Ghost Hunting with Derek Acorah

Derek Acorah

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Аннотация

The UK's number one TV psychic offers a fascinating and compelling guide to ghost hunting. With tips and hints on tools, locations, and types of spirit activity a budding ghost hunter might encounter, Acorah provides a remarkable guide with plenty of brilliant and absorbing stories of his own encounters.Derek Acorah, well-known from the television programme "Most Haunted," has written a guide to ghosts that will fulfil your every ghost-related desire! Whether you want to find your very own ghost, learn more about how Derek does it, or just share more of Derek's exciting experiences with the spirit world, Ghost Hunting With Derek Acorah is sure to satisfy you! Along with numerous entertaining and occasionally frightening true-life accounts of Derek's own experiences with ghosts, Ghost Hunting With Derek Acorah will give you intriguing insights into Derek's world and the world of the spirits.The book contains:- Information of different types of ghost you may encounter, such as residual energy, anniversary ghosts, poltergeists and the spirit people.- Hints on how to prepare and what tools to use.- Where to go to find ghosts, with examples of some of the best places to find a ghost in the UK such as Chingle Hall, Goosnargh, Rufford Old Hall, Ormskirk, Lancs, Speke Hall, Liverpool, and Smithills Hall, Bolton, Lancashire.- Information on which ghosts you might encounter and their history.

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Ghost Hunting with Derek Acorah
Star of TV's *Most Haunted*
Derek Acorah

To my mother, Elizabeth, with love and thanks

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Introduction

My name is Derek Acorah. I am a medium with clairaudient, clairvoyant and clairsentient gifts. Over the years I have conducted many paranormal investigations and in this book I would like to share some of my experiences with you in the hope that it will assist the intrepid ghost hunters amongst you.

I first became aware of my ability to communicate with the world of spirit as a small boy. I was living with my family at my grandmother's house when one day I saw what I thought was a man standing on the first-floor landing. He spoke to me and as he reached out towards me, it felt as though he was ruffling my hair. I was very afraid and raced down the stairs to tell my gran that there was a strange man in the house. My gran and my mother hurried up the stairs, but there was nobody to be found.

'Tell me what the man looked like, Derek,' my gran said gently. I described the person I had seen. As I did so my mother and my gran exchanged glances. My gran took a large tin down from a shelf in the kitchen and took out a photograph. I was startled to see that this was a picture of the very man who had stopped me on the staircase.

'That's him!' I shouted. 'That's the man on the stairs!'

'He's the next,' said my gran quietly to my mother.

She explained to me that the man I had seen on the stairs was in fact my grandfather, who had passed to the spirit world before

I was born. She told me that I would see many, many people who had passed from this life to the world beyond and that I wasn't to be afraid. At the time I didn't understand. I didn't know that my grandmother was a medium herself. I did know that many people would come to the house to sit and chat with her and would leave looking very much happier than when they arrived, but I didn't notice that it was in fact my grandmother who would do all the talking!

Being a young lad, I soon forgot the incident and got on with the single most important thing in my life—football! I told everybody that I wanted to be a footballer when I grew up. As I went from junior to senior school, it became apparent, much to my father's delight, that I did indeed have some talent as a footballer. My dad would talk longingly about watching me play for the team he and all my uncles revered—Everton Football Club. His disappointment was huge when at the age of 15 I signed as an apprentice pro with Everton's arch rivals Liverpool.

I was a professional footballer for a number of years. After leaving Liverpool FC I joined various other clubs, including Wrexham, Glentoran and Stockport, before eventually ending up in Adelaide, South Australia, playing for USC Lion. By this time I had met and married my first wife, Joan, and we had become the proud parents of our son Carl, who was born shortly before we left for Australia.

My footballing career came to an end in the early 1980s and I returned to the UK with my family. Although football had

been my passion, I had not forgotten my early brushes with the spirit world, which I have written about in my first book, *The Psychic World of Derek Acorah*, and I now saw where my ultimate destiny lay—working for spirit. I had been allowed to achieve my childhood ambition, but now I had to take on the real work of helping others through the use of my mediumistic gifts, just as my grandmother had done before me.

Joan and I went our separate ways and, living on my own, I began conducting private readings for people. Before I knew it, I was in demand. I was working for spirit each and every day—and finding a fulfilment I had not experienced whilst playing football. I knew without a doubt that my grandmother had been correct. I was indeed 'the next one'!

I have recorded at length in my second book, *The Psychic Adventures of Derek Acorah*, how I came to meet my spirit guide, Sam, and to work in radio and television. After meeting the husband-and-wife team Yvette Fielding and Karl Beattie, who created LIVINGtv's unrivalled paranormal programme *Most Haunted*, I found myself ghost hunting all over the country. Although I had already conducted many paranormal investigations, it was during the *Most Haunted* investigations that I honed my skills as a 'ghostbuster'. I would now like to tell you about some of my experiences and explain what ghost hunting is all about!

CHAPTER 1 Preparation

Preparation is essential for a successful ghost hunt, both to gain satisfactory evidence of any spirit activity and to rule out any other explanations. What will you need?

Equipment

As a spirit medium, I both see and hear spirit naturally. I am able to pick up events that have taken place in a building from the atmosphere there. I like to think of such events as ‘photographs in time’, but they are more commonly known as residual energies, emotions from times gone by that linger in the fabric of a place.

Although many paranormal groups turn to mediums for assistance in their investigations, investigators will also need to include items of a more worldly nature in their kitbags to give tangible proof of spirit activity.

A Torch

One obvious item is a torch. Take a supply of replacement batteries too—mischievous spirit presences like nothing better than to drain battery power and a

hapless investigator who has forgotten to pack extra batteries could well end up fumbling around in the dark.

Notebooks and Pens

Notebooks and pens will enable you to record details of events as they occur. The worst thing to do is to rely on memory, as after a long night's investigation recall can be blurred, especially if there have been many exciting incidents.

