

Madame Thibault's Hall of Waxworks attracted a lot of visitors. The front of the building was bright with red and yellow lights, even during the day. Inside the hall were scenes of murders, and other famous historical events, with lifelike figures made out of wax.

Clive Wilkes loved the place, both the outside and the inside. He was a delivery boy for a small supermarket, so he was often able to find some free time during the day to stop and visit the Waxworks. At the entrance to the hall there was a man sitting at a desk selling tickets. Then, after passing through a dark area, you came to the main hall. There in front of you was a bloody murder scene: a girl with long fair hair was pushing a knife into the neck of an old man, who sat at a table eating his dinner. His dinner was a plate of wax meat and wax potatoes.

Next there was the eighteenth-century Frenchman, Marat, who was killed as he sat in his bath; then the murder of President Kennedy, and then a scene in a Nazi prison camp. Clive loved every scene, and he never got tired of looking at them. But they didn't frighten him as they frightened other people - they made him smile, or even laugh. They were funny. Why not laugh?

One thing which Clive wanted to do very much was to spend a night in the Hall. It wouldn't be too difficult. Clive knew that three people worked there, as well as the ticket seller at the door. There was a rather fat woman with brown hair and glasses, who took the tickets as you went in. There was a man who gave little talks about the different scenes, though not more than half the people listened to him. And there was

another man, small, with black hair, who walked around watching people, to make sure they didn't damage anything.

So one night in November, Clive went in half an hour before the Hall closed, with a cheese sandwich in his pocket. He hid himself in the shadows and listened to the three people as they got ready to leave. The woman, whose name was Mildred, got the moneybox from Fred, the ticket seller, and took it into a room at the back of the hall. Fred left by the front door, the others by the back - First Mildred, then the taller man, then the small one. When Clive heard the door shut and the key turn in the lock, he waited for a moment in the beautiful silence. Then he went to look at the room at the back where they kept their coats, because he had never seen it. They seemed to use it as an office: there was an old desk there. Next to the room was a toilet. In a drawer in the desk was the wooden moneybox, but he wasn't interested in the money.

Clive started to enjoy himself. He found the lights and put them on, so that the scenes were all lit up. Now he was alone, so he could touch things as well as look at them. He stood next to the figures and touched their faces. He ate his sandwich, and sang a few songs.

By two in the morning he was bored, and tried to get out. But both the front door and the back door were locked, and there were no keys anywhere. He used the toilet, and went to sleep on the floor.

He woke up early, and had another look around. He wanted to find something to take home with him. He stopped by a waxwork of President Woodrow Wilson signing a document in 1918, at the end of the First World War. Yes, he would have

Woodrow Wilson's tie!

When the hall opened at 9.30, Clive was hiding behind a screen. Members of the public began to come in, but Clive waited until ten o'clock before he felt it was safe to join them. He left, with Woodrow Wilson's tie in his pocket.

He was half an hour late for work. There was a job waiting for him, so he went off on his bicycle.

Clive lived alone with his mother, who worked in a dress shop. She had no other children, and her husband had left her when Clive was five. He was eighteen now; he had left school early, without completing his education. Then he had spent a year doing nothing much. His mother worried about him and so she was pleased when he got the job at the supermarket.

When Clive came home that evening, he had a story ready for his mother. Last night, he said, he had met a friend and gone back to his house, and his parents had invited him to spend the night there. She accepted this story.

Clive put Woodrow Wilson's tie in the cupboard with his own. It was a beautiful tie, pale grey and expensive. He imagined someone - Mildred, perhaps - looking at the figure of the President and saying, 'Just a minute! What happened to Woodrow Wilson's tie?'

He felt very proud of his adventure, and wanted to tell someone about it, but he had no close friends who he could talk to. By the next day it didn't seem exciting any more.

One afternoon the following week, Clive had another idea. It was a really amusing idea - one that would certainly make the

public take notice. When should he do it? Tonight? No, he needed time to plan it.

