

## UNCLE BILLY'S GHOST – Adventures in Ocean Park

Parker huddled under the stairs, his legs drawn up to his chest and his arms around his knees. It was chilly and there was a musty smell in the air. He disliked dares but could not show the other kids he was afraid. Everyone in Ocean Park knew the story of Uncle Billy, as he had been known in the town. How he had worn old clothes that needed laundering, had walked with a limp and glared at kids. He had just looked real mean.

The old house where he had lived and died had sat neglected for over six months. Amongst the neighbors, there were rumors of strange lights and sounds emanating during the night. Uncle Billy had left no

will and the authorities had been unable to track down any family members. So, the old three story house set well back from the road, gradually deteriorated since Uncle Billy's passing, becoming something of an eyesore.

Parker and his friends sometimes climbed over the back wall and helped themselves to apples from the orchard at the end of the long over grown garden.



None of them had plucked up the courage to go near the house, even to look through the windows. Too spooky they all agreed.



The previous weekend, Parker's dad and several other dad's had taken a bunch of kids on a weekend fishing and camping trip. On the Saturday night, the fathers and kids had sat around a campfire, roasting marshmallows. One of the dads had told a very silly ghost story and of course, that got things going and soon, several of the other dads had told their favorite ghost stories and the boys had all ended up sleeping in the same tent, a little too nervous to sleep in their individual tents.

Parker tried to take his mind off the occasional creaking emanating from the house by thinking and worrying about his dad's situation. He had lost his job over three months ago and apart from picking up a bit of work here and there, pumping gas or doing odd jobs, the small family's finances were getting pretty slim. A few days ago, Parker had overheard his dad on the phone with the local bank manager with his dad sounding kind of upset. Afterwards he had Googled the word foreclosure,

learning it meant the bank could take their house because his dad was not paying the bank the money he owed them. His dad, as was his way, did not mention anything to Parker just how tight the family finances were.

The Monday after the camping weekend, Parker and his best friend, Cody Clark, Cody's sister Jackie and her friend Lisa and Charlie Mathers were walking home from school, passing by Uncle Billy's house.

Charlie Mathers came up with the dare.

"Everyone knows Uncle Billy's place is haunted. I bet one week allowance that no one could stay in the house

more than an hour after dark by themselves."

Jackie, Cody's sister, scoffed.

"How do you know it's haunted? It's just spooky. Anyway, how much do you get for allowance? Probably not even worth it."

Charlie said. "My dad says it's haunted. He and Mr. Davis, Evan's dad were coming back from bowling one night and saw a light and a shadow moving past one of the upstairs windows. They thought maybe there was someone stealing from the house so they called the police who came around. They checked it out and said the house was all locked up, no open or broken windows

and nobody answered their knocking."



Parker said "Huh. I bet I could. How much is your allowance?"

"Twenty dollars."

Parker, who really could use the money said "Okay."

Immediately Charlie Mathers said. "It's a bet then." Slugging Parker on the arm. "But what do I get if you lose?" Then. "I know. You gotta give me that autographed baseball mitt. The one signed by David Ortiz at Fenway Park."

Parker protested. "That's too much. That glove is worth more than twenty dollars."

Charlie said slyly. "So you don't think you can stay in Uncle Billy's house then."

"Yes I can. A bet is a bet" and the two boys shook hands.

"How do we know you'll stay in the house and not get scared and leave?" asked Lisa.

The kids pondered this question.

"I know." said Lisa. "I'll borrow my mom's I-phone and give it to Parker."

"How many hours do I have to stay to win the bet?"

Charlie said. "Eight o'clock to midnight. We can track you on the GPS. If the phone turns off or if you leave the house before 12 o'clock, you lose the bet."

There was some further discussion and the kids agreed to convene in the alleyway in the back of Uncle Billy's property at seven o'clock the next night.

"Just one thing," said Charlie. "How are you going to get into the house? It's all locked up."

Parker said "That's my problem."

The next night, the five kids were shuffling around in the back alley as dusk fell. Lisa gave Parker her mom's I-

Phone and Parker stuffed it in his backpack.

"How are you going to get in the house?" asked Cody.

In answer, Parker held up a key.

"Back door key," he said.