It is also a good idea to make a rough sketch of the location before commencing an investigation, numbering rooms for ease of reference.

Plain sheets of white paper and pencils are also a necessity so that an item or 'trigger object' can be placed on the paper and its outline traced. Any subsequent movement of the object can then easily be detected. Wooden crosses of a suitable size seem to be popular as trigger objects, though any item which has an easily traceable outline may be used.

Cotton and Tape

It may be necessary to seal off certain rooms whilst tests are conducted. As security is not the issue here, simple black cotton and adhesive tape may be used.

A sealed room is the ideal location for a trigger object or for strategically placed cameras that will record any activity taking place.

Candles

Household candles should also be included in the kit, as the flickering of their flames may reveal a spirit presence. Checks should be made prior to starting the investigation to ensure that there are no draughts which could cast doubt over the cause of a flickering flame. Of course lit candles must never be left unattended purely from a safety point of view.

Flour

Prior to the investigation a raid on the kitchen cupboard should be made to acquire a bag of ordinary flour. When sprinkled over the floor this will reveal any footprints—or handprints, if sprinkled on a tabletop. A small soft brush should be used to distribute the flour over the desired area. Care should always be taken when investigating a property owned by another person and it may well be a good idea to spread the flour over sheets of old newspaper.

Walkie-Talkies

Walkie-talkies or two-way radios are a good way for investigators to keep in touch with one another during an investigation. If you are contemplating splitting up into groups, or even going off individually whilst investigating a location, it is always a good idea to be able to contact your fellow investigators.

A Thermometer

A thermometer is a must in order to detect fluctuations in the temperature of a room. I have seen large green-house-type thermometers used, but of course the serious ghost hunter will invest in a digital thermometer which gives the exact temperature on an 'easy to read' digital display.

An EMF Meter

An electro-magnetic field or EMF meter is worth acquiring. These measure fluctuations in electro-magnetic energy. Parapsychologists and paranormal investigators are of the general opinion that spirits cause such fluctuations.

When investigating a property using an EMF meter, all sources of electricity, i.e. cabling, and all electrical devices must be carefully noted, as such items also generate electro-magnetic fields. Any fluctuations displayed on the EMF meter should then be checked against the location of the electrical wiring. Once all such electricity sources have been established, anything registering over 2.5 milligauss on the EMF meter indicates a possible ghostly presence. I have found, however, that EMF meters are not always capable of delivering an accurate indication of a spirit presence.

Pendulums and Dowsing Rods

Some ghost hunters favour the use of dowsing rods and pendulums. It is alleged that both devices can pick up the electromagnetic energy field of a ghost.

Dowsing has been in use for many years. In ancient times, a 'Y'-shaped stick would be used to trace underground water sources. Today people tend to use a pair of specially prepared dowsing rods made of thick wire. Each rod is a basic 'L' shape but with a shorter foot and a longer upright. A rod is taken in each hand, with the shorter length held firmly in each fist and the longer end sticking straight out in front. Upon reaching an area of psychic activity, the rods will begin to swing wildly and cross over each other. Before attributing a dowsing rod reaction to paranormal activity, however, checks should be made to ensure there are no underground streams or other sources of water in the area.

It is said that most paranormal activity takes place in areas where many ley lines are present or at the junction of ley lines, so if investigators are aware of the location of these lines, they will have a clearer idea of where to commence their dowsing. To discover where these lines run, initially investigators would have to make enquiries of people at the locations or conduct prior research. They could of course spend many long hours walking backwards and forwards trying to determine the route of ley

lines, but that could well be a complete waste of time as they could find that they had simply been following the route of an underground stream or water source.

Pendulums may also be used in psychic investigations. A pendulum is a length of cord which is attached to either a small weight constructed from wood or metal or, as is my preference, a small quartz crystal suspended from a light chain approximately seven or eight inches in length. Hold the end of the chain, allowing the pendulum to hang straight down. The pendulum must be completely still. It must then be asked to indicate 'yes' and 'no'. It will respond by either revolving in a clockwise or an anticlockwise direction; it may swing from side to side or backwards and forwards. It is up to each individual to establish the relevant response and its meaning, as these can differ from person to person.

Once you have established the relevant pendulum reactions for 'yes' and 'no', you can ask the pendulum many questions. It can also be used to locate psychically active areas in much the same way as dowsing rods. It will swing or spin more and more rapidly as it comes closer to psychic energy or a spirit presence.

Not all investigators use dowsing rods or pendulums, but they can add an interesting element to paranormal investigations.

A Tape Recorder

A tape recorder is a definite must, both to record events during séances and to place at strategic points within the location in order to record possible spirit activity. Over the years there have been some very interesting cases of ‘electronic voice phenomenon’, where people have claimed that they have caught spirit voices on tape.

Cameras

Cameras are another essential, though the choice of camera is of course a personal preference. There is an argument that people will only capture 'orbs' (the first manifestation of spirit presence), or 'life lights' as I prefer to call them, using a digital camera. I, however, have found this not to be the case. When my wife has accompanied me on investigations and has taken photographs using both digital and ordinary flash cameras, orbs have been captured with both camera types, together with many other examples of spirit activity.

At least one video camera together with a tripod really is a necessity. This may be placed in a locked-off position in a room in an effort to capture evidence of spirit presence. This may take the form of floating orbs, ectoplasm or, in rare cases, movement of furniture or other items. If two or three video cameras can be positioned in the same room, clearly surveying the whole area, so much the better. Should any movement take place, the fact that it is filmed from all angles can prove that there was no human interference. It is unfortunate that on certain occasions the movement of an object has been captured on film but because only one camera has been used there has always been the argument that 'somebody moved it'—that 'somebody' being a solid and earthly person.

