

GHOST STORY

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I want them to exist, but in my seven years as a professional researcher, I had as of yet been able to prove the existence of an otherworldly spirit. Had several creepy moments, but when it came time to put on the camera, the ghosts were simply nowhere to be found. If they existed, surely by now I would have been able to prove it, right? I'd been to dozens of haunted houses and some truly creepy places. Set up microphones and everything, only to come up empty-handed. I was hoping this time it would be different, I was about to close down my website for lack of business.

The house was only sixty years old. It sat in a fairly busy residential neighborhood. From the outside, it looked like every other single-story, overpriced ranch house in Southern California. The lawn and grounds had been maintained. The driveway had been redone. There was even a barbecue out back.

It looked like an upwardly mobile middle-class family lived here, not the paranormal.

"So, why are we here again?" I asked Jeff, my assistant, and cameraman.

"The house has recorded four deaths and two of them were suicides in its lifetime. A family reported their little girl missing one night. They claimed she went to bed and vanished sometime during the night." he said.

"Two suicides? Are you sure?"

"Yup. A local newspaper ran a story on it last year. That's not all. The last tenant was just renting it. The owner lives out of state and has never been to the property. The tenant refuses to go back inside. Left all of her belongings and everything. She paid a few neighborhood kids to go inside and collect them. She says this place is pure evil."

"That's quite a statement. I think the only thing evil about this place is the asking price. Half a million dollars for a two-bedroom ranch house? Who the hell is buying these things?" I asked.

"Don, I don't know about this place. As soon as I stepped inside, I could feel it. I've never gotten this vibe about any other place we've been to." said Jeff.

"So, what do we do?"

"The owner thought it would be a great selling point if we were able to conclusively prove that the place is not haunted. Not even home-buying investors will touch this place since that story. He told me we can live in the house as long as we want. He just wants to make sure it's worth his while."

"Meaning we give the house a favorable review, or he kicks us out?"

"That's pretty much what I took it to mean," said Jeff.

"My wife always has wanted to live in the city of Lost Angels, I guess this is her chance."

Her name was Jane Seymour. No relation to the actress. She worked in finance. She was transferred here from Texas last year. She loved the house. It was only ten minutes to her office and she didn't have to use the freeway. She thought it was a great house.....at first.

"It looks just like every other house in the city. I never in a million years thought it would turn out as it did. That place has something living in it. Something very, very bad." she said looking into the camera.

"The first time I came into the house, I felt it. So did my cat Priscilla. She hated this place. She would just stare and hiss at the walls. I'd never seen her do that anywhere else. It was like there was someone there, I just couldn't see them. It was fine at first, for the first few months. Work was booming, I was buried in work. I wouldn't come home some nights till late. One night I came home and found Priscilla dead on the floor. She was an old cat, I figured it was just her time. Then I saw her claws. It looked as if she had been in a fight with something. Like something attacked her, but the doors were locked and the alarm system was still in the green. I was heartbroken. I've had her since she was a kitten. She was my fur child. I put some wireless cameras in the house right after that and a few outside. I could arm them to detect movement and check it right on my phone. I kept getting these motion alarms, but there wouldn't be anything there. Then one night at work, it went off and I could clearly see something move in the living room. I wasn't sure if it was a person or just a shadow. I didn't know any of my neighbors. This would happen every so often when I was at work, or my sisters in Long Beach. I became convinced that there was someone or something in that house with me."

"What happened that made you not want to go back into that house?" asked Jeff.

"I came home one night and saw a little girl standing in my kitchen. I mean, she looked just like a real person. I asked her how she got inside the house and she didn't say a word. She just turned and walked back to one of the bedrooms. She was maybe twenty feet in front of me. As soon as I went into the bedroom, she was gone. I mean like she just vanished. I opened the closet door, checked under the bed, checked the windows, you name it. She just vanished right in front of me. I started doing some checking and found out about the suicides or unsolved murders and there she was, on the front page of the newspaper from 1966. Delores Jansen, age ten. It was a very big deal back then. The cops thought her parents murdered her, but they had no evidence to charge her. Don, I'm certain the girl standing in my kitchen that night was her, or some image of her. I saw her again, a few weeks later. This time, she spoke to me in her little girl voice. I'll never forget what she said. I was eating a bowl of cereal in the kitchen. I look up and there she was, just standing there."

