

The Graveyard Book

Jangal Publication

Other Books by
NEIL GAIMAN

Coraline
M Is for Magic
Stardust

Illustrated Books
The Dangerous Alphabet
MirrorMask
The Wolves in the Walls
The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish

The Graveyard Book



N E I L G A I M A N

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVE McKEAN

 HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS

The Graveyard Book

Text copyright © 2008 by Neil Gaiman

Illustrations copyright © 2008 by Dave McKean

"Graveyard" lyrics by Tori Amos, copyright © 2001,
used by permission, courtesy of Sword & Stone, Inc (ASCAP).

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner
whatsoever without written permission except in the case of
brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

For information address HarperCollins Children's Books,

a division of HarperCollins Publishers,

195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

www.harpercollinschildrens.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gaiman, Neil.

The graveyard book / Neil Gaiman ; with illustrations by Dave
McKean. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Summary: Nobody Owens is a normal boy, except that he has been
raised by ghosts and other denizens of the graveyard.

ISBN 978-0-06-053092-1 (trade bdg.) — ISBN 978-0-06-053093-8
(lib. bdg.)

[1. Dead—Fiction. 2. Supernatural—Fiction. 3. Cemeteries—
Fiction.] I. McKean, Dave, ill. II. Title.

PZ7.G1273Gr 2008

2008013860

[Fic]—dc22

CIP

AC

Typography by Hilary Zarycky

17 PC/RRDH 30 29 28



First Edition

*Rattle his bones
Over the stones
It's only a pauper
Who nobody owns*

TRADITIONAL NURSERY RHYME

Jangal Publication

1

How Nobody Came to the Graveyard 2

2

The New Friend 35

3

The Hounds of God 61

4

The Witch's Headstone 99

5

Danse Macabre 144

INTERLUDE

The Convocation 166

6

Nobody Owens' School Days 174

7

Every Man Jack 211

8

Leavings and Partings 295

The Graveyard Book

Jangal Publication

CHAPTER ONE

How Nobody Came to the Graveyard

THERE WAS A HAND IN the darkness,
and it held a knife.



Jangal Publication

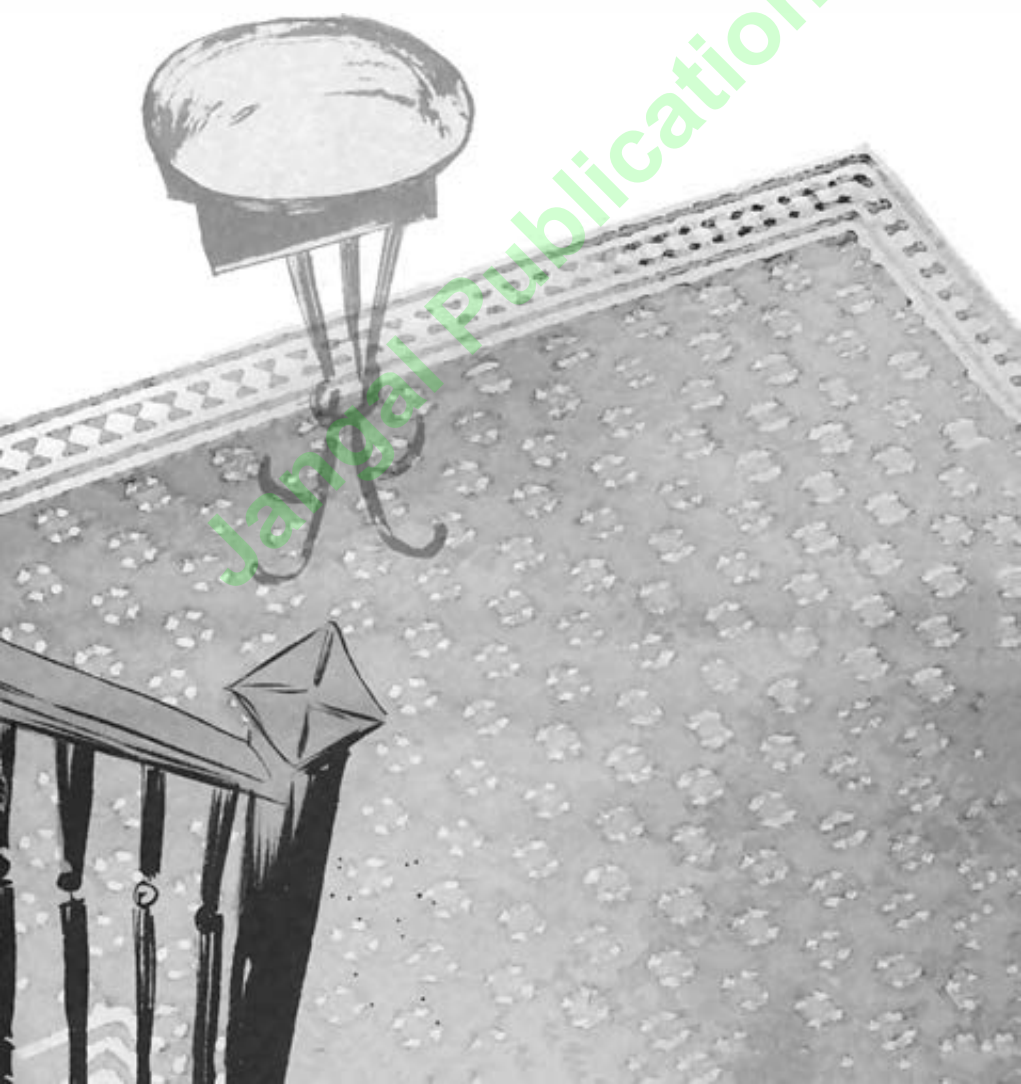




The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately.