Man's Best Friend

It has long been stated that man's best friend is his dog. A ghost hunter's best friend can be a dog too!

All animals are psychic. It is not by chance that a pet cat or dog will know exactly when its owner is due to walk through the front door. I have received numerous communications from people telling me that their beloved cat or dog 'always knows' when they are about to arrive home, even though they have not been following a regular pattern of behaviour. Gwen has often told me that she knows that I will be arriving home shortly because the dogs will walk over to the kitchen door and sit there waiting. I too have noticed that should Gwen be away from the home, I can put the kettle on when one of our cats stations himself on the window ledge to peer at the front gate.

Stories abound of animals who have alerted their owners to unseen presences in their homes. There have also been numerous tales of guard dogs refusing to enter certain parts of properties. One such story involves a security guard and his dog who used to regularly patrol St. John's Centre in Liverpool. The dog was a large black German Shepherd named Sabre, who was known for his fearlessness when dealing with intruders. However, there was one part of the shopping mall that Sabre refused to visit. He would strain at his lead, bark and growl when encouraged to walk there. It was a spot where an unfortunate accident had taken

place during the construction of the centre. A young builder had fallen to his death and his spirit was known to revisit the scene.

It makes perfect sense to me therefore that a dog would be an excellent companion when undertaking the investigation of an allegedly haunted location. Not every dog is afraid, of course. Some dogs may acknowledge a spirit presence by wagging their tail whilst looking towards something that they can see but that you cannot. Others may bark and run up to an area where nothing is discernible to you. Others may display fear, just like Sabre, by refusing to go into or past a certain area. But if you have a dog, take it along! It can only add to the fun and provide a warm furry body to snuggle up to during those long dark vigils.

These are my suggestions for equipment to use when conducting a ghost hunt. Of course if you are technically adept, you will be able to devise your own methods. These may include buzzers, bells and alarms which will sound if activity is detected, and infra-red rays (similar to the type used in security systems) which will sound an alarm when broken. There are many ingenious devices—the choice is yours. However, with the few simple items I have mentioned, a ghost hunt may be conducted quite satisfactorily.

Other Preparations

Once you have your kitbag together, there are a few other preparations to make before starting your investigation.

It is always necessary to rule out in advance the more worldly explanations for noises or movements which could in the excitement of the moment be attributed to a ghostly presence. I recall visiting one location where the chandelier was said to swing when 'the spirits' were around. An examination of the alcove in which the chandelier hung showed loose-fitting window panes which allowed quite a strong draught through. Needless to say, 'the spirits' only made their presence felt on breezy days!

Breezes are not the only thing to look out for. Loose floorboards are an extremely common source of 'ghostly' creaks and groans. Water pipes can create some unearthly noises in the wee small hours, especially in older properties. The noise created by a badly fitting door in a draughty old house can have the hairs on your neck standing on end. Even the scurrying of mice in an old house can be mistaken for something less worldly. The branch of a tree persistently tapping on a window or roof can cause the unprepared investigator to assume that they are not alone. The natural cooling down and settlement of a house at night can create a series of noises which sound very much like footsteps ascending and descending a staircase. If a fireplace has been used, the brickwork cooling can make slight creaking

and cracking noises. All these eventualities have to be taken into consideration before an investigation can commence.

If you intend using a trigger object—a cross, coin, book, etc.—it should be placed on a sheet of white paper and a pencil outline drawn around its base before the investigation begins. It is preferable to train a video camera or cameras on the object to capture on film any movement that may occur. Make sure that the whole of the sheet of paper is clearly visible so that should any movement take place, it can be proved that nobody has interfered with the item. The room should then be sealed to prevent anybody entering and inadvertently (or purposely—it has been known!) moving the trigger object.

Also in advance of the investigation taking place, a thermometer should be used to determine the naturally occurring cold and warm areas of the location. Older houses commonly had 'cold rooms' where perishable foods would be stored. Also, it may be that a certain room is warmer than the rest of the house because of the hours that the sun shines there. All things have to be taken into consideration.

Lastly, make sure that you have a map of the location so that everybody involved has a clear understanding of how the rooms relate to one another. This will ensure that when people split off into groups to investigate different parts of the location, nobody will be confused as to where they are.

CHAPTER 2 Ghostly Varieties

When researching their chosen location, the paranormal investigator can expect to find reports of different types of 'sighting'. Noises may be heard; people may see ghosts only at certain times of the year or on certain dates; people may record seeing 'just a pair of legs' or a 'headless woman'. I will describe the more common forms of paranormal event likely to be found on a ghost-hunting expedition.

Residual Energy

The more emotional or tragic the events which have taken place in a property, the stronger the energies that are absorbed by the fabric of the building. This is not to say that the normal daily life of the past is not detectable by a sensitive, but merely to explain that the more intense the emotional situation, the greater the depth of the energy. For instance, in buildings where vicious acts of murder have taken place, I have been immediately hit by the horror of the situation and at times have been forced to retreat to gather my spiritual protection around me. I have also entered buildings where nothing of any particular importance has taken place. Nevertheless, I have still been able to psychically detect the daily lives of the former occupants. I have been into old cotton mills where I was able to hear the tremendous noise of the looms and have been clairvoyantly shown the women and children at their work.

Residual energy also applies to objects. A sensitive can touch an item—maybe a piece of jewellery, a book or a piece of furniture, in fact anything which has been in contact with a person of this world or the next—and give information relating to the current or previous owner.

Anniversary Ghosts

These are the apparitions that appear at a given time on a given date each year.

The Tower of London has two famous anniversary ghosts—the phantom of Lady Jane Grey is said to reappear as a white shape every 12 February, the anniversary of her execution, and the harrowing slaughter of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, is said to be re-enacted every 27 May.