Two nights later Clive went to the Hall at nine o'clock and bought a ticket. Luckily the ticket seller didn't really look at people; he was too busy.

Clive went straight to Woodrow Wilson, and saw that he was still without a tie. The murder scenes didn't interest him as much as usual. Some real murder scenes would be so much better. He laughed. He would kill the woman first.

As the visitors went out, Clive hid in a dark corner near the office. When Mildred walked past him, in her hat and coat, he stepped forward and put his arm around her neck.

She made only a small 'Ur-rk' sound.

Clive pressed her neck with his hands until her body fell to the floor. Then he pulled her to the dark corner.

'Has Mildred gone?' said one of the men.

'Yes, she's not in the office. Well, I'm going, too.'

Clive jumped on him as he passed, and attacked him in the same way. The job was more difficult, because the man fought hard, but Clive managed to knock his head against the wall. It was the taller man, who gave the talks.

'What's happening?' The small, dark man appeared.

This time Clive tried to hit him on the chin. He missed, and hit him in the neck. The man was unconscious now, so Clive was able to knock his head against the wall, too.

They all seemed to be dead. Blood was pouring from the heads of the two men, and the woman was bleeding a little from the mouth. Clive found the keys in the second man's pocket. There was a pocketknife there, which he took, too.

Then the taller man moved a little. Clive opened the pocketknife and pushed it into his neck four times. They were all dead now, and that was certainly real blood coming out, not the red paint of the wax figures.

Clive turned on the lights which lit up the scenes, and began the interesting job of choosing the right places to put the bodies.

The woman should certainly go in Marat's bath. Clive thought of taking off her clothes, but decided against it, because she would look much funnier sitting in a bath with a coat and hat on. He took the figure of Marat out of the bath, carried it into the office and placed it on the desk.

Then he carried Mildred to the bath and put her in. God, she looked funny!

Now for the men. He decided that the man whose neck was cut would look good in the place of the old man who was having dinner. After all, the girl with the long fair hair was pushing a knife into his neck. The figure of the old man was in a sitting position, so Clive put him on the toilet. He looked so funny there, with a knife in one hand and a fork in the other, waiting for something to eat. Clive laughed and laughed.

Last, the little man. Clive looked around and noticed the Woodrow Wilson scene. The figure of the President was sitting at a large desk, signing a paper; that was an excellent

place, Clive thought, for a man whose head was cut open and bleeding. He managed to take the wax pen out of Wilson's fingers, carry him into the office and put him on the chair at the desk. His arms were in a position for writing, so Clive found a pen on the desk to put into his right hand.

Now he could put the little man in Woodrow Wilson's place. He lifted him up onto the chair, but his head fell forward onto the desk, and Clive could not make his hand hold the pen.

At last it was done. Clive smiled. Then he realized that every part of his body was tired. Now that he had the keys he could get out, go home, and sleep well in his own bed. He wanted to be ready to enjoy tomorrow.

There was some blood on his coat, so he must throw it away somewhere. But he needed a coat. He took one off a wax figure which was about his size, and put that on. Then he used the inside of his own coat to clean off any possible fingerprints from places he had touched. He turned off the lights, and found his way to the back door. He locked it behind him, and dropped the keys on the ground. In the street was a box with some old newspapers, empty cans and plastic bags in it, where he hid the coat.

Clive slept very well that night. The next morning, he was standing across the street from the Hall when the ticket seller arrived just before 9.30. By 9.35 only three people had gone in, but Clive could not wait any longer, so he crossed the street and bought a ticket.

The ticket seller was telling people, 'Just go in. Everybody is late this morning.' He went inside to put on the lights, and

Clive followed him.

There were four other customers now. They looked at Mildred in her hat and coat sitting in Marat's bath without noticing anything strange about her. Two more people came in.

At last, by the Woodrow Wilson scene, a woman said to the man with her- 'Was someone shot when they signed that document at the end of the war?' There was blood, real blood, on the papers on the desk. By now they were dark red.

'I don't know. I don't think so,' the man answered.