"Last year, Uncle Billy knocked on our door and said he was going away for a week. He gave my dad the back door key and asked him to keep an eye on his house. He never came back for the key."

So that was how Parker came to be holed up in a cubby hole under the stairs in the front entrance way. He had used the flashlight on the I-phone to navigate through the back garden, open the back door and make

his way through the house to what he figured was a safe place to spend the next four hours.



He checked his watch now and then, amazed at how slow time went when you wanted it to go fast. Around nine thirty, as he crawled out of the cubby hole to stretch his legs, he heard the back door open with a slight squeak. He quickly dropped down and squeezed back into his hiding place.

"Who the heck is that?" he thought to himself.

He heard footsteps as someone came down the hallway in his direction. A figure walked by him as he hunched down, heading in the direction of the staircase. He could hear the footsteps slowly diminishing as whoever it was, climbed the stairs.

"Man oh man." Parker whispered under his breath. He could hear some noises coming from upstairs as if whoever it was, was moving stuff around. And right then, his left leg cramped up. He violently jerked up, hitting his head on the panel under the stairway. Holding his head with one hand and grabbing his locked leg with the other, he staggered out of his cubby hole, dancing on one leg and finally falling

back into his hiding space where he crashed into the back wall that gave way and he fell backwards into the darkness.

Suddenly, there were footsteps running down the stairs and as Parker struggled to sit up, a bright flashlight shone in his face.

"Parker."

"Dad?"

A hand grabbed one of his arms and he was dragged out from under the stairs into the entranceway. Parker stood up, rubbing the pain in his cramped leg and staring up at the bewildered face of his father who had lowered the flashlight and was crouched down, staring into

the face of his equally bewildered son.

"You have some explaining to do young man. What are you doing in here?"

"Dad, I could ask you the same thing."

Parker's dad lifted his son up and sat him on a nearby chair.

"You could but I want to hear what you have to say first. And what was that crash? You scared the heck out of me."

Parker managed to straighten up his cramped leg and then explained to his father about the bet he had made with his friends.

"So I was crunched up in the cubby hole under the stairs when I heard the back door

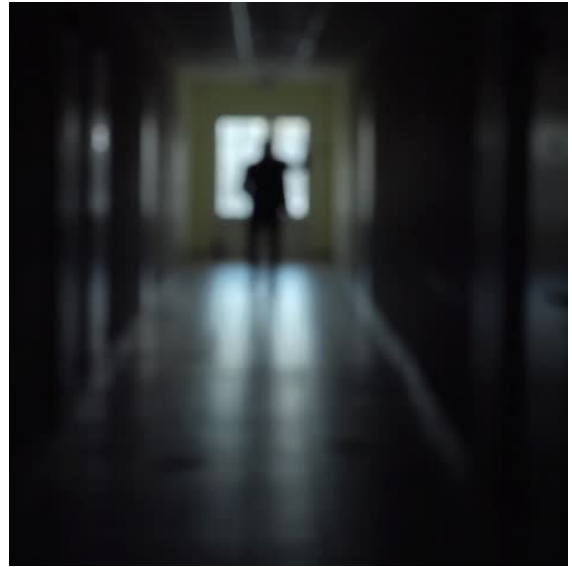


open and someone, you, come in and went up the stairs. I could hear you up there and then one of my legs cramped up and I jerked up hitting my head," he paused gingerly rubbing a bump on the back of his head, "Then I tried to get up and then fell over backwards into my hiding spot. I crashed through the wall and then you arrived. I thought you were Uncle Billy's ghost."

"Uncle Billy's ghost? Who came up with that idea?"

"Well, a lot of the dads have said they have seen lights and someone or something moving around late at night and all the kids reckon it's the ghost of Uncle Billy."

Parker's dad stood and shook his head. He looked down at his son and nodded.



"I guess I owe you an explanation." He paused, thinking. "Many years ago, when you were just a little kid, Uncle Billy was well regarded around town. If someone had a problem, Billy was there. He was generous, kind and everyone loved him. That's how he got the handle Uncle Billy. He was everyone's favorite uncle."



Then, an accident changed him. He stopped being friendly, stopped helping people and just became mean. And, he became a recluse. You know what that means?"

Parker shook his head.