On 19 May a coach drawn by headless horses is said to drive towards Blickling Hall in Norfolk. The figure of Anne Boleyn, cradling her bloodied head on her lap, can be seen inside. She was beheaded at the Tower of London on 19 May and was reputedly born in a house where the present Blickling Hall stands.

Another of Henry VIII's wives also appears as an anniversary ghost. On the 4 November 1541 Catherine Howard ran sobbing along what is now known as the Haunted Gallery at Hampton Court Palace, intent on pleading with the king to spare her life. Each year on this date it is said that her distraught phantom can be seen re-enacting this tragic scene.

Ghostly monks are said to walk at Glastonbury on Christmas Eve each year, while even though part of what is known as the Nun's Walk at Borley Rectory in Essex has been built upon, there are still occasional sightings of a nun on 28 July each year.

Hallowe'en (31 October) inevitably has a long tradition of

anniversary ghosts, which range from First World War soldiers drinking at Bournemouth town hall to the ghostly monks who walk near the ruins of a chapel near Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

In fact there are literally hundreds of ghosts which are alleged to reappear each year on the same date. As yet I have not visited the location of an anniversary ghost on the anniversary. I have, however, been to such sites at other times and have immediately been made aware of the residual energy of some of the spirit people reputed to 'walk' the premises. One has to remember, though, that many stories of anniversary ghosts are just that—stories. They have no real truth behind them and their roots have been lost in the mists of time.

Crisis Ghosts

The theory behind crisis ghosts is that at the emotionally charged moment of death the spirit projects itself into the consciousness of those nearest to it in life. There have been numerous accounts of people having ‘visions’ of loved ones who have either been dying or been going through moments of intense fear or danger.

A well-known crisis ghost was that of Norman Leslie, a member of the famous Leslie family. During the First World War he appeared on the banks of the lake at his home, Castle Leslie in County Monaghan, Ireland. Staff at the castle thought that he had arrived home on leave and rushed to prepare his room for him, but then he was nowhere to be found. A week later his mother received a telegram informing her that he had been killed in action in France.

Ghosts who Walk through Walls

This type of ghost is usually experienced in older properties, often dating back centuries, which have been altered structurally over the years. Floors may have been raised, resulting in an apparition which appears only from the knees upwards, or maybe a doorway will have been blocked up and relocated, which means that the ghost, continuing to use the original doorway, appears to walk through the wall.

I can recall investigating an old manor house in Cheshire that had been drastically altered. I was amazed to view clairvoyantly horse-drawn wagons parading backwards and forwards through the living quarters of the old house. Even more bizarre was the fact that I could only see the horses from the belly upwards, the legs being invisible.

When I related my findings to the historian present, he was able to tell me that the house had been radically altered and extended. What I was viewing was the route that carters used to take along a road which ran under the footings of the present building, hence only the upper portion of the horses and carts being visible.

Spirit People

As well as all these types of ghosts, of course there is the group of 'people' I feel particularly at home with—the spirits of people who have lived in or had a strong connection with a building and who make return visits. These are the people I can communicate with either directly or through my spirit guide Sam, who acts as an intermediary, passing on information from the people in spirit to me and enabling me in turn to pass it on to people still living in this world.

These spirit people are as alive as you and I. My truth is that there is no death—we live on in the world of spirit once we have shed the physical garb of this earthly incarnation.

Spirit people can be anywhere they wish to be. They can visit a home they used to inhabit or they can visit the homes of family members and friends. They can call in to a previous workplace to visit former colleagues or just to see how 'the old place' is being run in the present day. They turn up at theatres where mediums are demonstrating in order to communicate with loved ones in the audience. There are no restrictions on the people in the spirit world—they can go wherever they please.

CHAPTER 3 Not So Haunted

In my experience, the places that are least likely to yield a ghostly presence or the glimpse of a spirit person are the very places designed to scare the living daylights out of people by dramatizing some of the more horrific incidents of the past. I have visited a number of such places, but I am afraid to say that I have been disappointed to find that instead of experiencing a steady stream of willing spectres, I have moved between the various displays without meeting even one spirit entity.

With the growth in popularity of LIVINGtv's *Most Haunted* and paranormal programming in general, however, my mailbag has increased in size considerably and the majority of the letters I receive are genuine requests for explanations of inexplicable events taking place in people's homes. There are some communications, though, that recount events that are nothing to do with the spirit world and more to do with very fertile imaginations.

I recall with some amusement a letter I received some years ago. It was from the matron of a nursing home in Liverpool and catalogued the complaints she had been receiving from one of her elderly ladies, whom I shall name Beryl. Beryl had been complaining that she was being disturbed at night by something that she could not see. When she switched on the light there was nobody there. I decided that this was one occasion when I would

go along to attempt to sort out the problem myself.

I arrived at the home and was met by the matron, who told me that she was most concerned, as Beryl was complaining loud and long to the staff within earshot of other residents, which was making everybody rather unsettled and apprehensive, especially at night.

I asked to be taken to meet Beryl and was led to the pleasant bed-sitting room that was Beryl's home.

Beryl greeted me brightly. 'Hello, Derek! I've been watching you on the telly. My grandson videos *Most Haunted* for me and I watch it in my room. I'd watch it in the main lounge, but the others won't have it on because they say it gives them the willies!'

As Beryl spoke I looked around the room. It was bright, comfortable and clean. I could feel nothing in the atmosphere to suggest that anything untoward from a paranormal point of view was taking place.

Beryl continued, 'I came to live here after my Bert passed away. I would have liked to have gone to the same place as my sister Jessie, but at the time there was no room for me there. She's been in touch just recently, though, and she tells me that there's a nice little room empty just opposite hers.'

I looked hard at Beryl. She grinned back at me and winked.

'So, tell me about what's been going on in your room,' I said.

Beryl proceeded to tell me a lurid tale about ghosts who roamed her room at night and entities who jumped onto her bed and pulled the bedclothes from her.

