

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS PRESENTS

ROBERT RILEY

SHADOW INVESTIGATOR

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2# SHADOW INVESTIGATOR - PART 2

At the age of 12, I saw what I believed was a shadow entity forcing a red haired woman off the road causing her death. The spirit of the red haired woman came back to visit me, knocking at the front door, staring right at me through the frosted glass. When I got home, it wasn't long before I saw the same shadow entity sitting in a chair, although he would only show himself through reflections at first, it wasn't long before his presence in our home became frequent and obvious. I hadn't the guts back then to confront uncomfortable situations so I would stand back and let him take on different family members, manipulating them, pushing them, dragging them, and creating a dark atmosphere in my family home. I said nothing and I did nothing. My life had changed drastically from my first encounter with a shadow man and his unfortunate victim, the red haired woman.

The darkness within the family got too much for my parents who both lost their way. My mother left first and then my father became somebody else. Somebody I could no longer live with, so only one month after my mother left, I moved out. Every time I saw the red haired woman at our front door, knocking, wanting to come in, but every time, something stopped me from letting her in.

At the age of 19 years, I came back to the village where it all started. I'd only arrived in the car park of the Old George Inn when I heard the noise of a small child chattering as if at play. From the driver's seat I could see the ghost of a little girl in my rear mirror. From my point of view she was sitting there, playing with what appeared to be a broken bracelet. She wore a school uniform that matched the modern day school outfit that I saw from across the street. It was that time in the afternoon where the little ones were being picked up by parents. For some reason, I'd drawn in this little girl, how sad it seemed when I realized she'd already passed so young. She grumbled about several events that had marked her day, whined that she was hungry before she slumped back in her chair. She sported a typical childish pout. Something told me she hadn't arrived too long ago. I had to ask her to leave, indicating that her parents were waiting to take her home. The suggestion worked and she stepped out of the car and disappeared from view and that was it. That was the end of my first spirit encounter in my home village in over six years, and already

I was emotionally compromised. I had to shake off the thought of the little girl and focus on the task at hand.

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I met the estate agent, Daniel Webber who said that the place had been close to being sold on no less than seven occasions prior to its initial viewing. Never had the fact that it was haunted been disclosed, but still, people experienced the house and left with the same hasty spirit, pardon the pun. Daniel Webber went to the same school as I, in fact, he'd never left the village, and humble as he was, he seemed to me to be an 'easily bored' type - as well as uncomfortable, using humour to break the tension between us.

With Daniel tagging along for the ride, we headed to the old street where I once lived. I thought I would recognize it, but nothing registered. This row of houses could have been on any other street, with hedgerows eclectically changing to fences, to neatly designed, uniform open plan front gardens. Then came number sixteen: my old home. The front garden was wild and overgrown, with a split wooden fence half, painted and under-stained. The house stood alone, out of date with overgrown wall plants, with branches working through all the aged gaps and excesses of the house external rain pipe system. For me, on the outside, there were no memories worth clinging to. I went inside the house and all that changed almost instantly.

The house was empty of furniture and also, strangely enough, there were no interior doors leading from room to room. The living room, kitchen and hallway appeared like open shells which led to darkness. The walls were damp, wallpaper already heavily peeled. The carpet had been lifted too, leaving remnants of old newspapers from the previous few decades, layered chronologically in a scatter-book fashion. There were hand-prints smeared all dirty in a line across the ceiling right to the far end wall. It was as if something had been crawling in defiance of the opposing force of gravity.

The split level staircase was a vivid memory. I had been pushed down it once during the dark era of my teens. I tried to block such a memory and with an air of confrontation, I took a hold of the hand rail, swung around and sat on third step of the first staircase that turned and climbed into the dark upstairs landing. I sat there and waited, looking around, seeing ghosts from my own past, family events, corners that I hid against, and there were scratch marks still on the door frame between the hallway and the kitchen, from when my brother was dragged along the carpet from one room to another. These were terrifying memories that, had I been there with the frame of mind that I had now, I would have handled it with more understanding. I had to stop thinking about the memories however, because that was drawing on my negativity, my fears, and my weaknesses.

