



# **Evelyn and The Ledger**

## *A Haunting Tale*

Evelyn Harper had lived all her life in Preston, a Lancashire town formerly recognised for its now long-closed range of textile mills.

Nowadays, Preston retains its Northern grit and warmth, blending tradition with transformation. A distinct community spirit and cultural vibrancy can be recognised within its bounds.

This was Evelyn's world, and now, at the age of thirty-two, she still lived in the same two-bedroom terraced house where she had grown up. She was, however, now alone, her parents having retired to a village outside the city, in search of quiet mornings and garden centres.

In previous years, while still at school, Evelyn hadn't gone far, but she was a studious girl who achieved respectable A-level grades, followed by an admin office job. She was the kind of person people might describe as reliable and well-mannered. She was now content with a quiet and unobtrusive life in her well-maintained home.

It was on a quiet Sunday, with rain pattering the window, when Evelyn was sitting cross-legged on the carpet, sorting through a box of photographs. Through fear of causing damage, she was handling each image with great care. Then came the sound of a letter being posted through her front-door letterbox.

Evelyn retrieved the letter, which bore no postmark. She opened it with care, with an inexplicable feeling that it was a missive she was expecting.

The paper inside was brittle, yellowing at the edges like it had waited years for this moment. It bore the familiar names of Evelyn's colleagues.

The letter slipped slightly in Evelyn's grasp as the light in the room dimmed imperceptibly. It was as though the walls themselves had drawn a breath. Simultaneously, a faint tremor ran through the floor beneath her.

She did not know what it meant. Not yet. But Evelyn Harper, so often inconspicuous, was about to become part of something neither she nor anyone around her could have foreseen.

Evelyn sat motionless for a long time, the letter loose in her hands. The tremor had passed as quickly as it arrived, and the silence that followed was somehow deeper than before. Rain continued to slide down the windowpanes in rivulets, but the comforting sound now seemed more distant, as if the house was sealed off from the outside world.

She turned her eyes to the letter again, brow furrowed. The handwriting was neat, almost old-fashioned, as though someone had practised each letter with reverence. It wasn't typed; it seemed deliberately hand-written. There was no address, only a date: 16th October 1974. That alone sent a chill through Evelyn. The letter was older than she was, and she read the names aloud: Graham, Tilda, Marcus, Evelyn.

She caught her breath as she realised that these names did not relate to any of her current colleagues or acquaintances, and she hadn't worked anywhere before the office at the council building, which she joined fresh from school. She scanned the rest of the page.

"The breach has occurred. The sequence is intact. Recollection begins. You must remember. The ledger was opened ... do not attempt to close it alone. We are near. We are waiting." No signature. No explanation.

She placed the letter on the coffee table as though it might burn her fingers. As she sat on the floor, legs folded like a child, she felt absurdly vulnerable. A deep hum had begun somewhere in her ears, perhaps only in her imagination, but she could not shake it.

The next morning at work, the office seemed unchanged. Evelyn arrived early, as always, coat damp, hair frizzing slightly from the drizzle. She passed the reception area, nodded to Dennis, the security guard, who never looked up from his crossword, and climbed the narrow stairs to the third floor.

Her office was a plain rectangle of grey partitions, flickering fluorescents, and computer hum. It smelled faintly of old paper and disinfectant.

She sat down at her desk and booted up her terminal. Her inbox blinked with new emails, mostly administrative fluff. But one message stood out.

Subject: RE: The Ledger

There was no sender. She clicked.

"Do you remember the tunnels?

Did you forget the weight of the walls, the silence?

—G.T.M.E."

Graham. Tilda. Marcus. Evelyn.

She shot up from her chair so quickly that her knees struck the underside of her desk. Colleagues looked over, startled.

"You okay?" asked Simon, who sat across from her. His voice was muffled, as though coming through thick material. Evelyn stared at him. His features looked the same as always, round face, glasses, mid-forties, but in that moment, there was something *off*.

A flicker, like a double exposure. A second face layered over the first. Just for a heartbeat.

"I'm fine," she muttered, sitting slowly. She deleted the email. That night, Evelyn couldn't sleep. The letter was beside her bed now; its fragile paper pressed between two books. She hadn't thrown it away. She couldn't.

At 3:17 a.m., she gave up trying to sleep. The tremor returned. This time, it was more violent, enough to rattle the radiator and send a small mirror toppling to the floor. Her phone on the bedside table buzzed with a single notification.