"What did she say?"

"Get out of here while you still can.....before he gets you too."

"Wow.....did you get this on camera?"

"No, I usually didn't turn them on until I left for work. She just went back into the same room and disappeared. I was shaking for the next two days. I think she is trying to warn me from the other side. That night, I woke up and was sure there was someone in my bedroom with me. Some tall, shadowy figure. I turned on the light and saw someone dash into the hallway. So, by now, I'm like really scared. I didn't want to stay in the house, but I had no choice. I couldn't afford to stay anywhere else. I started sleeping in my car. It all came to a head one night in the summer. I got home from work and turned on the TV. I was going to do my workout when I saw him in the hallway. He was just standing there. I don't know what it was. He was like a shadow or something. I could make out his figure, but not his face. We just stood there for a few seconds before I bolted for the door. I grabbed my purse on the way and never looked back. I won't go back in that house. I had to quit my job and move back to Texas. It destroyed me financially, but I wasn't going to spend another second in that place. There really is something horrible in there, Don. You better be careful."

"Jane, it's not that I don't believe you, but I have to be a skeptic by trade. I've heard of a lot of ghost stories but never heard one quite like this. You're telling the truth here, you're not embellishing or exaggerating?" I asked.

"I was making two hundred thousand dollars a year. Would I have walked away from that if I was just embellishing?"

"That's really not all that unusual for this area? Why didn't the ghost take you too? I mean he certainly seemed determined?"

"I don't know. I'm just thankful to be alive. Watch your ass in that house. Whatever is in there is no joke."

"So, was there any other unusual activity? Most hauntings involve mysterious noises or even screams." I asked.

"No, there was nothing like that. Just that very dark figure and that weird tingling feeling you get as soon as you step into the house," said Jane

"This story is unusual in several ways. Most ghost stories are pretty routine and generic. Apparitions, noises, but never actually being attacked by the ghost. Are you familiar with the history of the house? It's unusual, but very typical of most houses in the area."

"Just what I read in the newspapers," she said.

"The house was built in 1962. It sat empty for a year until the Jansen family bought it and moved in. Nothing unusual was reported until Delores went missing one night. She told several of her friends and her teacher that she thought there was something in her room with her at night. Police suspected the parents, but didn't have any evidence to charge them. They moved to Oklahoma a year later and pretty much fell off the face of the Earth. The home was purchased two years later by a couple named Kohn. He died in his sleep in 1968. No foul play was suspected. It was then purchased in 1973 by the Butler family. Mrs. Butler said she felt as if there was some kind of evil

presence in the house from day one. Her husband shot himself on his sofa one night in 1975. No details were given about the house from then until 1982, when it was bought by the Ruiz family. They lived in the house from 1982 until 2004 without incident. They said they never experienced anything unusual in the house. It was purchased in 2004 by its current owner. In 2005, the tenant renting the house shot herself in her bedroom. The house remained vacant for two years until 2007 when it was rented to the Akadain family. They describe nothing unusual about the house until they left last year when you moved in. So, on the surface, we have a very uneven ghost story. It seems as if some people get haunted and others don't. It's very unusual as far as hauntings go." I said.

"I'm sure a whole lot more happened in this house. I talked to a neighbor that has lived in that neighborhood for most of her life. She said some very weird shit has happened in that house over the years. She said she would never live there."

"See Jane.....that's what makes this story so unique. It's an outlier as far as ghost stories go. Most stories are very routine and ordinary. This one is so out there, it really begs to be investigated."

"I don't believe in ghosts or spirits, or anything like that. They might exist, who knows? I just know that when you come face to face with whatever is living in that house, it's going to scar you forever. When I think back on that, I'm convinced that if I had stayed in that house for just another minute, I would have disappeared too."

"Well, thank you for your time. I guess the only way to really know for sure is to move in and see what happens." I said.

"You have no idea what you're getting into. If that thing can't have you, it will kill you, and make it look like suicide." Jane said.

