

HAUNTED CANADA

The Third Terrifying
Collection

Joel A. Sutherland

illustrations by
Norman Lanting and Mark Savona

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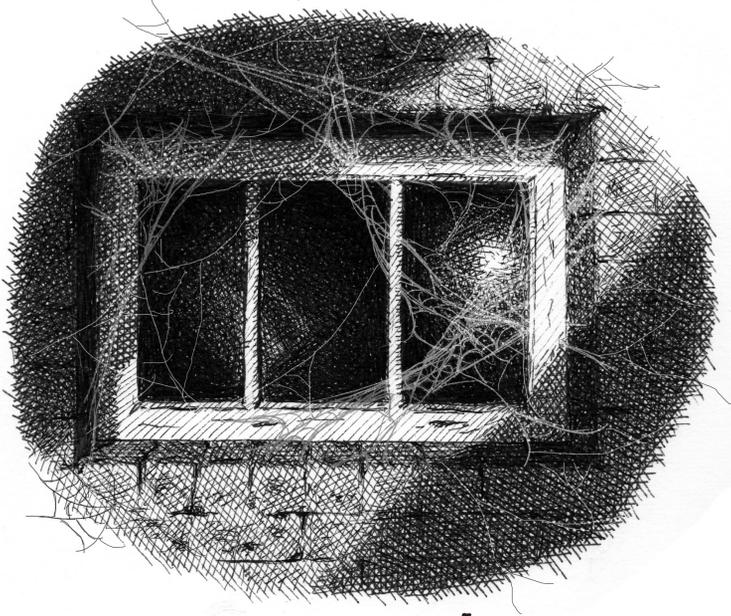
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THE BEDROOM IN THE BASEMENT

Calgary, Alberta

For many teenagers, the day they are finally allowed to move into a basement bedroom is a proud one. It's a sign of respect from parents who now feel their child is mature enough to be separated by a floor or two at night. The freedom and independence that comes with sleeping in the basement is a dream come true.

For sixteen-year-old Rick Goodwin, moving into the basement of his family's new home was more of a *nightmare*.

The teen immediately called dibs on the basement room when he and his mother moved into the duplex on Beaver Dam Way in 1992. His mother, Barbara, didn't put up a fight. He was a responsible boy, and she and her two younger children would sleep in the three upstairs

bedrooms. Everyone was happy, but the happiness would only last for two weeks.

On September 19, fourteen days after they moved in, Barbara heard the loudest banging imaginable coming from the basement. She had been unpacking some boxes that had been neglected since moving into the new home. She looked at the clock. It was 11:55 p.m. Why was Rick making such a commotion so late at night? It sounded like he was pounding nails into the wall studs. The racket was so loud that Barbara was afraid it would wake the other children, and maybe even their neighbours. She marched down the stairs as her temperature started to rise.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The noise got louder and louder as she made her way into the basement. Barbara realized the sound was too loud to be caused by a hammer, and she still couldn't figure out what her son was doing. But just as she reached the bottom step, the noise suddenly stopped. She waited, listening in the dark, half-expecting the sound to start up again. It didn't, so she decided to head back upstairs without bothering Rick. He'd probably got it in his head to hang a picture up on the wall. Now that he had finished doing whatever it was he was doing, Barbara just wanted to finish her own work.

As she walked up the stairs, she hugged her arms to her chest and tried to rub some warmth into them. The temperature had suddenly plummeted. She checked the thermostat on the main floor, which was set to a warm temperature. It must have been malfunctioning. The air was icy cold.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Barbara jumped. She didn't know how it was possible, but the sound was even louder than before. She marched

straight back down into the basement, furious that Rick could be so inconsiderate. She was playing out what she would say to him when she landed on the final step and the sound immediately stopped again. This time, Rick's door flew open and the startled boy ran out of the room.

"Mom!" he yelled, his eyes wild. "Did you hear that banging?"

The sound had come from his door, as if something was trying to bash its way in. Rick's cat stared at the door and shook in terror. The cat, who had spent nearly every night sleeping on Rick's bed, refused to enter his room from that day forward.

This was the beginning of a string of terrifying and unexplained activity that plagued the Goodwins over the coming months.

Just before midnight one night in September, Rick and his mother were together upstairs when they heard the banging on his bedroom door again. The racket occurred three separate times that night, but when Rick crept downstairs to go to sleep there was no sign that anything had been in his room.

At two in the morning on October 2, Barbara woke up to a very peculiar sound coming from the basement. Not the banging on her son's door, but the screeching of windows sliding back and forth. She went to the basement and confirmed that the windows were open, which was confounding. The windows had been covered in dirt and old cobwebs and had clearly not been opened in many years. As a result, they were practically locked shut with age, and Barbara had planned on loosening them sometime soon.

As three o'clock approached on October 14, a new sound woke Barbara. She slipped out of bed and wearily

stumbled into the living room toward the source of the sound. She found it. In the middle of the floor was a small toy piano, playing a tune that echoed off the walls. Barbara stared at the electric toy in mute horror. She knew there were no batteries in that piano.

At midnight on November 2, Barbara heard a sound coming from Rick's bedroom. *Tap, tap, tap, tap.* She was in the dining room, directly above his room, and she happened to glance quickly out the window at the backyard. Something had triggered the motion-activated light, but there was no one back there. Then the back gate slowly swung shut on its own, as if someone had just passed through, but she hadn't seen a soul.

So far, each of these unexplained events had taken place in the middle of the night, but that soon changed. At noon on November 12, Barbara heard footsteps in the hall near the back door, then a muffled voice upstairs. There was no one in the hall, so she followed the sound of the voice. Bizarrely, the sound was coming from a dresser in one of the bedrooms. She opened a drawer and found a toy phone. From it came a hollow, soulless voice repeating the same message over and over and over.

Have a nice day!

Have a nice day!

Have a nice day!

Like the toy piano, the phone had no batteries.

Throughout the second half of November and the entire month of December, odd events continued to stack up on one another like caskets in an overcrowded cemetery. The doorbell rang repeatedly when no one was anywhere near

the door. Footsteps pounded up and down the basement stairs. Odd smells with no discernible source filled the house. Locks unlocked themselves and doors swung open and closed. And then the ceiling in Rick's room began to disintegrate as if by water damage. Bits of wet plaster rained down on his bed, but a building contractor couldn't find the cause.

Shortly before New Year's Eve, Barbara sat down at the kitchen table and closed her eyes. The nearly constant presence that seemed to terrorize her and her family was driving her mad, and she felt like she was at the end of her rope. Not knowing what else to do, she asked aloud for some sign of the ghost's existence. She hoped to learn something — anything — that would help her deal with the ghost that dwelled in her home. Instead, what she found was a pair of handcrafted earrings she had lost shortly after moving into the house. They had appeared in the middle of the table where she sat.

Rick moved out of the basement. He couldn't bear the thought of spending one more night down below, alone but not alone. Interestingly, the paranormal activity slowed down from that day forward. It didn't go away completely, but the Goodwins were thankful for any small improvement. Whether the ghost had provided Barbara with her missing earrings as a peace offering or a show of its power is unknown.