"It means he didn't want to have anything to do with anyone. He became a loner. He just changed. This was very sad for me as I'm going to tell you something that no one else knows. Billy is your uncle, my brother. He is, was, really your Uncle Billy."

Parker looked wide eyed at his father who crouched down and looked Parker in the eye.

"But, I didn't know he was my brother until after he

died. The accident affected his thinking and personality. He didn't share this information with anyone and refused any offers of help. It seems he and I were adopted by two different families when we were kids, after our parents died in a car accident. Later, he tracked me down and for whatever reason, did not share our relationship with me until after his death. A lawyer contacted me with a letter outlining what I am telling you. In the letter, Billy said he was leaving all his possessions to me but the lawyer had no knowledge of a will executed by Billy to make that legal. No paperwork anywhere. His house is all paid for it seems and he didn't like banks. So,

I've been coming over here some nights just looking around seeing if I can find a will or some paperwork. But, I've looked everywhere and wherever he left the paperwork, it was not in this house. And because of this, the government will take possession of the house and the proceeds go who knows where."

Parker looked at his dad.



"So this house actually belongs to you but because there's nothing to show it's yours, you lose this house and we lose our house as well? I heard you talking on the phone with the bank manager dad."

Parker's dad looked away. Standing up, he pulled Parker into him and hugged him, his eyes red.

"Sometimes life does not go the way you want it to Parker. You just got to roll with the punches. Come on, let's get out of here. I'll make us a hot cocoa."

"But dad. I can't leave until twelve. If I do, I lose the bet and then I have to give Charlie my catchers mitt, the one you got me signed by David Ortiz."

"How do they know you are here or not?" Parker's dad asked.

"Lisa gave me her mom's I-Phone and they are checking up on me on GPS. It's in my backpack."

Parker leaned into the cubby hole under the staircase to grab his backpack and as he did, he noticed the panel he crashed into had revealed a small storage area under the staircase.

"Dad, look here."

He pulled the I-Phone from his backpack and turned the flash light app on, shining it into the recess. The light revealed a small filing cabinet.

"Dad, dad. Look here, There's something in here."

Moving aside for his dad, Parker shone the light on the cabinet. His dad reached in and dragged the cabinet towards the opening. He wrangled it on its side, then manhandled it out through the opening, setting it upright on the floor. He pulled on each drawer but both were locked.

"How we going to open it dad?"

"Well, that's a good question Parker. The key you borrowed to get in here for your dare was a copy I had made for a "just in case" situation. Billy never did ask for the original key back and there was another key on the ring and I could never figure what it was for. Now I think I know."

He pulled the key ring from his pocket and inserted the smaller of two keys into the lock on the top draw. The lock turned and the drawer slid open. He did the same with the second drawer.

Inside the top drawer was a large brown envelope. There was also a cash box.



Parker's dad undid the tie holding the envelope closed. Inside were a bunch of documents. He slid them out. The front page of the top document stated in capital

letters. **LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF WILLIAM BUCK.** He looked at Parker.

"I don't believe this. I've got to sit down. This is your Uncle Billy's missing will."

He thumbed through the document and stopped at the last page. Out loud he read:

*"I leave all my worldly possessions to my brother Mitchell Buck including my house, my cash savings and my gold collection."*

"This is unbelievable. I'm stunned. Well, it sure proves one thing - he did not believe in banks." He opened the cash box to reveal a collection of gold coins. The second drawer was stacked

full of bundles of bank notes in plastic wrapping.

"Parker, your dare might have been the most rewarding dare that was ever made. But, first thing in the morning we have to get all this over to the lawyer's office just to make sure it's legal. There's a lot of money here and I've got make sure we do what's right. You understand that?"

Parker stared in wonder at the contents of the cabinet.

"Dad, I know it's a lot of money and if the lawyer says it's all legal, we don't lose our house, right?"

Parker's dad nodded.

THE END.

Parker then said. "Okay, but this all happened because of my dare and I don't want to lose my catcher's mitt, so is it Ok if I stay here until twelve so I don't lose my bet."

Parker's dad nodded again.

"I think we'll stay here together. I'll need you to help me carry this over to our house. And I think the least I can do for you, all things taken into account is keep you safe from ghosts, though I think your Uncle Billy's ghost might be a ghost you would want to meet."