Unknown Number

"The hatch beneath your home is waking."

She stumbled from bed. The word *hatch* tugged at something deep in her memory. Evelyn padded barefoot across the landing and into the hallway. Her parents' old room. It was mostly empty now. She flipped the light on.

The rug. She hadn't touched it in years. Beneath it, a trapdoor. She knelt, her heart pounding, fingers tracing the wood until she found the iron ring.

The hatch creaked open.

A black void yawned below, thick with damp, a smell of earth and rust rising to meet her.

She should have closed it. Called someone. Screamed. But instead, Evelyn fetched a torch from the kitchen and descended.

The tunnel beneath her house was narrow and stone lined. A leftover from older days, maybe war-era or earlier. But this wasn't on any map. She followed it, barefoot, for what felt like hours. Then she saw them.

Four chairs in a circle, each facing inward. On one sat a thin, unmoving figure, its face shrouded in grey cloth. A candle flickered in its hand, but the wax had not melted. Evelyn stared. On the floor between them was a thick, leather-bound book. Its cover was cracked and ancient, a symbol carved deep into it, a circle intersected by a vertical line.

The ledger.

Evelyn reached down. Her hand hovered above it.

As she touched the cover, something seemed to ignite inside her mind. Flashes, blinding, fragmented.

Running through tunnels. A scream behind her. Graham was shouting her name. Tilda falling. Marcus was chanting something under his breath. And her voice ... crying, pleading.

Then silence. She was back in the room. Alone now. The figure had vanished. She fled.

Over the next few days, Evelyn's reality began to thin. At work, she would catch glimpses of her colleagues with unfamiliar expressions. Tilda's face ... Tilda, who wasn't supposed to exist, would hover behind the receptionist's smile.

One morning, Marcus stood outside her office building. Except it wasn't *this* Marcus, but the version from her vision. Slightly older, eyes hollow. He said only one thing before vanishing into the fog: "If you close it without us, you'll bring the others through."

Evelyn began researching. Old city records. Forgotten maps of Preston. She found a mention of a cult-like group from the 1970s, *The Circle of the Ledger*. They believed in memorial reincarnation, a cyclical return of souls linked by one traumatic event.

A breach, they had called it. A place where time and reality could thin and spill. She found four names in the records. Her own among them. They had died in a tunnel collapse in 1974. Unexplained. Buried alive. Only... she was still here.

They came on the seventh night. Figures moved in the corners of her vision. Whispers slithered up through the walls of her home. A shape lingered at the foot of her bed, unmoving, watching. The letter glowed faintly now, a golden edge pulsing with each passing hour. It was calling her back. She called in sick. Walked the streets of Preston like a ghost, seeking the others.

In a disused records room at the council building, she found Graham. Or the man who had once been him. He looked up with ancient eyes. "You remember now," he said, I do." "We didn't finish the ritual. That's why we came back. Part of us did, at least. The breach was never sealed."

Tilda and Marcus joined them two days later, each bearing the same haunted look, the same flickers of memory. Evelyn brought them back to the house. Back beneath.

The circle was reformed. The book was waiting.

Candles lit without flame. The air was charged with static, time folding around them. Each of them placed a hand on the ledger.

"We acknowledge the breach," they intoned.

"We acknowledge the memory."

"We relinquish the echo."

The book burst open. Pages flew, ink dissolving into smoke. A shriek rang out, high and awful, and the tunnel shook. From the walls, they came, the shadows. The Others. Echoes of what could have passed through, if the breach widened.

Evelyn stood firm.

"We end the circle," she whispered.

Light flared. The ledger burned in silence. She opened her eyes in her bed. Morning sunlight streamed through the window, warm and golden.

The letter was gone. The tremor had not returned.

The hatch beneath the rug was sealed, no trace of it ever having opened.

At work, her colleagues smiled in recognition, but the flickers were gone. Tilda was not there. Nor Marcus. Nor Graham. Perhaps they had found peace.

Evelyn walked home through a quiet, untroubled Preston. She passed children playing, people chatting over fences, and the smell of baked bread in the air. Something inside her had lifted.

She didn't know what came next. But for the first time, Evelyn Harper felt unburdened. She turned the key in her front door, stepped inside, and smiled.

*The breach had closed. And she was free.*