The house was already furnished. We only had to bring bedding and towels. It even came with an espresso machine. The lawn was neatly manicured and it even had a large backyard. My wife Becky fell in love with it.

"This house is amazing! I don't ever want to leave here," she said in awe as we toured the property.

"I'm not sure how long we can milk this thing, honey," I said.

"Don, you have to milk it. Southern California is like the center of the world. We can spend the next few months just walking around and exploring. We can host parties in the back and live like kings and queens."

"You're not concerned about this turning into the next Amityville?"

"I still think Amityville was a hoax. That family ought to be ashamed of themselves, making money from mass murder."

Jeff and I set up the equipment, which was nothing more than microphones and cameras. We set them up in every room, including the garage. We could check at any time on our phones to see what was happening in the house. That was all. Just sit back and wait for the ghosts to show up. The longer they took, the better. Haunted or not, my wife and my daughter Jasmine, absolutely loved the place. I wouldn't want to live here, but it was a great place to visit. Disneyland, Six Flags, the libraries, and the history of Southern California was fascinating. America's capital might be in Washington, but its cultural and historical centers were New York and Los Angeles. We walked around the city for hours and were just blown away by what we saw. Coming from the midwest, this was certainly an eye-opener.

I wasn't really sure what to make about Jane and her story. She certainly did not fit the profile of someone who experiences paranormal activity, which only made her story seem more credible. I don't think she was after money. She had no social media profile to speak of. If her story was true, it could put me on the map and if it wasn't, then I could live rent-free in a dream house.

Nothing and I mean nothing unusual happened for the first few weeks. My wife and daughter spent days wandering all over Southern California. We had sold our house in Indiana and were using the profits to fund our little adventure. I spent my days doing my research on the house and the missing Jansen girl from 1966. I was even able to obtain police files about it. Both detectives believe her parents had something to do with her disappearance. They just didn't have a body or any evidence that a crime had been committed, so it had to be treated as a missing person case. Her parents told police they put her to bed around 8:30 that evening and that she had wanted to sleep with her parents. It seems the parents were both drunk and horny and told her to stay in her room. She interrupted them once more before they blew up at her. They went to get her up for school the next morning and she wasn't in her bed. The mother of the girl had a nervous breakdown. The father blamed himself for her disappearance. When police interview her friends and teachers, they discovered that she was terrified of something in that house that was *out to get her*.

On the surface, it sounds like the makings of a great mystery. The reality was probably much different. Her school had requested that someone from the county be sent over to her house to look at her living conditions. Both parents were alcoholics and the girl had the marks of being beaten. Her teacher also believed that she had been sexually abused by an older cousin, who was never interviewed. It was certainly possible that she simply ran away and was met with foul play. We'll never know what really happened to her.

I also tracked down the last living relative of the Butler family who owned the house in the 1970s. The deceased had a son, who was now 72 years old. He was very eager to talk about the case.

"It wasn't what you think. I told my story to that news reporter a few months ago, but she didn't even publish it. My father didn't commit suicide, he was murdered by my mother or her lover. He did not kill himself."

"Interesting. Why do you believe that?"

"I was in the Marines overseas when my dad was killed. I got to go home for a week to help my mom. She didn't seem upset at all. I mean, it was almost like she was happy to be rid of him. My dad was a good man, he'd give you the shirt off his back, but he was an overweight slob that drank too much. He and my mom had grown apart over the years to the point where they wouldn't even speak to one another for days. I think he bought the house because my mom wanted it and he thought it might save their marriage. Little did he know. My mom waits four months until my dad is in the ground before she starts dating again. She meets the man of her dreams and a month later, they get married in Vegas. Turns out, they had been seeing one another for quite some time before my dad's death. She got everything, the house, the cars, the insurance payout, you name it and she got a new husband. I think she waited until my dad was passed out on his recliner, then put his gun up to his head and squeezed the trigger. She and her lover had the whole thing planned. She pretends to come home and finds my dad dead. Cops never suspected a thing. My dad would never have killed himself unless it was with booze. I stopped speaking to my mother in 1980 and haven't spoken to her up until a few days before she died in 2012. I didn't really have anything to say to her."

"Interesting.....did you ever go to the police with this?"

