner. There was no going back. They knew they wouldn't be able to find their way home through the thick smog. Their only hope was to ask for help at the old manor house. The rusty iron gate creaked angrily. With a heavy heart, Ali trudged up the pathway. His white, shaking hand pressed the doorbell while his friends cowered on the pavement outside.

The ancient front door groaned as it opened. Inside the air hung with the smell of damp and decay. The masses of cobwebs that hung from every surface made it clear that this house had been abandoned for many years. The chime of a grandfather clock broke the silence momentarily before a sea of rats scurried across the floor. In the distance, a figure dressed from head to toe in black lurched forward towards its waiting prey. Ali's friends had found their courage and were waiting next to him with intrigue.

"That's just your shadow, caused by my torch," Jesse explained calmly.

"But what about the rats?" enquired Ali.

The best buddies entered the house, not knowing what to expect once they'd crossed the threshold. Jesse was the first. Brave as a lion, he strode into the building while shining his torch into every corner of the room. Robyn was next, but stayed very close behind Jesse.

"Who opened the door?" asked Ali, still shivering on the step.

Finally, Florence grabbed him by the collar and pulled him into the house with the others. Once inside, the heavy oak door slammed behind them closing out the damp, foggy air while trapping them inside the putrid, dilapidated house. None of them knew where they would rather be.



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Questions

1. What does descended mean?

2. Find and copy two similes from the text.

a.

b.

3. Find and copy an example of personification.

4. Why did Ali have a heavy heart?

5. How did his friends feel while they were waiting on the pavement? Which word lets you know that?

6. How do we know this house is empty? Explain as fully as you can.

7. Do you believe that the black figure is Ali's shadow? Explain your answer.

8. How do we know that Robyn was nervous?

9. Who is the most reluctant to enter the house? How do you know?

10. What do you think will happen next?