

The Heirloom



Luke Godding



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For Mom and Dad



Chapter 1

Once upon a time, there was this kid named Nick. He was a normal sort of boy—going to school, eating food, playing sports—nothing out of the ordinary. Nick lived in a city with his parents and his pet lizard, Reginald. Every year at Christmas time, he and his family would spend a week or two at their property in Illinois. The 26-acre piece of land had an old log cabin that had been in the family since the late 1800s. This year, they did the same things to prepare as every year. But something else would happen that the family was not expecting.



As they drove out, Nick fell asleep. When he woke up, they had just arrived. Nick was eager to start decorating, and he jumped out of the van, grabbing his backpack and suitcase. Nick and his parents went into the cabin and started unpacking. Seeing it was close to 9:30 p.m., they decided to get some rest and finish in the morning.



Chapter 2

The next day, Nick dined with his mom and dad in the dining room, as usual. They finished getting out their belongings, and Nick climbed into the attic to find their decorations. He got out everything they needed and was just about to go back down the ladder when he caught his foot on something and fell. Luckily nothing broke, but when Nick inspected what he had stumbled over, he found that a little square of the wall at the baseboard protruded into the room. He crawled to it and took it out of the wall. The thing he had tripped on was a hidden compartment! Inside was a messily-folded, yellow sheet of paper. Nick took it out and saw that there were a bunch of words scrawled at the top of the page, “Must get it back at all costs. Must get revenge. Soon ...”

It was hard to figure out who had written the note or where it had come from. He pocketed the paper but then noticed another sheet at the bottom of the box. Upon further investigation, Nick found a simple layout of the property on the second page. But



then, Nick espied to the left a series of small rooms with descriptions next to them. He saw that they were actually underground graves!

Nick was just about to tell his parents when he looked out the window and saw Reginald running around. Walking outside, Nick picked up his pet. Lizard-laden and lollygagging back to the house, Nick wondered how Reginald had been clever enough to escape. Oblivious to reality, Nick was unaware of the eyes that followed him to the door.



Chapter 3

As Nick sat down for breakfast the following morning, his dad walked past to slip his son a note. It said,

Hey bud! This year I think you should cut down the tree for us! Didn't tell you during breakfast because I don't think your mother would exactly be thrilled about the idea. But you are old enough and smart enough to know not to play with an ax. Meet me outside in 10. Dad.

Nick silently chuckled to himself because his father was absolutely right!

When he had finished up, Nick went out to the garage and found his dad waiting. His father handed him the ax and said, "Be quick about it! Don't want Mom getting suspicious!" Nick took the ax, as well as a small sled to drag the tree on, and hurried out to the tree grove located on the outskirts of the property. He chose a nice little fir, about six feet in height, and was just about to start chopping when he heard a snapping stick behind him. Nick turned around but saw no one. Probably just a squirrel, Nick thought to himself, as he started cutting some more. Although it was cold and there was snow on the ground, perspiration

dripped down Nick's face by the time he had finally vanquished the tree.

Pausing to catch his breath, he discovered that he still had the old letter and the floorplan in his pocket. Nick completely forgot about the tree and Christmas and only thought about finding that hidden entrance to those underground tunnels. He walked to the supposed spot where the door should have been located but couldn't find anything. Disappointed and down-trodden, Nick started back to get the tree. He dragged it and the ax onto the sled when he noticed something peeking out of the snow. It looked like a type of rock and was too heavy to lift, so Nick brushed some of the snow away and realized that the smooth, dome-shaped hunk of minerals was a tombstone! "Elton VanGhar, the founder, 1827-1891" was carved into the rock.



"Well, that shows that there must be graves under here somewhere," Nick remarked out loud. He dug in the snow around the tombstone and found a lever disguised as a stick! Pulling it up, Nick felt a slight shift in the ground next to him. He dug some more until he revealed the wet, dirty ground under the snow. Then Nick saw another fake stick and pulled it, opening a trapdoor with stairs descending into blackness. Dare he go down ... alone?

Chapter 4

Whooping in surprise and delight at his discovery, Nick bounded down the stairs, finding that there was indeed a series of passages. He saw clay doorway after clay doorway, all leading to their own separate tombs. When Nick came to the last one, he observed a large coffin inside that was different from all the others. The tomb itself was decorated fancier than the rest, housing pictures, rotten food, and a few knives, all having a thick layer of dust blanketed over them.

“I’ve been waiting for you,” said a voice like thunder (but somehow quiet) from somewhere in the room.

Nick spun around, “Who said that?!”