"I did, twice. Both times the DA refused to re-open the case. It's caused a lot of drama and bad blood in my family. I hated to be the cause of it, but I just think my mom got away with murder."

"Did either parents ever lead you to believe that the house may be haunted?" I asked

"No, they never said anything like that. I talked to my dad only a week before his death and he seemed fine. I think she just told the police she thought the house had an evil presence to throw them off."

"You don't know anything more about that house that may prove helpful?"

"No, I didn't want anything to do with that house or my mother after his death. I never assumed it was anything but a very evil woman killing her husband. I don't think ghosts had anything to do with it." he said.

The information wasn't really helpful to my case. Even if the wife did murder her husband, it just meant that the cause of death was by human hands, not by the paranormal. I was unable to track down anyone in the Ruiz family and the information about the suicide in 2005 was sketchy at best. There was a life insurance payout to a family member in the amount of a hundred and five thousand dollars. The victim's name was Clay Johnson. Yes, Clay was a girl, or what passes for one nowadays. She was a pretty well-known pornographic star who was hooked on prescription drugs. Not exactly a model for stability. A week before, a judge had given her ex-husband full custody of their only child. It too, seemed like a perfectly plausible, perfectly explainable death, except for one small detail: that afternoon, she had planned on taking her daughter with her as she fled the country to Belize, which has no extradition treaty with the United States. She had used what money she had to buy a home in Belize, get passports, buy plane tickets, etc. Why go through all the trouble, then suddenly decide to just blow your brains out? The police still ruled the cause of death to be suicide by gunshot. The house then went through several tenants, some of which lived in the house for years. The owner would not give me the names of his previous

tenants, so I had to do a little good old-fashioned *gumshoeing* to get the information I needed. The only name I was able to track down was Ronald Kim. He was from Korea. He clearly came from money, as he was the only occupant. He was actually on the Redlands fire Department for a while. He didn't seem to mind talking to me. He had a heavy Korean accent, but was very sharp and had some very choice words for the house in general.

"Get out of there. Trust me. It's not worth it." he said.

"Why?"

"I lived there for almost three years. By the end of those three years, I was certain there was something in that house with me," he said.

"Do you mean a ghost?"

"In Korea, it's called a *Gwisin*. But, yes.....that's exactly what it was. I saw it one night. I jumped out the window of my bedroom, into the bushes. I wouldn't go back into the house, without some friends, who helped me pack. I'll never forget it. It was like a giant shadow with bat wings. It filled up the entire room. I could feel it. It wanted me dead."

"Kind of odd that it took three years to finally show itself," I said.

"I was never really there. I stayed at the firehouse most of the week. Sometimes a week or two would pass before I came home. I went back to Korea for a month. It was just a place to crash when I got burned out at the firehouse. That house is bad news man, I wouldn't stay there if I were you."

"Ronald, the spirit in the house seems to pick its targets at random. Some people live in the house for years and never experience any problems. Can you think of anything you might have done to draw it out?" I asked.

"I don't know. Maybe the ghost just doesn't like Asian people."

There had to be a connection with all of these people. They came from completely different backgrounds. Discounting the previous cases, I now had two confirmed cases of paranormal activity. Both people reported pretty much the same thing. There had to be more. Jeff and I spent the next two weeks pouring over everything we could. We hit paydirt one Tuesday when a website Jeff used to scour through public records came up with a hit.

"Look at this." He said holding up a few sheets of paper.

"What did you find?"

"Public records search turned up a police report filed in 2003 against someone named Maya Bijorkis at this address. Animal control responded to a neighbor's complaint. Animal control found several mutilated dogs and cats inside the house. Seems she was engaging in some kind of witchcraft and needed their blood." said Jeff.

"Wow," I said reading the report.

"They fined her a thousand dollars and she had to spend the night in jail. I did some more searching. I got a Maya Bijorkis who now resides in Barstow. Might be worth a trip." he said.

"I think we just found our missing link. I'll tell the missus we won't be back for a while." I said.

"I'll get some road snacks," said Jeff.

Half an hour later, we were on the road. Maya's address was listed as Barstow, but she lived in a rural area, outside the city limits. We were out in the middle of nowhere.

