

down to the two-lane highway. It was a peaceful setting, an ideal dream house and a good place to raise children. But the former inhabitants of the house had been far from happy.

For years Mindy and her husband had heard things in the house late at night, but never with any regularity. Most of the noises they managed to ignore. They liked their home and didn't mind the occasional light switches being turned on and off, objects moving around with no explanations, doors slamming, or even the sound of a woman weeping from the upstairs master bedroom. But when their five-year-old son, Stevie, started to have horrible nightmares about people fighting over a child and telling his mother that a little boy had died in his room, Mindy started to worry.

Stevie's nightmares got worse and worse until finally he became terrified of sleeping at all. He complained of being shut up in a small dark room, although his room was really big and airy. At her wit's end, Mindy called the ASPR.

Dr. Osis assured her that he and Alex would work on the case. He discussed the matter with Alex and they agreed to investigate the house from the ASPR: at the time Alex had several important speaking engagements which did not allow him to go to Cedar Rapids.

Thursday night, Alex went into his black box, built for him at the ASPR for the purpose of out-of-body experiments. The black box is a tiny room with a pillow and rug where Alex sits in complete darkness. Alex is hooked up to vital sign

equipment and measurement devices in the next room with which Dr. Osis monitors his contact and communications with a remote speaker system. Many of the men's conversations have been taped for the case files. Later, Alex and Dr. Osis go over the tapes to discuss the case with the person who has asked for help.

After Alex made himself comfortable in the box, he informed Dr. Osis that Mindy's house dated from 1917. Until Mindy's family moved in, the same family lived there until the death of an elderly couple, who were the last residents. When questioned by Dr. Osis, Alex replied that both had died of natural causes, although he seemed less certain about the female. He felt she might have died as a result of over-medication, perhaps intentionally. In any event, her death had not been easy. Neither of them, he understood, had been very happy.

Alex described the woman wearing a long dress that reached below her ankles. She spoke to him, repeating over and over, "I did not mean it this way. I must say, it was not meant this way." Small and plump, the mid-sixties aged woman paced in front of Alex in what he felt was an attempt to settle the scene for the elderly couple and the present inhabitants of the house.

Not longer after that, Alex picked up the collective energy of a scene that had been repeated in an upstairs room of the house. It was the early 1920s. A blond child about five or six was sitting on a black oak floor in his parents' bedroom as a heated argument raged around him.

"Is the argument between the parents, or between them and the child?" Dr. Osis questioned.

Alex commented briefly, "Between them." There was a long silence that left Dr. Osis waiting. Finally Alex continued, "The man appears to be becoming very violent. He is very angry, in fact. The woman is trying to hold on. I see her rushing over to pick up the child, it seems she is convinced that the man is going to attack the child. I see her holding the child. The man tries to take him from her. The woman is screaming and the child is crying and the man keeps saying 'something has to be done, something has to be done.' Now she is running into a small room adjoining their bedroom where the child is placed on the bed."

Dr. Osis asked Alex to describe the room. Alex said that it was very dark. There were no windows. It was a small room, hardly big enough for the child and his mother. Alex continued, "The man is saying, 'It's for the good of us all.' I guess he wants to put the child away and the woman doesn't want to. I have my doubts that the other children are even allowed to see the child. They may not have seen him at all."

After a long silence, Alex commented, "I can see why a child would be frightened staying in such a place. I can hear moaning from the child...I would say this is about six months before the child died." Alex ended the day's session then, expecting the next day to go back to the same scene and resume his investigations with Dr. Osis. But the next afternoon, Alex found himself in an entirely different situation.

Alex settled himself back into the black box and began talking over the intercom with Dr. Osis. "There's some kind of structure. It is a small building...." Alex hesitated. "You know, Dr. Osis, it was the beginning of the same structure that was completed in 1917. There was some kind of structure on that land on which a woman had previously died. There are several cross-sections of things here."

In the adjoining room, Dr. Osis sat forward with interest. He knew now that they were dealing with multiple manifestations. "What does the woman look like?"

"She's about thirty-five. Dark hair. She wears a bonnet. She's very well dressed. The dress goes, Dr. Osis, I would say close to her ankles or just a little above them. So it's not a 1917 scene."

"Can you say more about her?"

"Just...."

"Does she want to tell you something?" Dr. Osis probed.

"At the present time, no. She just seems to be floating." Alex's voice faded and Dr. Osis checked his instruments.

"Does she want to tell you something that happened to her?" Dr. Osis continued. "Did she die a violent death? A natural death? Perhaps accidental?"

There was a long silence before Alex finally spoke.

"Dr. Osis this is crazy. I have never seen this before."

"What is it?" Dr. Osis was staring at the instruments, they were jumping wildly.

"It's like a small tombstone. Perhaps the woman was buried there and moved later. Or else she's still buried there."

Or maybe she's buried nearby and nobody knows anything about it. It's a tombstone with a mound. She's pointing at it. All green grass with a mound like a piece of rock. It's not a regular tombstone, Dr. Osis. She keeps pointing at it but I don't see any name on it. There's something running through my mind, something like Margaret, but I don't know what that means. It's fading. I'm holding her hand. Is anything happening?"

Dr. Osis checked his instruments, the needles were going crazily. "Right now, yes," he told Alex.

"We're talking. She's telling me that there was a dreadful epidemic or disease in which everyone in the village thought she was dead. She was buried alive. She's pointing to the grave." Alex stopped abruptly. "Oh, my...." His voice sounded in great pain, "She was married. At the time she was pronounced dead, she was pregnant and buried alive."

"It must have been terrible to awaken in the grave," Dr. Osis said sympathetically, partly for Alex's benefit.

"She is telling me, 'Now I have told you. This completes the event.' She is standing at the foot of her grave talking to me. There's this mound and a slab of rock at the other end. Now she's disappearing, it's as though she's lying down and resting."

The next thing Dr. Osis heard was Alex's normal speaking voice. "I'm back, Dr. Osis. There are tears streaming down my face."

Two days later, Alex and Dr. Osis told Mindy that her house was haunted by two women; a woman with a retarded child who died in the house and the woman who'd died in the smallpox epidemic. On the phone, Mindy confessed that something very odd had happened to her.

She had been sleeping in her room when, all at once, she woke up and looked around. She saw what she described as sparkles in front of her eyes. They shimmered against the wall for several second and then disappeared. In their place was a dark rectangle that looked like a screen. Mindy watched, fascinated, as a person walked through the screen. When she got out of the bed to investigate, the person vanished. Even though Mindy looked around the room, she couldn't find a trace. Her curiosity satisfied, she turned around to get back into bed and saw a pair of bare feet on the quilt. There was a pretty dark-haired woman sitting there weeping. Mindy walked over to the young woman. She didn't touch her, but she consoled her. Eventually, the woman stopped weeping and vanished.

From then on, there were no more incidents in the house. Stevie stopped having nightmares about strange people he'd never seen in strange rooms he'd never been in. Once the two women, grieving over the fates of their children, had been given the chance to communicate their histories, the manifestations ceased. Perhaps the hauntings were activated by the presence of a happy, healthy child in the house.