‘I’m really frightened!’ she said, winking at me again. ‘You never know, the next thing is they might start interfering with me!’

I knew immediately that this was a ruse dreamed up by Beryl in an attempt to get herself moved to the same residential home as her sister. But as she had been speaking I had seen the spirit form of a man materialize next to her armchair. He was a small round man who wore his shirtsleeves rolled up. He had an open friendly face and had been smiling as Beryl had unfolded her tale of ghosts and ghouls and things that went bump in the night.

‘She’s a wily old bird, my Beryl,’ he said as she finished speaking. ‘She’ll stop at nothing to get in the same place as that sister of hers. They’re very close.’

I thanked Beryl for allowing me into her room and asked the matron whether I could speak with her in the office.

‘What d’you think, Derek?’ she asked as we sat sharing a pot of tea and a plate of biscuits.

‘I don’t think that there’s anything going on in Beryl’s room at all,’ I told her. ‘In my opinion Beryl desperately wants to join her sister and she’s come up with this story in an attempt to secure a move for herself.’

The matron looked surprised. ‘Really!’ she said. ‘Well, if she’s prepared to come up with a story such as this she must really be determined. I’ll see what I can do. I believe her sister’s resident at another of our houses. There may be a chance that I can arrange a transfer. It’s not something we usually do, but I’ll make a special

concession on this occasion.'

Some weeks later I received a letter from Beryl asking me whether I would call to see her in her new home. I arranged to visit a few days later.

'You're very naughty!' I chided her.

Beryl giggled like a young girl. 'It was you who gave me the idea,' she said. 'All the ghosts and things going on in those spooky houses you visit on the telly—I thought it'd be worth a try! It gave all those other old fogies something to think about, anyway.' She grinned impishly. 'Seriously, though, Derek, I can't say that I'm sorry I pulled a fast one because I'm here with Jessie now, but I do truly believe that we go somewhere when we pass away. I know my Bert's waiting for me and that we'll be together again soon.'

I patted her hand. 'Of course he is, Beryl,' I told her. 'I saw him in your room at the other place. It looks as though he has the same sense of humour as you, so goodness knows what'll happen when you get together again!

CHAPTER 4 The Matter of a Ouija Board

Not all such claims are bogus, of course. I have visited many people who have been bothered by spirit visitation and have been able to help them understand what has been going on in their homes.

One such plea for help came from Eva, an elderly lady who lived alone in a flat on the outskirts of Wigan. 'I need your help,' she wrote. 'I don't know what to do. You're my only hope of finding peace.'

A week later I was standing outside the building which housed Eva's ground-floor flat. As she opened the front door I was hit by the cold and unwelcoming atmosphere.

'It's horrible isn't it, Derek?' Eva commented. 'It wasn't always like this, though. My home always used to have a lovely feel about it. Now I'd love to move, but I just can't afford to. You don't get much on a pension these days.' She smiled ruefully.

As Eva made a cup of tea for us, I looked around. The home seemed perfectly normal. There was a comfortable suite in front of the gas fire, a china cabinet against one wall and a small dining table and chairs against another wall. Everything was neat and tidy. In fact it was the typical home of an elderly lady. There was nothing that I could see that would generate anything untoward

and Eva herself was a lovely old soul. I imagined that normally she would have been bright and cheerful, but at the moment she was looking much less than happy.

Eva returned to the room carrying a tray of tea. She sat opposite me and proceeded to tell me what had been happening in her home.

'It all began about eight months ago,' she said. Since then she had been experiencing a number of things in her home which were disturbing and frightening. She was unable to sleep at night because of the loud bangs and crashing noises that she could hear coming from her sitting room as she was lying in bed. If she got up to investigate, there was nothing there. She would wake up in the morning to find her furniture moved around. The worst thing happened just as she was arriving home from a shopping trip one day. She heard a noise in her sitting room as she was hanging up her coat in the hallway and when she went to investigate she found that water was streaming down the wall of the room. She was now at the stage where she felt as though she just wanted to run away.

'I've had the council in,' she told me, 'and even the local priest came along. He was very kind, but no matter what he did, it didn't make any difference.'

I had a very strong feeling that Eva's problems were all linked to the flat above her. I asked her who lived upstairs. She told me that the flat was empty and had been so for more or less the same amount of time that she had been experiencing her problems.

‘The young couple who lived in that flat were a bit odd-looking,’ she said. ‘I was glad to see them go really, because I didn’t feel comfortable around them and they used to have some very strange-looking visitors.’

I sat back in my chair and closed my eyes. As I sat quietly I could feel Sam drawing closer to me. I heard his voice. ‘Fools!’ he said. ‘They were fools—dabbling with ouija boards and the like!’

Ouija (which is a combination of the word ‘yes’ in French and German) boards have been popular since Victorian times, when invoking the spirits was considered something of a parlour game. The letters of the alphabet, the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and the numbers one to ten are arranged in a circle and a glass tumbler is used to point to them. Today it is possible to purchase a pre-printed board game which uses a plastic planchette as a pointer.

People sit around the table, each with a finger resting lightly on the base of the upturned tumbler. The spokesperson for the group will then request that any spirit who wishes to make contact with the group do so. This is where the immortal words ‘Is there anbody there?’ stem from. The theory is that should a spirit presence be summoned, that spirit person will use the energy of the people in attendance to move the tumbler around the tabletop, indicating letters of the alphabet which will spell out a name or a response to any question asked of it. It will answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ by gliding over to those words and will give dates by visiting the relevant numbers.

I have come across incidences of people using a ouija board

on numerous occasions. It may be a serious attempt to invoke a spirit, it may be idle curiosity or it may merely be a party game. Whatever the reason, it is a grave error of judgement to use one of these boards unless you are fully aware of the possible consequences. I do not like them and would not encourage anybody to use one myself.