Clive wanted very much to laugh, but he managed not to.

Suddenly a woman cried out in terror, and at the same time a man shouted, 'My God, it's real!'

Another man was examining the body with its face in the meat and potatoes. 'The blood's real! It's a dead man!'

The ticket seller, Fred, came in. 'What's the trouble?'

'There are two dead bodies here! Real ones!'

Now Fred looked at Marat's bath. 'Good God! Good God!. Mildred!'

'And this one! And this one here!'

'I must call the police!' said Fred. 'Could you all, please - just leave?'

He ran into the office, where the telephone was, and Clive heard him cry out. He had seen Woodrow Wilson at the desk,

of course, and Marat.

Clive thought it was time to leave, so he did. No one looked at him as he made his way out.

That was all right, he thought. That was good.

He decided to go to work and to ask for the day off. He told his employer he felt ill, and put his hand on his stomach. Old Mr Simmons had to let him go.

Clive wanted to take a long bus ride somewhere. He didn't know why he wanted to do this, but the need was very strong. He had brought all his cash with him, about twenty-three dollars, and now he bought a ticket for a bus going west - for seven dollars, one way. This took him, by the evening, to a town in Indiana.

There was a cafe here where the bus stopped. As he went in, he saw newspapers on sale. There it was, in big letters:

MYSTERY KILLER: THREE DEAD IN WAXWORKS HALL.

He bought a paper and read it at the bar, drinking beer.

This morning at 9.30 ticket man Fred Keating and several visitors to Madame Thibault's Waxworks discovered three real dead bodies. They were the bodies of Mrs Mildred Veery, aged 41, George Hartley, 43, and Richard MacFadden, 37, all employed at the Hall. Police believe the murders happened at about ten yesterday evening. Because the bodies were put in place of wax figures, police are looking for a killer with a sick mind.

Clive laughed over that. 'Sick mind!' But he was sorry that there were no details about the really amusing things: the old man sitting on the toilet, the man signing the document with his head broken and bleeding.

Two men were standing at the bar beside him.

'Did you read about the murders at the Waxworks?' he asked one of them.

'Not really.' He didn't seem interested.

'You see, I did them,' said Clive. He pointed to a picture of the bodies. 'That's my work.'

'Listen, boy,' said the man. 'We're not troubling you, and don't you trouble us.' They moved away from Clive.

Clive slept in the street that night. On the road the next day he waved at a passing car, which took him to another town, nearer his hometown. That day's newspapers did not have any more news about the murders, in another cafe that evening he had a similar conversation, this time with two young men. They didn't believe him, either.

Next day he stopped a few more cars, and finally reached his hometown. He went straight to the police station.

'I have something important to say about a murder,' he told the policeman sitting at a desk. He was sent to the office of a police officer who had grey hair and a fat face. Clive told his story.

'Where do you go to school, Clive?'

'I don't. I'm eighteen.' He told him about his job.

'Clive, you've got troubles, but they're not the ones you're talking about,' said the officer.

Clive had to wait in a small room in the police station, and nearly an hour later a doctor was brought in. Then his mother.

They didn't believe him. They said he was just telling this story to attract attention to himself.

'Clive needs a man around the house,' his mother told them; 'someone who can teach him to behave like a man. Since he was fourteen he's been asking me questions like "Who am I?" and "Am I a person?"'

The policeman told Clive he must see the doctor twice a week for treatment.

Clive was very angry. He refused to go back to the supermarket, but found another delivery job.

'They haven't found the murderer, have they?' Clive said to the doctor on one of his visits. 'You're all stupid - stupid!'

The doctor only laughed at him.

There was one thing which might help to prove his story: Woodrow Wilson's tie, which was still in his cupboard. But he wasn't going to show it to these stupid people. As he delivered things on his bicycle, as he had supper with his mother, he was planning.

Next time, he would do something really big. He would take a gun up to the top of a high building, and shoot at the people

in the street. Kill a hundred people at least. Then they would take notice of him - then they would realize that he was a person!