

The Anderson House

It was a Saturday morning in late October when Robert Gordon stormed into Brenda Peterson's real estate office. Brenda looked up and asked, "What's the problem Robert?"

"We're not spending another minute in that awful place you rented to us. Last night was the final straw." Then he threw the keys on Brenda's desk and yelled, "Look at the side of my truck!"

Brenda got up from her desk and walked quickly over to the window. The side of Robert's white truck was painted with large red letters that read "get out or die."

Brenda smiled for a moment, then she turned and began to walk back to her desk. She avoided eye contact with Robert until she sat down. Then she looked at him but before she could say anything Robert said loudly, "That happened while the truck was locked in the garage. Can you explain it?"

Everyone in the town new about the Andersen house. It was built almost a hundred years ago. Twenty years after it was built the entire Andersen family disappeared without a trace. Five people simply disappeared from the face of the earth. Franklin Andersen was the wealthiest man in town and half of the men in the area worked at his clothing factory. He treated his employees well, offering them benefits like overtime pay and sick time that were unheard of in the early twentieth century.

The local and state police searched for more than a year for some clue to what happened, but nothing was ever found. Since Franklin Andersen left no will, the city auctioned off the house and it was purchased by a man named Gerald Godson. Gerald and his family of six lived in the house for two years when strange things began to happen. Doors would open and close by themselves, items in the cabinets would be found neatly stacked on the floor, furniture would be tipped over or turned upside down. The pranks were frightening, but harmless. Until the day Betty Goodson, their youngest daughter, disappeared.

Like the Andersen's, Betty Goodson was never found, and there were no clues to tell the police what happened. The Goodson family moved out. The house, which is still owned by the Goodsons, had been rented occasionally for the next sixty years, but the renters never stayed long. Then about thirty years ago the incidents at the house stopped, and there had not been another one until two weeks ago.

Brenda said, "You knew the stories about the house being haunted. We even talked about it before you signed the lease."

"I know, but there hadn't been any unusual occurrences at the house for a very long time. I guess whatever terrorized the previous tenants is back. Look, I don't care about the rent I prepaid, Goodson can keep it, but I'm not setting foot in that house again."

Robert left the office, slamming the door on his way out. As soon he was gone Brenda called Bob Goodson. When he answered she said, "Robert left the house so it's available for Tim Findley. He should be here Monday."

"Good, make he an offer he can't afford to refuse."

"I'll take care of it."

Tim and Marci Findley had moved three times since their son Rick was born almost six years earlier. Now they were on the move again. This time their destination was Nevada, not the state, but a small city in western Missouri. Once a thriving and growing place, the population was now less than eight thousand. It was also the new home of Warner Electronics, and they offered Tim a job with a substantial increase in salary.

Before they left for Nevada, Tim contacted a real estate agent about finding a home for the three of them, plus their German Shepard named Barker. There wasn't much available, but the agent promised to keep looking. She promised that by the time they arrived she was sure she would find something for them. Taking her at her word they left Green Bay on a cool Saturday morning in late October. They arrived in Nevada at about ten o'clock on Monday morning and drove directly to the real estate office.

When they walked in a woman looked up from her desk and said, "Good morning. I'm Brenda, and I assume you guys are the Findleys, right?"

Tim said, "Yes, I'm Tim. This is my wife Marci, and our son Rick. Our dog, Barker, is still in the car."

"Well, it's nice to meet you. If you want to bring Barker in that's no problem. I love dogs."

“Okay, I’ll go get him,” Marci said.

Tim sat down at Brenda’s desk and asked, “Did you find anything for us?”

“Yes, a house I think will be perfect for your family just became available. It’s old, but in perfect condition. It was completely remodeled about five years ago. It has three large bedrooms, two baths, and a fenced back yard that will be perfect for Barker. The best part is the rent is only \$600 per month, way under your budget.”

“Why is it so cheap?”

“The house has been in the owner’s family for a long time and was purchased for cash about eighty years ago. The taxes here are low so his cost for the house is minimal. He does expect you to maintain it, although he will pay for any major repairs.”

Marci had walked in with Barker in tow. She asked, “Did she find us a place?”