“It’s me, yer Great Grandpappy Elton, plus a few more greats, obviously.”

“Whoa! You’re a ghost!” exclaimed Nick.

“Yep, and I’ve been dead for over a hundred years, just hanging around, waiting to get revenge!”

“Revenge? On who?”

“Well, let me tell ya my story,” Elton replied.



Chapter 5

“It was 1849. I was near on 23. I was heading to the city of Springfield when I came across a lame horse hitched up outside a house. I went up and knocked on the door, and a tall, skinny fella answered. I said to him, ‘Hey, you realize your horse has a broken ankle, don’t ya?’

“No, I didn’t realize that. Thanks for telling me. I’ll send for the town’s horse doctor.”

“No need for that,’ I said, because I was a farmer. ‘I can fix him up right away. What’s your horse’s name?’

“Old Bob.”

“I found out later that this tall, skinny fella was none other than Abraham Lincoln!”

“I fixed up his horse but had to leave right quick because I was on my way to a meetin’. I absentmindedly asked what time it was, so Abe pulled out his pocket watch, ‘It’s half past 2.’ I told him that I’d been meaning to get meself a new timepiece, so he gave me his.”

“At the time, I had a friend called Benedict Nambo. He was a bit nosy, and after I got the watch, he kept asking me to show it to him. It was a nice silver one, so

he may have had good reason to be peepin' at it all the time. But I was suspicious that he was gonna steal it or something. Long story short, one day after Lincoln was shot, I came home to find Benedict making off with my watch! I was so mad that I placed a curse on Benedict and all his relations!"



Chapter 6

Nick had been listening intently, and at this point, he said, “Benedict sounds like a kleptomaniac.”

“A what?”

“You know, a kleptomaniac, one of those people who steals stuff all the time and doesn’t think twice about it.”

Elton looked off into the distance, “Maybe that’s why my other watches kept disappearing.”

Nick then said, “Hey, what did you say his last name was?”

“Nambo.”

“I have a friend named Carlos Nambo! Is that who you want to get vengeance upon?”

“You bet your bottom britches, boy!”

“Well, what if I could just get the watch back for you? Would that help?”

“Definitely wouldn’t hurt!”

“But how can I prove that the watch belongs to our family?”

Elton replied with a smile, “I engraved my initials on the inside of the watch.”





Chapter 7

Nick hurried back to the house—he had been gone a lot longer than he was supposed to—and ran into the kitchen where he found his father.

“Dad, dad! I just cut down the tree and was heading back and I saw a gravestone in the snow that said Elton VanGhar on it and I found a tunnel with tombs in it and I saw a ghost and ...”

“Whoa, slow down, slow down,” his father said. “You saw a ghost? Are you feeling okay? Did you hit your head?”

“No, no, I’m fine, but it was crazy!” Nick then repeated Elton’s story.

After he finished, his dad said, “Are you sure you didn’t bump your head?” when suddenly, from out of nowhere, Elton appeared. Nick’s dad just looked at his son and said, “I think I believe you now.”

Just then, Nick’s mom came rushing into the kitchen because she had heard all the ruckus but stopped dead in her tracks when she saw Elton’s glowing figure. She stood there, mouth wide open, for about three seconds before she fainted dead away.



Chapter 8

“**W**hat’s wrong with her?” Elton exclaimed, “Hasn’t she ever seen a ghost before?” Once Nick’s mom had revived, Elton briefly explained everything to her. After this, she was very confused indeed and wasn’t sure she entirely believed the whole thing. Even so, she consented to go along with whatever they had planned. But now, there was the trouble of getting back the watch. It took some time to devise a scheme, but eventually, Nick’s father suggested having Carlos and his family over for dinner. Everyone agreed that that would be best. But how to get them to bring the pocket watch?

“Hey!” blurted Nick, “I know! How about we ask Carlos to bring it to show to you two,” motioning to his parents, “since you’ve never seen it before.” Nick’s mother called Carlos’s parents, and it was settled—the Nambos were coming over tomorrow night!



Chapter 9

The next day, they all got ready—except for Elton because he had gone back to his tomb—and before they knew it, there came three sharp taps on the front door. Nick scurried out of the kitchen to let Carlos and his family in, “Welcome everyone! Long time no see, eh?”

“The food’s almost ready!” Nick’s mom declared, “So come on into the dining room.” Everyone got seated at the table, and the food was brought out. Both sets of parents immediately started chatting away, and the two boys were left in the verbal dust.