The trouble generated by ouija begins with the fact that the people using the board are rarely conversant with the workings of spirit. They know nothing of the lower realms of the world beyond, the realms inhabited by spirits who can cause a variety of problems: all sorts of attacks, disruption in the home, items being moved, obnoxious smells, inexplicable noises—in fact just the type of annoyances that poor Eva was experiencing.

The only way to bring Eva some relief from the problem was to close the vortex or portal that had been opened by the irresponsible people who had up to recently lived in the flat above her. A vortex or portal is a 'doorway' in our ether used by spirits to enter or leave our earthly atmosphere.

I explained to Eva that the events she had been experiencing were nothing whatsoever to do with her—she had simply been the victim of other people's foolhardiness. I asked whether she would agree to me conducting a candle rite in her home. This would close the portal left in the atmosphere and would protect her and her home from further intrusion. 'Anything, Derek! I'll do anything to put an end to all this!' she replied.

I had suspected before I had left home that there might be

the need for protection of this dear old soul, so I had come prepared with my candles and a plain white sheet. Eva supplied me with bowls of salt and water. I said my prayer of invocation and proceeded with the candle rite.

After this I am happy to say that Eva kept in touch with me from time to time and was able to report that she was living happily and peacefully in her home once more.

CHAPTER 5 Poltergeists

Poltergeist is German for 'noisy ghost' and poltergeistal activity is commonly linked to children, especially girls, approaching puberty who have displayed signs of psychic ability. It is generally agreed, and is also my opinion, that a poltergeist is not the manifestation of a spirit person, rather an abundance of energy generated by and drawn to adolescents or people suffering severe emotional stress.

Usually poltergeistal activity is limited to noises—rustlings, tappings, knocks and dragging sounds—but occasionally disarray can be caused within a home with items being thrown, furniture moved and obnoxious smells created. There have also been some reports of poltergeistal energy causing the person affected to levitate from their bed.

In most cases the problems subside if the affected individual is removed from the premises and reappear when that person returns. Obviously the person who is attracting the poltergeistal activity is unaware that the entity is drawing on their emotional energy.

It is unusual for poltergeistal activity to be of any duration. In some cases it lasts only for a few days; in others, a number of months.

There are always exceptions to the rule, however. This was amply demonstrated by an early 1950s case when the

poltergeistal activity focused on not one person, but two, and in both cases males. The events took place at 1 Byron Street in Runcorn, Cheshire. Sam Jones and his grandson, John Glynn, then 16 years of age, shared a bedroom in the family home. One night, having just retired to bed, they heard a scratching noise coming from the dressing-table drawer. An investigation showed nothing and, thinking it might have been a mouse scared away by them opening the drawer, they both returned to their beds and thought nothing more about it. The following night, however, not only were there scratching noises but the drawers began to rattle and the dressing table moved, despite being extremely heavy.

After that numerous acts of poltergeistal vandalism took place—a clock was smashed, chairs were thrown against the wall and books flew through the air as though thrown by some invisible hand. There were many independent witnesses, including reporters from the *Runcorn Guardian* newspaper, two policemen, two Methodist ministers and various psychic researchers. No logical explanation could be given and it was declared to be a definite case of poltergeistal activity.

Over the years I have come into contact with poltergeistal activity on numerous occasions. Sometimes it has been of extremely short duration—a sudden burst of disruption that is over as soon as it has started. There have been other occasions, however, when people have become so frightened that they have moved out of their home, only to find that the disruption follows them to their new house.

One incident that I remember well involved a lady named Jean. She called me at my office sounding very agitated. She had been living together with her son Stephen, aged 12, and her daughter Lindsay, aged 15, since the breakdown of her marriage a year or so earlier. It had been an acrimonious divorce which Jean and her children had found extremely upsetting. As time had passed, however, they had come to terms with their new life and everything had seemed to be more settled. That was, until a few weeks before Jean's call to me.

Jean told me that strange things had started to happen—not very much at first, just little things like odd noises and belongings being moved. In fact initially it was more irritating than frightening. As the days turned into weeks, however, the noises had become more sinister. They seemed to be concentrated around Stephen's bedroom, which was situated above the family lounge. When Jean and her children were watching television in the lounge, it sounded as though something heavy was being dragged along the floor of the room above. On investigating, they would find that bedclothes had been disturbed and books had been thrown around the floor. Stephen became afraid to go to his bedroom to sleep. He reported that when he did so, he felt as though his bed was vibrating. On one occasion Jean told me that he had been literally thrown out of the bed. After that he had insisted on sleeping on the sofa downstairs.

Upon arrival at Jean's home, I stood outside looking at the house. It was unremarkable, but I knew psychically that all was

not well within the four walls. I knocked on the door, which was opened a few moments later by Jean, looking pale and nervous. She told me that the previous night had been very bad, with a constant array of noises, squeaks and bangs that had prevented her and her children from getting any sleep at all.

'I'm at the end of my tether, Derek,' she said. 'I thought that we would be able to pick up our lives after my divorce and live happily here.'

She led me through to the lounge. I asked her to tell me exactly what had been going on and how her son and her daughter had coped after the divorce.

Jean told me that although Lindsay had been very upset, she had been able to continue with her life in a more or less regular way, maintaining her interests with her friends, and with the help and support of her teachers, her schooling had not been affected too badly. Stephen, however, had been a different matter. He had been extremely upset and had told his mother that he felt to blame for his father leaving the family to set up home with another woman. The fact that she had a son and daughter approximately the same ages as Stephen and his sister had exacerbated the problem. Stephen felt that his father had looked for another boy to be his son because he was not worthy of the position. Unfortunately, Jean was preventing her husband from visiting Stephen and Lindsay because of the deep hurt she had suffered. All in all, Stephen was a very miserable and confused boy. Jean had tried time and time again to explain to him that he

had nothing to do with the family break-up, but he remained unconvinced.