"This could all be for nothing," said Jeff.

"I know. She's the missing link in all of this. It can't just be a coincidence."

We drove down the long dirt driveway until we got to a group of trailers. A woman was sitting out front, watering her plants. We stopped in front of her.

"Maya?" I asked.

"Who's asking?"

"I live in the house at Parson Lane, may we talk?" I asked.

"I got nothing to say," she said as she walked away

"Here we go," I said to Jeff.

"I drove up next to her and handed her two twenty dollar bills."

She stopped and took them, putting them into her dirty pants pocket.

"What do you want?"

"Maya, I know this may sound crazy, but I understand you were arrested by the Redlands Police Department for animal cruelty, correct?"

"Yeah....so?"

"Are you a witch?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The dead animals.....what were they for?"

"Look, I was a different person back then. I don't really remember too much," she said as she walked away.

I got out of the car and followed her. I put a hundred-dollar bill in her hands. She stopped and looked at it. Maya put her head down. She seemed visibly upset.

"Let's get out of the sun," she said.

We followed her over to a shaded area that was being used as a carport.

"I'm not sure what you want me to say. It was a very bad period in my life I would just rather forget," she said.

"Maya.....we're here because of something in that house. Something that doesn't seem to make any sense. Do you mind if we record you?" I asked and gave her another twenty.

"No, I don't mind. I've done so much harm, I'm so embarrassed. I didn't even I had been arrested until I woke up the next morning in a concrete cell block."

"Were you doing witchcraft in the house?" I asked.

"The man who I was staying with, he was a very, very bad man. He had money, but he had a heart of stone. He gave me the drugs. He was also a witch. From what I remember, I did some bad things too. I just don't really recall the specifics. I did that much meth, my brain is pretty much shot. I can't even remember what I did yesterday."

"We have two tenants who stayed in that house that describe seeing and experiencing something very unusual. They describe some kind of strange shadow-like figure with wings. It seems to pick its victims at will. Does that sound familiar to you?" I asked as Jeff recorded.

"I know we used to have parties, where we would do black magic rituals. I didn't really believe in any of it. I remember one where we drew a giant pentagram and were trying to conjure up a demon who would attack our enemies. We would torture people and animals." she said as she started sobbing.

"I know this is difficult. We're just trying to get to the bottom of this mystery. We were hoping maybe you could fill in some of the blanks for us. We're trying to figure out how this thing came to inhabit this house."

"Do you own the house?" she asked.

"We're just staying in it while we investigate. There's something in that house with us, we're just trying to figure out what it is."

"I wish I could be more helpful to you, but I honestly don't recall very much about that time in my life. I remember doing some very bad things for drugs. I sold my soul to the devil and I will never get it back." she said.

"Do you think that things were in the house before you moved in, or do you think you somehow brought it in?"

"I honestly couldn't tell you. From what I remember, it's certainly possible I did, but I don't believe in any of that voodoo mumbo jumbo. It might work on poor, uneducated farmers in Hati, but that's about it. I think the man I was staying with believed in it, but I don't. We hurt all those people for nothing."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Maya?" I asked.

"I believe that heroin and Meth can make people do things they never imagined themselves doing. That's the real evil, the drugs. They rob you of your soul."

"Here's my card. I want you to keep it. If you can think of anything else that might help us, please give me a call." I said.

"We got a good one here, boss. This is going to be the one that finally puts us on the map," said Jeff looking at the video he recorded.

"What do you mean, we just bought ourselves a big nothing burger with everything on it."

"We have all the ingredients of a blockbuster, but we're still missing that one big, final piece, the one everybody wants to see. We don't have an image of that ghost." I said.

"Yeah, that is a problem."

"No one is going to want to see our movie when they know we stayed in the house for over three months and didn't see a damn thing. We got nothing. We got three months of nothing. That ghost is messing with us. I'd give anything just to get a glimpse of it for ten seconds on film. Just ten seconds and we could have a blockbuster. Without those ten seconds, we got nothing. We can't have all this build-up just to let down the audience at the end."

"So, did the ghost always live in that house, or did Maya bring it there? We can't say for certain that it took the Jansen girl. Maybe it was just messing with Jane."