The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet.

The street door was still open, just a little, where the knife and the man who held it had slipped in, and wisps of





nighttime mist slithered and twined into the house through the open door.

The man Jack paused on the landing. With his left hand he pulled a large white handkerchief from the pocket of his black coat, and with it he wiped off the knife and his gloved right hand which had been holding it; then he put the handkerchief away. The hunt was almost over. He had left the woman in her bed, the man on the bedroom floor, the older child in her brightly colored bedroom, surrounded by toys and half-finished models. That only left the little one, a baby barely a toddler, to take care of. One more and his task would be done.

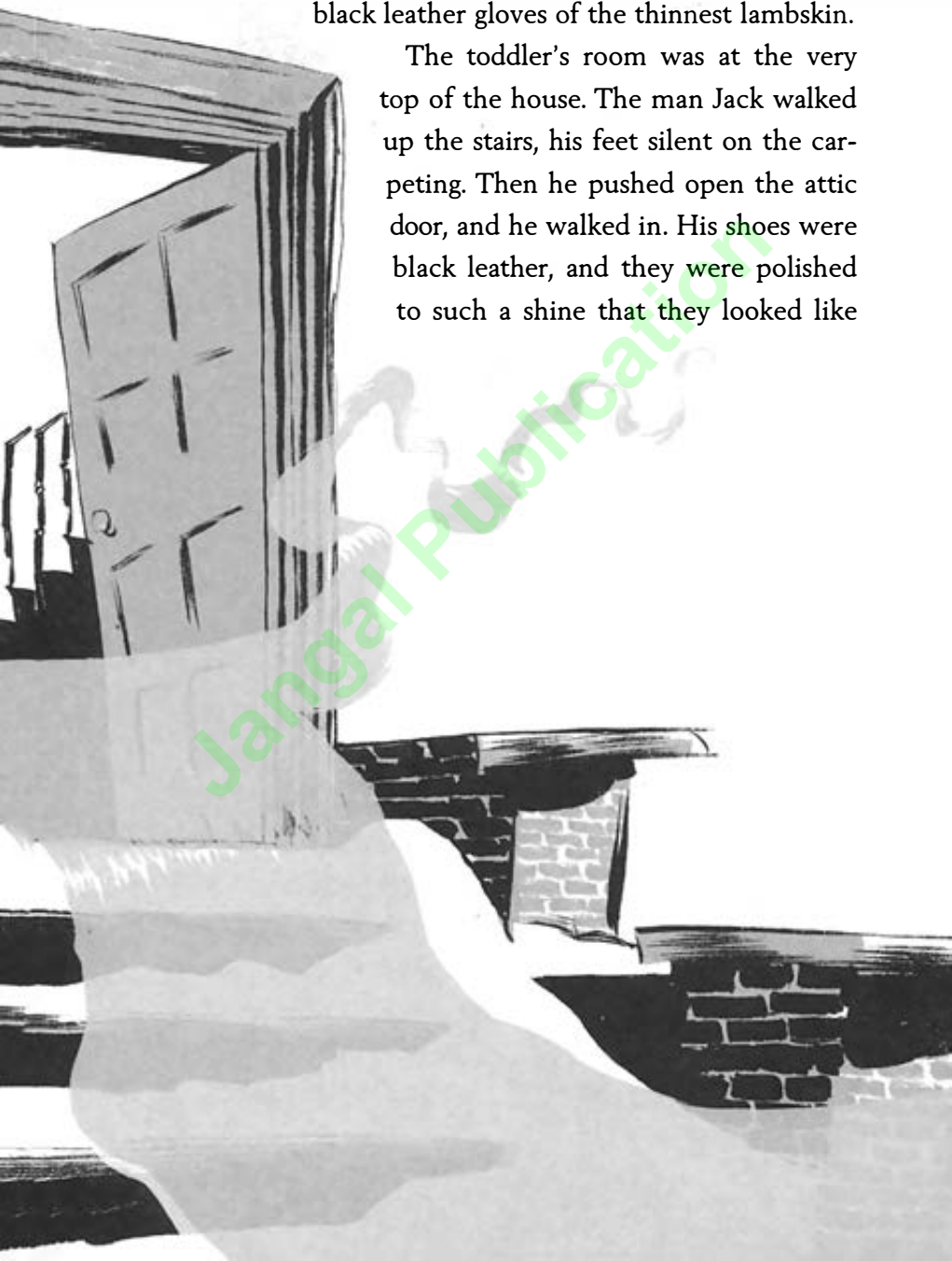
He flexed his fingers. The man Jack was, above all things, a professional, or so he told himself, and he would not allow himself to



smile until the job was completed.