Then the strange events began to take place. The first occasion was when Jean was sitting in the lounge. From the bedroom above came loud knocking noises. Thinking that Stephen was in his room, Jean went into the hallway and shouted up the stairs for him to be quiet. As she did so, Stephen answered from the kitchen, wondering what his mother was talking about. They both knew that Lindsay was out of the house visiting a friend. They rather nervously climbed the stairs and went into Stephen's bedroom. There was nothing there, though a pile of schoolbooks which had been lying on the desk was strewn over the floor. Jean assumed that the books had fallen to the floor, picked them up and put them away in the desk cupboard. They both went downstairs and thought no more about the matter.

A couple of nights later a similar incident took place—the knocking noise, the investigation of the bedroom and the books all over the floor. This time, though, Jean knew that there was something amiss. She herself had put Stephen's schoolbooks away not half an hour earlier. She also knew that both Stephen and Lindsay had been downstairs with her watching a favourite television programme when the noises had begun.

Every day something would happen. There would be banging and knocking noises and items would fall to the floor inexplicably, no matter how securely they were placed. Jean also started to notice an awful smell on the landing outside

Stephen's room. Because his bedroom was next to the bathroom she thought there might be a problem with the drains, though the odour was not actually present in the bathroom itself. A visit from a plumber brought no relief, however, as he told her the plumbing system was in perfect working order.

Jean and her children became more and more frightened. It got to the point where they all shared one bedroom, as they were too afraid to sleep in separate bedrooms. A priest was called in to perform an exorcism, but if anything things appeared to intensify. When the family went to their bedroom at night they now felt that there was a sinister presence in there with them. At her wits' end, Jean contacted me.

It was clear to me that this was not the work of any spirit presence. It was poltergeistal activity—energy attracted by Stephen's deeply emotional state. It had built up over a period of time, feeding on the emotions Stephen was releasing into the atmosphere, recharging and growing each day until it had built up enough to create noises and move objects around the home.

I called upon Sam. 'The atmosphere must be cleansed,' he told me. 'The negativity must be broken down in order to diffuse the build-up of power.'

I talked to Jean and explained the situation to her. I told her that Stephen's unhappiness and insecurity were attracting the negativity into the home in much the same way that a moth was attracted to the light. I asked her whether she could find it within herself to contact her husband and allow him to see the two

children. Stephen would then be able to rebuild his relationship with his father and maybe the deep rejection he was experiencing would be dispelled. This in turn would stop him from sending out his unhappy thoughts into the ether, thus starving the energy build-up. Reluctantly, Jean agreed. In the meantime, I conducted a candle rite in order to cleanse the house of negativity. That, together with Stephen's happier thoughts in the weeks to come, would diminish the negativity to a point where it would disappear completely.

I visited the home on three consecutive days. Each time I performed a candle rite and prayed for the family to be relieved of the burden they were enduring. Meanwhile Jean contacted her former husband and agreed that he could once again play a part in their children's lives. Stephen became much happier once he found that his father still loved him just as much as he ever did.

Starved of the unhappy emotions Stephen was releasing into the atmosphere, the energy lost its power, and as suddenly as the unpleasantness had begun, it stopped. The family were at peace once more. The situation may not have been exactly as Stephen would have wished, but at least he knew that he could see his father and that he still loved him.

CHAPTER 6 Ghostly Communication

I am fortunate. I am both clairvoyant and clairaudient, which means that I can both see and hear spirit people. If a person who has passed into the world beyond wishes to speak to me, they can do so. However, I cannot command or demand that they do so. I cannot order a spirit person to suddenly appear and speak to me. I can only ask, and if they wish to do so, then they will. I communicate with them either directly or through Sam. If it happens that a spirit person has not been over on the other side long enough to learn how to communicate with me directly, they will tell Sam what they want to say and he will pass on their messages to me. As I have said, I am fortunate.

If a person in this world does not have the gifts I and other mediums possess, then the people in spirit have to show their resourcefulness by communicating using other methods. A common method of bringing themselves to the attention of those in this world is through the sense of smell. How many times have you been in a room and thought that you smelled the aroma of pipe smoke or the scent of a flower? How many times have you fancied that you have smelled the perfume of a loved one who has passed on to the spirit world? This is your family members communicating. They use familiar smells to bring themselves to your mind—maybe the smell of a pipe smoked by a grandfather, of the cigarette brand used by a favourite uncle, of a newly baked

pie brought by a grandmother whose house always smelled of cooking. They all evoke our memories and bring to mind the loved one who is trying to let us know that they are around us always.

Another method commonly used by people in the spirit world to draw our attention to them is the movement of objects. So an ornament that was once the property of a loved one may have inexplicably moved, a curtain may twitch in a draughtless room or a framed photograph may fall over. These are all ways in which our loved ones in spirit let us know that they are still around, caring for us and guiding us.

There are also times when a spirit person who is unknown to us may wish to let us know that they are around. This is often experienced in hotel rooms, especially when the hotel was once a home. A kettle may suddenly switch itself on or a wardrobe door may swing open for no apparent reason. It is merely a former resident letting you know that they are still visiting their home or a special place which holds a particular memory for them.

Séances

The word *séance* (French for 'a sitting') is used to describe a group of people gathered together for the sole purpose of invoking a spirit or spirits from the world beyond ours. I consider it important that such a group is headed by an experienced medium, though this is not absolutely necessary.

The people involved, usually six to eight in number, arrange themselves in a circle. I find that better results are achieved if the same people take part each time. A table may be used. This is not a necessity, though it is preferable.

