

Old Victorian House

Some years ago, I lived in an old Victorian house near our downtown area. I loved the house because it was huge and roomy and had a lot of character that matched my artistic flair. I lived alone in the house with Brigitte, my German Shepherd.

One day as I was watching TV in the living room, I heard strange noises like footsteps that seemed to come from upstairs. I muted the TV volume so that I might listen, and I heard what sounded like someone walking around upstairs. The dog noticed it first and ran barking to the foot of the open staircase, but she would never actually go up the steps. Since the house was so old, it had a lot of noises from settling, I didn't think much about it, but there was a spot in the upstairs floor that always squeaked when I walked over it, and at night when I was lying in bed reading, I heard the floor squeak in that spot out in the hallway nearly every night. I told myself again that the walls were settling and I went to sleep.

I had family pictures arranged on top of an old piano in the downstairs hallway that had come with the house. One day I came in and noticed that a picture of my niece was face down on the floor. I wouldn't have thought it so strange but it had been situated partially behind another picture that had not been disturbed. I was puzzled, but I put the picture back in its place and left for work as usual. I later returned home to find the same picture face down on the floor again in the same place, still with no other pictures in front of it having been moved. I was now starting to feel that something was very strange. No one else had been in the house, no one else had a key, and nothing else had been moved. Several more weeks passed and I heard the strange footsteps and occasionally found something that had been moved. I tried to think of a way to dismiss it all as normal, but one event made that impossible.

One night as I was sleeping, I suddenly awoke to the feeling of something at the end of the bed like someone sitting on the corner of my bed. A little surge of adrenalin rushed over me as I tried to focus my eyes in the dark room, but I saw nothing. I thought it must have been the dog moving around in the dark and I went back to sleep. A very short time later, maybe ten or fifteen minutes, I woke up again to the dog nudging me and whining anxiously. I tried to open my eyes and look at the clock but it was flashing. Had the electricity gone off? I rolled over and tried to go back to sleep.

A while later, my heart skipped a beat when I suddenly heard a pounding on the front door. I didn't want to answer the door alone in the middle of the night. I threw my robe on and staggered down the stairs to answer it with the dog beside me. The pounding on the door continued furiously and I heard a desperate voice on the other side as I turned the lock and swung the door open.

A fireman in full dress was standing outside telling me to get out of the house quickly as smoke was coming from the attic window. I sat outside with the dog in the chill of twilight as the fireman diffused a small electrical fire that had started from old, frayed wiring in the attic. Luckily they had caught it in time and the damage was minimal, but I couldn't get the strange nagging feeling out of my head that someone had been sitting at the foot of the bed that night.

After the repairs to the house were done and everything was quiet again, something else happened that would really demand my attention and question my beliefs. There was an extra room on the main level in the house with bookshelves that I called the reading

room, and I had all of my books arranged on its many shelves around the fireplace. I was sitting in a chair in that room one afternoon reading my book when something averted my eyes upward. As I looked up, my big, thick dictionary suddenly flew from the shelf and dropped onto the hardwood floor. If it had been a smaller, lighter book I might have thought it had simply fallen, but this was an extra large, heavy dictionary that had landed several feet away from the shelf. I was flabbergasted but strangely it didn't scare me. It just seemed like something or some-one was trying to be noticed. Though I hadn't really believed in ghosts before, I couldn't really think of another explanation for a book flying off a shelf.!

After giving it some thought, I decided to go to the county courthouse and see if I could find some information about the previous owners of the house.

I took part of an afternoon off and went to the courthouse and local library and I sifted through old records and newspapers for any information about the previous occupants of the house. When I finally found some information, it was fairly boring---no dramatic murders, suicides, or mysterious deaths, but there had been local fire chief who had owned the house some fifty years before that had died at a fairly young age of pneumonia. Could he be the one haunting my house for some reason? Unfortunately, I couldn't find any more information on him, but he was the only individual that I found that had died an untimely death in the house.

Weeks went by again and the strange noises and events slowed down a little. Brigitte had a litter of puppies in the basement and I was up and down the basement stairs frequently checking on them. One day I was down there cleaning when I heard a slamming of the front door upstairs on the main level. I wasn't too disturbed because it was a small town and no one kept their doors locked during the day. I immediately thought it might be my dad or one of my friends coming in but no one had ever slammed the door like that. I listened for a moment as heavy footsteps walked across the floor above my head from the front door all the way to the kitchen. It sounded like a man's feet, and I didn't move for a moment, trying to get a sense of who it might be. Brigitte, who was always a good watchdog, paid no attention as I listened to the footsteps shuffling around the kitchen. So I believed that if she wasn't disturbed by the visitor, it must be safe. I suddenly felt curious eno!

ugh to investigate and I headed up the stairs. As I faced the back door, I thought I saw a figure out of the corner of my eye through the door window, but when I tried to focus through the glass, there was nothing there.

By that time I had convinced myself that this was the spirit of the young fire chief trying to make his presence known, and I was strangely unafraid as long as I never laid eyes on him. I pushed the back door open and walked into the kitchen where the noises had come from. I heard more shuffling as I came in, but it abruptly stopped as I closed the door behind me. The room became strangely silent. Is there anyone here? I asked. No one answered.

I suddenly felt that I needed to say something to this supposed spirit. Maybe it was silly, but there was no one else around to call me crazy. What did I have to lose by trying to communicate? I finally looked around the room and spoke.

"I know you're here and I know who you are, and I don't have a problem with your being here as long as I never actually see you." I spoke as plainly as I possibly could, not knowing whom I was addressing.

I hoped I was saying the right things. But, from his actions, I believed that he hadn't really wanted to scare me to death. In the beginning he had subtly moved things around in the house, and when I failed to believe what was happening, he threw a dictionary off the shelf. It had seemed that he just wanted to be noticed. I hoped that what I said would appease him in some way, and I also hoped that if he was real, he understood that it was important that I never ever actually, physically saw him.

After that day, things became quiet in the old house. There were no other noises or activities except for a few strange, small thumps every now and then. But I think he had just wanted me to know that he was there, and he found a way to do that.