His hair was dark and his eyes were dark and he wore black leather gloves of the thinnest lambskin.

The toddler's room was at the very top of the house. The man Jack walked up the stairs, his feet silent on the carpeting. Then he pushed open the attic door, and he walked in. His shoes were black leather, and they were polished to such a shine that they looked like



dark mirrors: you could see the moon reflected in them, tiny and half full.

The real moon shone through the casement window. Its light was not bright, and it was diffused by the mist, but the man Jack would not need much light. The moonlight was enough. It would do.

He could make out the shape of the child in the crib, head and limbs and torso.

The crib had high, slatted sides to prevent the child from getting out. Jack leaned over, raised his right hand, the one holding the knife, and he aimed for the chest . . .

. . . and then he lowered his hand. The shape in the crib was a teddy bear. There was no child.

The man Jack's eyes were accustomed to the dim moonlight, so he had no desire to turn on an electric light. And light was not that important, after all. He had other skills.

The man Jack sniffed the air. He ignored the scents that had come into the room with him, dismissed the scents that he could safely ignore, honed in on the smell of the thing he had come to find. He could smell the child: a milky smell, like chocolate chip cookies, and the sour tang of a wet, disposable, nighttime diaper. He could smell the baby shampoo in its hair, and something small and rubbery—a toy, he thought, and then, *no, something to suck*—that the child had been carrying.

The child had been here. It was here no longer. The man Jack followed his nose down the stairs through the middle of the tall, thin house. He inspected the bathroom, the kitchen, the airing cupboard, and, finally, the downstairs hall, in which there was nothing to be seen but the family's bicycles, a pile of empty shopping bags, a fallen diaper, and the stray tendrils of fog that had insinuated themselves into the hall from the open door to the street.

The man Jack made a small noise then, a grunt that contained in it both frustration and also satisfaction. He slipped the knife into its sheath in the inside pocket of his long coat, and he stepped out into the street. There was moonlight, and there were streetlights, but the fog stifled everything, muted light and muffled sound and made the night shadowy and treacherous. He looked down the hill towards the light of the closed shops, then up the street, where the last high houses wound up the hill on their way to the darkness of the old graveyard.

The man Jack sniffed the air. Then, without hurrying, he began to walk up the hill.

Ever since the child had learned to walk he had been his mother's and father's despair and delight, for there never was such a boy for wandering, for climbing up things, for getting into and out of things. That night, he had been woken by the sound of something on the floor beneath him falling with a crash. Awake, he soon became bored, and had begun looking for a way out of his crib. It had

high sides, like the walls of his playpen downstairs, but he was convinced that he could scale it. All he needed was a step . . .

He pulled his large, golden teddy bear into the corner of the crib, then, holding the railing in his tiny hands, he put his foot onto the bear's lap, the other foot up on the bear's head, and he pulled himself up into a standing position, and then he half-climbed, half-toppled over the railing and out of the crib.

He landed with a muffled thump on a small mound of furry, fuzzy toys, some of them presents from relations from his first birthday, not six months gone, some of them inherited from his older sister. He was surprised when he hit the floor, but he did not cry out: if you cried they came and put you back in your crib.

He crawled out of the room.

Stairs that went up were tricky things, and he had not yet entirely mastered them. Stairs that went down however, he had discovered, were fairly simple. He did them sitting down, bumping from step to step on his well-padded bottom.

He sucked on his *nummer*, the rubber pacifier his mother had just begun to tell him that he was getting too old for.

His diaper had worked itself loose on his journey on his bottom down the stairs, and when he reached the last step, when he reached the little hall and stood up, the diaper fell off. He stepped out of it. He was only wearing a child's

nightshirt. The stairs that led back up to his room and his family were steep, but the door to the street was open and inviting. . . .

The child stepped out of the house a little hesitantly. The fog wreathed around him like a long-lost friend. And then, uncertainly at first, then with increasing speed and confidence, the boy tottered up the hill.

The fog was thinner as you approached the top of the hill. The half-moon shone, not as bright as day, not by any means, but enough to see the graveyard, enough for that.

Look.

You could see the abandoned funeral chapel, iron doors padlocked, ivy on the sides of the spire, a small tree growing out of the guttering at roof level.

You could see stones and tombs and vaults and memorial plaques. You could see the occasional dash or scuttle of a rabbit or a vole or a weasel as it slipped out of the undergrowth and across the path.

You would have seen these things, in the moonlight, if you had been there that night.

You might not have seen a pale, plump woman, who walked the path near the front gates, and if you had seen her, with a second, more careful glance you would have realized that she was only moonlight, mist, and shadow. The plump, pale woman was there, though. She walked the path that led through a clutch of half-fallen tombstones towards the front gates.