Nick, being incredibly nervous because he knew that he had to bring up the subject of the watch, was at a loss for words. All of a sudden, he asked, “Hey Carlos! Did you bring the watch?!”

“Yeah.” Carlos replied, “It’s in my pocket right now.”

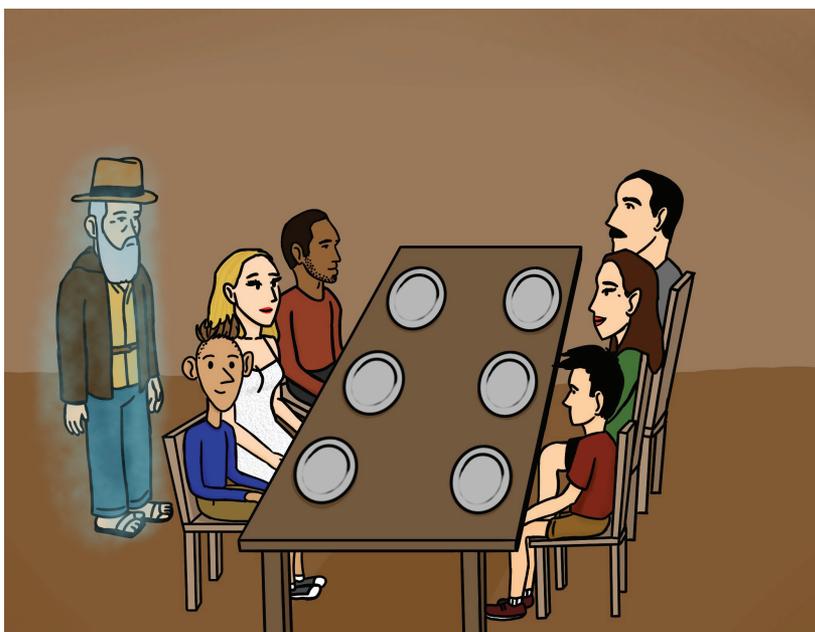
“Cool, let’s show it to my parents—oh, and by the way, the craziest thing happened when we got here.” Nick then launched into Elton VanGhar’s story.

During this time, Elton himself unexpectedly appeared behind the Nambos. Nick noticed him, as did his mom and dad, but they didn’t say anything. “... he

was walking past someone's house, and out comes Abraham Lincoln! He rushed up to Elton and asked him if he could fix his horse's ankle. But—”

“No!” Elton protested, startling the Nambos, “No, it was I who offered to fix the horse's leg, remember?”

“That's right,” reminisced Nick, “I'd forgotten that that's how it went. Oh, and if you didn't make the connection, the ghost behind you is Elton.”



Chapter 10

Once the Nambos recovered from their shock of seeing a real “live” ghost in person, Carlos was the first to speak up, “What, what happened next?”

“Um,” Nick hesitated, “actually, Elton, can you tell the rest of the story?”

So Elton picked up where the story left off. Carlos and his parents sat listening, spellbound by the tale until Elton came to the part of Benedict’s treachery. “How is it that we’ve never heard this part of the account before? Is there any proof that the watch is yours?”

Nick then spoke up, “Check the inside of the pocket watch. There you should find the initials that Elton carved himself, E. V.”

Carlos carefully opened the watch and declared, “Hey, he’s right! What do you think of that, Dad?”

“I guess we should return the watch to its rightful owners!” Carlos gave Nick the pocket watch, and it was now back in the hands of its original family.

“Well, Elton, consider it returned,” stated Nick. Elton smiled, looking peaceful and content, and the families watched as he sank slowly into the ground.



Chapter 11

“Yo Nick, can we see the tomb you were talking about?” inquired Carlos.

“Sure, come on,” Nick replied. He grabbed his flashlight, walked out the door, trailed by his parents and the Nambos, and showed them the tombstone, the graves, and the coffin that Elton’s bones were in.

They came back to the cabin and finished their cold dinner, marveling at what had just happened. Later, the boys were talking and made a pact—they wouldn’t allow ancestral grudges to break up their friendship. Life’s too short to be bitter.

A few days later, the two families gathered at the Nambos’ cabin to celebrate Christmas. As they exchanged presents, what do you think Nick gave to Carlos? A brand new pocket watch, inscribed with the initials, C. N.



THE END

Author's Biography

Luke Godding is a 16-year-old who aspires to be an artist, professional tennis player, writer, stop motion animator, and LEGO designer. He currently lives in Santa Ana, California, with his parents and his neighbor's cats. One of his favorite pastimes is eating, and he doesn't really care what he eats as long as it tastes good to him.