There was a knock at the door.

Nothing to be alarmed as I looked up from my step; it was Daniel the estate agent, along with Chinese takeaway and typical small-town jokes about Chinese people and various food order numbers. After seeing I was not amused he stopped with the jokes. I was in two minds about his arrival. First, it was nice of him to think of my stomach, but I would have preferred to have eaten back at the car, outside of the house. My olfactory senses and the overall sense in the house had been contaminated. Daniel came in for a moment, handed me the house special fried rice and chicken-foo-yung. I thanked him, but the house appeared to make him feel uncomfortable enough not to stick around, pondering from the get-go, the idea of eating in the comfort of the car out on the driveway. Within minutes, I was alone once more.

I took the Chinese food and headed to the dark kitchen. I chose not to turn on any lights. There was plenty of light coming in from the back window from the neighbor's garden flood light.

There was another sudden knock at the door.

A cold feeling came from the bare, stripped down living room. I walked through to the hallway, and just as I stepped aside, allowing the rear garden flood to shed light across to the front door, I saw the figure, the face, the red hair staring through the distorted glass. She raised her hand, knocked once more, three resounding knocks and suddenly, I was fourteen again, feeling the fear. A ringing my right caused a welcoming distraction; and as I walked to the front door, inches away from the red haired spirit, I heard a low resounding grumble from the pitch black darkness of the living room. I looked across, noticing what I thought was a shadow slip across from one side of the door to the other. I turned back to the front door, and the red haired woman was no longer there. She was now beside me, to my left. I didn't need to look at her to know she was right there. She was afraid, shaking, frightened, just as I'd remembered her to be when I saw her alive, in the car, driving on that dark country road that evening I cycled home late from school. I heard a door slam to my right, but as I looked, I was reminded instantly that there were no interior doors connecting to the rooms. There simply was nothing there to be slammed.

The red haired woman disappeared, and again, I heard a low grumble coming from the living room. I had to get my ass in there, take a look at what it was that was beckoning my attention. I walked confidently, not caring who was waiting for me. I called out for whomever to answer me, to face me.

It was then that I felt a cold breeze flow through me. What I saw then was incredible: Pictures of the event that I witnessed five years before. The black entity that took a hold of the wheel was not trying to force the red haired woman to hit me or the tree that she ended up 'parking' herself into. He was trying to avoid it - he wanted to save her - trying to pull her away to safety.

I found myself back in the living room standing together with the shadow man who explained with more pictures that he was there to protect him and his family from the red haired woman whose soul was dark and vindictive. She had attached herself to me and then to my family. Had I known that, I would have blessed the shadow man's presence, for he was nothing more than just a guardian, a moderator unable to take form but present enough for those who could see him to know he was there. Together, I stood with the shadow man and called for the red haired woman, she knocked on the door and this time, we opened it, allowing her to come in. I focused my energy and I felt weakness run through me as the shadow man did what he'd tried to do for years... gather enough strength to force the red haired woman to cross over. The moment she disappeared, the room fell silent, calm, and peaceful.

"She's gone." I said to Daniel the Estate Agent who'd fallen asleep in his car.

"She's gone? You're sure?" Daniel said back as he stirred wearily. To this I simply nodded, and after a very brief conversation, the estate agent gave his sincere thanks and took me back to the hotel.

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After Daniel drove off, I turned to my own car which sat alone in the hotel car park.

I had company.

Ducking to view into the side window I noticed the little girl whom I'd met earlier that day. She sat on the backseat just doing nothing more than playing with her broken bracelet. She must have been there all this time oblivious to the wait she had endured. I approached the car, got into the driving seat. I listened as the little girl sang to herself, staring at her through the rear view mirror.

"I better take you home." I said.

"Thank you." She answered sweetly. "I'm hungry, and it was Daddy's turn to come and get me today." She said with a deep sigh.

I smiled, sensing the picture of her house, her garden, her parents and brother who'd recently suffered such a shocking loss of losing a sister. I started the engine and drove out into the night.