“I think so. Can we go look at it now?”

“I have some pictures. Would you like to look at them first?”

“Sure,” Marci said. Marci sat down next to Tim and Brenda turned her monitor around so Marci and Tim could see it. Then she began showing them the pictures. After she looked at the last picture Marci asked, “Can we afford this place? It looks very nice.”

Tim said, “The rent is only \$600.”

“Wow!” Marci exclaimed. “Let’s go look at it.”

The house looked even better in person than it did in pictures. It was situated on a large wooded lot. The driveway was long and wound through a forest before it arrived at the house, the leaves covered the ground, at least a foot deep on either side of the road. The house looked kind of run down on the outside, but inside it was perfect. Tim and Marci spent fifteen minutes waking around the house. They liked everything they saw and Tim told Marci they would be happy to sign a lease.

There was a counter in the kitchen and Brenda put her briefcase on it. She opened the case and removed a lease form. After she spent a few minutes filling it out she handed Tim the lease and said, “The owner wants two month’s rent up front. Is that okay?”

Tim said, “Absolutely.” Then he signed the lease, took out a checkbook, and wrote her a check for twelve hundred dollars. He gave Brenda the lease and the check and asked, “Our furniture will be here tomorrow. Can we move right in?”

“Of course. You’ll need to go over to the electric company and switch over the billing this afternoon. You may also want to go to Nevada Cable and set up your TV and internet service. I have a paper with the addresses on it.”

She handed Tim the paper and the keys to the house. Tim said “Thank you.”

Brenda said, “You’re welcome. I’m going back to my office now. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or problems.”

They spent the night at a local motel. The following morning the movers called and asked where to deliver the furniture. He gave them the address of the house. By that evening Tim and Marci were comfortably seated in the living room, surrounded by unopened moving boxes. The only room they finished was the kitchen. Rick was on the floor playing fetch with Barker.

They went to bed at ten o’clock. Tim still had a week before he started work, but instead of spending the day unpacking boxes they decided the following day they would get up early, register Rick for school, and spend the day exploring the area around their new home.

Rick and Barker slept together. At two o’clock Barker began to growl, something he seldom did. The growling woke up Rick who ran to his parent’s room. He shook his father and said, “Dad, I’m scared, and so is Barker. He’s growling.”

Tim and Rick went back to Rick’s room, but Barker wasn’t there. They heard a noise from downstairs, so they walked down to the kitchen. It was dark, but they could see Barker in the dim light. He was staring at the ceiling, softly growling. Tim turned on the light. Every cabinet in the kitchen was open, and some of the contents were stacked neatly on the counters. Tim looked at the ceiling where Barker was staring, but there was nothing there.

“Dad, did you and mom empty the cabinets?”

“No, we didn’t.”

“Then who did?”

“I have no idea.”

Barker stopped growling and the three of them went upstairs and back to bed. Tim was worried that Rick would be scared, but he seemed okay. When Tim got back into bed Marci asked, “What’s going on?”

“I think we may have a poltergeist.”

“What? Are you nuts or something?”

“Every cabinet in the kitchen was open and some of the stuff was stacked on the counter. Did you do that?”

“No.”

“Well, neither did I. Also, Barker was growling at the ceiling.”

“Tim, you know I don’t believe in supernatural crap. I’m sure there’s a logical explanation for what happened.”

“I can hardly wait to hear it.”

Marci smiled and said, “Shut up and go to sleep.”

The next morning Tim and Marci put away all the stuff on the counters and closed all the cabinet doors. There was no food in the house yet, so they went out for breakfast. While they were waiting for their food Rick asked, “Are we going to do something special for my birthday?”

Marci responded, “Since your birthday is on Halloween we always do something special, like go trick or treating.”

“I guess I can’t have a party since I don’t know anyone here. But, trick or treating should be fun,” Rick said happily.

They went to the school to register Rick. Marci filled out the paperwork and gave the completed form to the clerk. She was reading the application when she suddenly looked at Marci and asked, “You’re living at the old Andersen house?”

“I have no idea. If the address I gave you is the address of the Andersen house, then I guess we are. Why?”

