Sonata for Harp and Bicycle
By Joan Aiken
Published in August of 1958

By Melanie Nigro, Manisha Ramprasad, Maytal Burstein, and Clare McCord
About Joan Aiken

✱ Born in 1924 and raised in London
✱ Lived in an eerie house that paved way for her interest in mystery
✱ Began writing at 5, published first short story at 16
✱ Died in 2004
Other Books by Joan Aiken

- *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* was published in 1962. It is one of Joan Aiken’s most popular stories. It features Bonnie and her cousin, Sylvia, who are threatened by wolves.
- *Black Hearts in Battersea*, published in 1964, is another one of her popular books. It features a man named Simon who goes to London and faces many adventures.
- *The Stolen Lake*, one of Aiken’s most popular books, was published in 1981. Trush, a twelve-year-old girl, goes on many dramatic adventures.
Setting

- The setting is set in London, England in the district of Clerkenwell. It takes place in the 1950s. The characters are middle-class.
- This adds mysterious mood and old-time charm to the story; it gives a sense of normalcy to an otherwise fictional story.
Characters

Jason Ashgrove → stubborn, strong-willed, healing; round, dynamic; mostly indirect char. (diction, effect on others, actions)

Berenice Golden → intelligent, clever; flat, static; indirect char. (other’s opinions, actions)

William Heron → vengeful, in love; flat, dynamic; indirect char. (other’s opinions, actions, effect on others)
Summary

✦ Jason begins working at the Grimes Buildings and wants to know why are forced to leave at 5 every day
✦ Goes in building to investigate and sees ghost (William Heron), who wants revenge for losing love (Daisy)
✦ Jason is cursed by a Heron to jump of fire escape; consults in his problems to Berenice
✦ Berenice & Jason go back to building to reunite ghost lovers by making Heron think that Daisy left him roses; never haunts building again
**Inciting Incident:** Jason begins to wonder why they are forced to leave the building at 5 p.m. everyday.

**Setting:** London, England in the Grimes Buildings in the mid-1900s. The characters live in a middle-class environment.

**Rising Action:** Jason goes into the building and becomes cursed to jump from the fire escape from William. He and Berenice become lovers and they come up with a plan to help William.

**Climax:** Jason lays down the roses in Room 492 for William.

**Falling Action:** Jason and Berenice see William pick up the roses and leave the building on a bicycle with a harp.

**Resolution:** The ghosts of Daisy and William are reunited as a couple forgive each other and stop haunting the Grimes Building.
Point of View

- Third-person omniscient: In most of the story, the narrator shows the events in Jason’s perspective, but we are able to see some of Miss Golden’s thoughts as well. (ex. When Miss Golden thinks about Jason)
- It enhances the story because we are able to see the main events through Jason’s perspective, but Miss Golden’s point of view provides some comic relief.
There are many literary techniques used in this short story:

- Suspense is used in the beginning and throughout the story. When Mr. Manaby tells his assistant that “no one can stay in the building after five o’clock,” the reader gets a feeling of suspense because he/she wonders why that is.
- Foreshadowing is used as well. It can be predicted that when Mr. Manaby states that no one can remain in the building after 5:00 p.m., someone ends up disobeying Mr. Manaby’s order.
- Finally, irony is another technique used. The reader wouldn’t suspect that Jason would go back into the Grimes Building after being warned, but he does. That is when he meets William Heron, the ghost.
Symbolism

✦ A symbol in “Sonata for Harp and Bicycle” are roses.
✦ Jason lays down roses in the room where William and Daisy are.
✦ He hopes that this will make him able to finally show his affection towards Daisy.
✦ The roses signify the love and affection William has towards Daisy.
✦ The roses also symbolize the remembrance of lost love.
The theme of this story is that people need to question superstitions in order to learn the truth.

At the beginning of the story, no one was allowed to stay in the building past five o’clock because of the ghosts that were haunted the Grimes Building. This was commonly accepted among all of the workers, so no one dared to do anything to fix the problem of shorter hours.

Miss Golden and Jason managed to get the two enraged ghosts, William and Daisy, together so they could fall back in love.

The problem of the ghosts haunting the building was solved, which ensured that the workers could now stay in the building past 5:00 p.m.
We chose to give this short story two out of three stars:

- The plot of the story was very exciting because of the mystery in the story, which starts when Mr. Manaby announces that no one can stay in the Grimes Building after 5:00 p.m.
- The reader was constantly wondering what the outcome of the story would be because of the suspenseful plot. Would William and Daisy fall in love again? Or would Williams heart be broken?
- There were, unfortunately, a few sections in the story that were hard to understand due to the lack of detail provided.
The End
Image Citations