"I think that house has always been bad, from like, day one," said Jeff

"I don't know, bud. Our finances are in bad shape. We got to come up with something soon or we're going to have to close up shop." I said.

"What do you want to do? I've got to head back to Indiana next week," said Jeff.

"Yeah, Jasmine has to start school next week back in Indiana. She and Becky will be leaving in two days."

"I guess that's it."

"I'm not ready to give up just yet. We didn't come all this way and spend all of this time and money just to return empty-handed. Maybe if it's just me, it might feel bold enough to show itself."

"You're not going to stay in that house by yourself, are you?"

"I don't have any other choice. If I don't get something on film, this was a waste of time. We're so close, Jeff. We're so damn close. This could be our big break."

"I don't believe in ghosts, but there ain't no way in hell, I would stay in that house by myself."

"If you don't believe in ghosts, then why wouldn't you stay in the house?" I asked.

"What if I'm wrong?"

I said goodbye to Becky and Jasmine a few days later. Jeff said he would be back next week if we had enough money for a plane ticket, which we didn't. We had spent a ton of money on this project and had very little to show for it. I sat in the empty house and just had to hope and pray that the ghost would make itself appear to me.

I also got a call from the owner of the house who politely informed me that my time was up. A cleaning company would be there in two days and I had to be out of there by then. I decided to get drunk by myself to celebrate. I wasn't quite sure what I was celebrating, but I figured whatever chapter in my life I was about to move onto required some hard liquor before I was ready to accept it. I had to wonder if this was worth it. We had drained our life savings for this little adventure. I was going to have to get a real job now. Making videos for a living might sound appealing to a twenty-year-old, but forty-year-old me needed something more steady with health insurance and retirement. My dreams of becoming a famous director were going to have to be put on hold for a while.....*or indefinitely.*

I poured myself a few drinks and dozed off in front of the TV. I was in the middle of that wonderful *not quite drunk, but not quite sober* point of the evening. I hadn't had this much to drink in ages. I passed out a short time later.

I had the strangest dream. I just remember staring up at the ceiling and seeing these giant shadows moving over me. I woke up just as the shadows were about to engulf me.

I fell out of the recliner and quickly looked across the room. I didn't see anything. It must have just been the booze. I went into the bathroom to take a leak and as I was peeing, I could swear I saw something move behind me. I walked out into the hallway and that's when I saw it. It was standing right in front of me. It was tall and thin. Not a person, just more like a figure. I had to make sure the cameras were recording, I might not get another chance. I was scared shit less, but also very excited. My prayers had indeed been answered.

"Nice of you to show up," I said

The figure said nothing as it just continued to stare at me. It opened its wings and the shadows seemed to engulf the room, drowning out the light. I ran into the bedroom and slammed the door shut. I knew I should just bolt out the window, but I had to be certain I got it on film. I had to be sure. It was worth risking my life to be sure. I locked the door and stuffed a towel underneath the door.

You belong to me now, Donald. Now and forever. I heard it say through the door.

I reached into the nightstand and took out my 9mm. I figured if I was going down, I was going to go down swinging. I aimed the gun right at the door.

The thing began pounding on the door. I thought it was going to rip it right off its hinges.

Come on you son of a bitch.....just a little bit longer and I'll have you on film forever.

There was a brief pause in the banging. I thought maybe it had stopped, but then I could clearly see the door knob turning. I figured this was as good a chance as any. If I couldn't get it on film, the cameras would record me shooting at it. I fired three rounds through the door. The knob quickly stopped turning. I heard something fall on the carpet in front of the door. Guess our ghost wasn't so tough after all.

I opened the door and saw Jeff laying on the floor, covered in blood. He was gasping for air. I dropped my gun and had to recoil in horror at what I had done.

"Jeff, what the hell are you doing here?"

"Sorry buddy.....forgot my wallet on the way to the airport," he said, coughing up blood.

I looked up and could see the winged figure standing at the end of the hallway. I'm not certain, but I'm fairly certain I heard it.

That son of a bitch was laughing at me. That goddamn ghost was laughing at me as I watched my partner and best friend fight for his life right in front of me.....and people think ghosts don't exist.