“Uh, I’m not sure how to tell you this, but the house is haunted.”

Marci said, “I don’t believe in ghosts.”

The clerk looked her in the eye and said, “You will. You probably should go talk to the last tenant, Robert Gordon. He’s the editor of the local paper. The newspaper office is Main Street, across from the library.”

Marci and Tim looked at each other, but said nothing. Suddenly Marci had feeling of dread, but all she did was look at the clerk and say, “Thank you for your help with the registration.”

Rick started school the next day. That night a cold front came through and dropped the temperature to the mid-thirties. The next morning Marci was going to drive Rick to school. She opened the front closet, but her coat wasn’t there. She kept looking in the closet, tossing items over her shoulder, muttering under her breath about losing her favorite overcoat, which she remembered hanging up yesterday.

Rick walked up to her, ready for school, and noting the concern on his mother’s face asked, “What’s wrong mom?”

“I lost my coat, but I remember hanging it up in the closet yesterday.”

“I’ll help you find it.”

The two of them began looking when Marci noticed a button from her coat on the floor in front of the fireplace. She looked into the fireplace and gasped! Sitting on the grate was the remains of her coat. She screamed, “Tim, come here now!”

Tim was in his office upstairs, unaware of what was going on. He ran down the stairs and into the living room. Marci was there gazing at the fireplace. Tim looked at the fireplace too and realized what was in it. He asked, “How did that happen?”

Marci said, sarcastically, “I got up in the middle of the night with nothing to do so I decided to turn my favorite coat into ashes.”

“Do you still think there’s a logical explanation for what’s going on, especially when you consider what the woman at the school said to us?”

“I don’t know what to think anymore. I’m going to wear your coat and drive Rick to school. We’ll talk about this when I get back.”

When Marci returned she found Tim still sitting in the living room looking at the fireplace. Marci sat down next to Tim and asked, “If the clerk at the school knows the house is haunted, why didn’t Brenda know?”

“I’ve been asking myself the same question.”

“Maybe we should go back to Brenda’s office and discuss this with her.”

“I think that’s a good idea. Let’s go.”

Twenty minutes later Tim and Marci walked into Brenda’s office. She was on the phone but using hand gestures told them to sit down. They sat and waited until Brenda was finished with her call. Tim looked at her and said, “I know this may sound a little nuts, but I think the house is haunted.”

“Well, there have been some rumors in the past, but that was a long time ago. Probably at least thirty years ago. What happened?”

Marci told her about the two incidents. Brenda listened politely, but didn’t respond.

Then Tim asked, “Who were the last tenants?”

Without a moment of hesitation Brenda lied and said, “Kenneth and Elizabeth Franklin lived there for a couple of years, but he found a new job somewhere in Washington and they left in hurry. They didn’t even give me a forwarding address.”

Tim knew she was lying but did not challenge her response. He said, “If this continues we’re going to have to find a different house.”

“Okay, if living there makes you feel uncomfortable I’ll do my best to find you a different house,” Brenda said with an obviously forced smile on her face.

Tim said, “Thanks, we’ll give it a few more days.”

After he left the office Marci said, “Why is she lying to us. I think she knows exactly what’s going on.”

“I agree, since we know who the last tenant was we should go speak with him.”

“I agree. If the house has a history perhaps Mr. Gordon knows something about the place.”

Tim knew exactly where the library was, because it was next to the school Rick was attending. So he drove there. Across the street was an office with a sign that said “Nevada Media Company”.

They walked through the double doors and found themselves in large storage area. They could hear someone working so they went in the direction of the sound and found a man removing boxes from a pallet. When he saw them, he asked, “Can I help you?”

“Yes, are you Robert Gordon?”

“Yeah”

“Mr. Gordon, we just rented the house you recently vacated, and we’ve had a few unusual things happen in the house. I was wondering if you could tell us what’s going on and why you left so quickly.”

“Well, that’s not a surprise. First, you’ve probably already realized that something is living, or at least occupying, the house with you. In our case the entity, for lack of a better word, performed a series harmless pranks that started about five or six weeks after we moved in; cabinets opened, shelves emptied, lights turned on or off. To begin with it was kind of interesting living there. It certainly changed my mind about the existence of ghosts. However about two weeks ago the pranks became more serious. One morning we walked into the kitchen and discovered all of our glassware was smashed on the floor, it must have made a lot of noise but both my wife and I slept through it. The next morning, we found the pictures in the living room were slashed with a knife, and all the furniture was upside down, even the piano. We were both petrified to sleep in the house, but we decided to try one more night. That was last Thursday. When we got up on Friday morning I discovered the side of my white pickup was painted with large red letters that said, ‘get out or die’. So, we spent Friday packing our things. That night we went to a motel, and on Saturday I called the landlord and said we were moving out and he could keep our deposit. We moved back here to a small apartment behind the store.”

“Tim, maybe we should move out too?”

“And go where? We don’t have anywhere else to go.”

“Other than burning my coat his pranks were harmless, but based on Mr. Gordon’s experience they probably won’t stay that way.” Then looking at Mr. Gordon, she asked, “You live here so you must have known the house was haunted. What made you decide to live there?”

“The reports of the house being haunted are old. There haven’t been any reported incidents at the house for more than thirty years. My wife and I thought the story about the house being haunted was a crock of shit. The last people who lived there had been in the house for five years and never reported anything strange or unusual. So, we assumed our experience would be the same.”

“And it clearly wasn’t. I wonder what triggered the events?” Tim asked.

Then Marci said, “You accepted the job here three weeks ago. That coincides with the start of the weird occurrences.”

“Are you trying tell me the entity in the house wanted the Gordon’s to leave so we would rent the house?”

“It’s a possibility.”

“How could this entity possibly know that we would rent that house?”

“Because the entity is controlling Brenda. That house was the only one she talked about.”

“Even if that were true, why would it want us there?”

“That’s what we’re going to have to figure out.”

Tim said, “Thanks for giving us the information. I’m not sure what we’re going to do with it yet, but at least we know what is going on.”

Marci looked at Tim and ask, somewhat sarcastically, “Do we?”

Gordon said, “You may not know the whole story yet, but I suspect you will soon.”

Time and Marci went back home, expecting to find something another gift from the entity, but everything appeared normal. Tim picked up Rick from school, and Rick said he really liked the school. He said there were only nine other kids in his class, and they were all very nice.

When they arrived at home Marci was making dinner, and Barker was on the floor watching her. When Rick came in he ran up to him and sat down. Rick petted his head and said, “He always jumps up when he sees me. I wonder why he is sitting like that?”

Tim responded, “I don’t know. Maybe he’s had a hard day.”

Then Tim reached over to pet the dog and as he got closer Barker began to growl. Tim backed away and Barker stopped growling. Tim said, “He’s never done that before either. I wonder if he’s sick.”

When they sat down for dinner Barker sat next to Rick’s chair, instead of begging for food from everyone. Marci said, “Barker is definitely not acting normal. If this continues we’ll have to take him to a vet.”

For the entire evening Tim and the dog were inseparable, he even followed Rick into the bathroom.

That night Tim and Marci slept very well, but when they woke up Rick was standing in their bedroom watching them, and Barker was at his side.

Tim asked, “Rick, is everything okay?”

Rick spoke, but the voice was not his, it was the voice a mature and educated man. It said, “Yes, everything is okay. But my name is not Rick, my name Baltazar, and you are not my father. But Marci already knows that. My father is Mammon, one of the seven princes of Hell. Barker is now my protector. For your own safety do not approach him unless you ask me first.”

Tim looked at Marci, who had this horrified look on her face, and asked, “You screwed a prince of hell?”

“At the time I didn’t know what he was. I found out the next day. Mammon told me I was pregnant and would have a male child. Before Rick was born I was afraid he wouldn’t look normal, but he did, so I assumed that you were his father.”

“I guess you were wrong!” Tim said angrily.

Marci did not respond. She just looked down and away from Tim.

Baltazar said, “On my next birthday I will be leaving to take my rightful position and a new prince of Hell. Until that time please stay away from me. I don’t want to hurt you.” Then he turned around and left the room, with Barker following him.