The people taking part must place both feet on the floor—there must be no crossed legs or ankles. This is to ensure a clear channel for spirit communication. The physical body is surrounded by an energy field known as the aura, or auric field. In order to help a spirit person to communicate during a séance it is important that there are no restrictions on that energy field. If a person crosses their legs or ankles whilst taking part in a séance this would result in what I would call a 'crossed energy polarity'. Any person taking part in a séance needs to be in tune and in balance to receive the best spirit communication.

The people involved should either join hands or, if a table is being used, should place their hands palms down upon its surface with the little finger of each hand touching the little finger of their neighbour on either side, thus maintaining a chain of energy.

Everyone should be relaxed and comfortable.

The people should then close their eyes and empty their minds of all thoughts, whilst the medium, as head of the circle, recites a prayer of invocation and protection for both themselves and the people taking part in the séance. It is imperative that this is done. When invoking the spirit realms it is impossible to predict the nature of the spirit or spirits who will come.

Once contact with the spirit world has been established through the medium it is no longer absolutely necessary to maintain physical contact with the neighbouring person and people may rest their hands on their lap or on the tabletop, but with the palms upwards. This is also so that there are no restrictions on the auric field. Sitting with the palms of the hands facing upwards keeps the energy field of the physical body open. If a person were to sit with their hands clasped together or arms crossed, then that is again a crossed energy polarity.

The first sign of spirit presence is usually a noticeable drop in the temperature in the room, or even a cold draught which can be felt passing around the circle of people. The medium will then attempt to communicate with the spirit entity.

A séance should end with the head of the group thanking the spirit communicator(s) for their presence and efforts. It is at this time that any spirit entity should go back to the spirit realms that they inhabit. To help them achieve this, a prayer of thanks and protection should be offered. This could be the Lord's Prayer or any other prayer which is considered appropriate.

A séance should not be confused with the 'circles' held in Spiritualist churches or meetings. These are held for the development of mediumship. There are also 'rescue circles', which are when established mediums try to bring peace to earthbound entities and enable them to pass into the light of the higher side of life, and 'healing circles', when members of the Spiritualist church community gather together to request healing for people who are sick or needing the help of the world of spirit in overcoming the difficulties that are sometimes brought onto our life's pathway.

Many years ago I used to sit regularly in circles, one of which was a development circle for up-and-coming mediums. There were seven of us, four ladies and three gentlemen. We sat once a week on a Thursday evening in a room at my home. After a couple of weeks together as a group we started having very good results with our spirit communications.

One particular evening one of our sitters did not arrive and we decided to go ahead without her. We were ten minutes into our communication before one of the group, John, sank into a deep trance, allowing his spirit guide communicator to transfigure him. It was a sheer joy to experience—that is, until his guide informed us that Susan, the lady who had not arrived that night, had been travelling to my home when her car had skidded off the road, ending up in a ditch in the countryside.

I asked John's spirit guide whether he could give us any more information. He said that Susan had been badly injured and had

been taken to hospital. Alice, her grandmother in spirit, had watched over her in the ambulance. He also told us the name of the hospital.

I asked one of the sitters to leave the circle to get in touch with the hospital. They confirmed that Susan was there and said that she had been taken straight through to the operating theatre. We decided to check that her family had been informed. I thanked the spirit guide for talking to us. He told us that on the way to the hospital Susan's heart had ceased beating on two occasions. The ambulance crew had done a good job and resuscitated her successfully. He then informed us that it was not Susan's time to leave this physical life, that she had a lot of years left. I thanked him again and closed the circle for the evening.

In the coming days we all went to the hospital to sit with Susan, who was still unconscious, and her family. We tried to reassure them that she would pull through and return to full health, although I appreciate that at the time this may have been difficult to believe. Susan had a badly fractured skull, two broken legs and a fractured pelvis. Her lungs had also been punctured by a number of broken ribs.

Weeks later, when she was conscious, she told me that she had seen her grandmother Alice walk up to her. She had taken hold of her hand and they had walked together in a beautiful garden where the flowers were large and vibrant. Alice had explained to Susan that she could stay for a short while but then she would have to leave. She told her that she would be safe and would

return to full health, but one day they would meet again.

On another occasion, we had grouped together once more for a night of communication. Again John's spirit guide joined the circle to offer encouragement to all the developing mediums. Suddenly John began swaying to and fro. I became aware that a spirit person other than his guide had entered our circle. It was a male spirit. He started speaking through John. He said that he was a sailor and seemed to be in a very distressed state, depressed because he had lost his money and his livelihood.

I asked him if he knew that he had passed over to the world of spirit. He replied that he didn't know, but that he had visited his house recently and been extremely upset to find his wife and family totally ignoring him. They hadn't seemed to notice that he had arrived home.

I continued to question him about what he could remember. He informed me that he had decided to go on a trip for the day and had bought a ticket to the Isle of Man. He had boarded the ferry and gone down to the public bar for a drink. He had consumed a few drinks and then become very distressed over his finances and the fact that he had lost his job as a cabin steward on the ship he had worked on for the past 11 years. He had been frightened to go home and tell his wife, as he felt that she would be very angry. Also, he couldn't believe that a court case had gone badly wrong for him the previous day. He had expected a sizeable amount of money to be awarded to him, but now he was faced with legal fees amounting to many thousands of pounds.

With no job and therefore no salary, he had no hope of being able to pay them. It was all too much for him.

I asked him why he had decided to board the Isle of Man ferry and he told me that he had planned to throw himself overboard. Then he said, 'Oh God! I *did* throw myself over! It didn't hurt, though! It was like going into a deep sleep.'

I told him that we could help him to go to the light, where he would be received by other members of his family in spirit, and with his agreement we successfully assisted him in reaching the heavenly light of the spirit realm. He would go in to a state of sleep and restoration there before taking his true place in the world of spirit. All of us in the circle were overjoyed that we had been able to help this poor man.

A few days later I received a shocking telephone call from my mother. She told me that a friend of my aunt's had gone missing from the Isle of Man ferry. No body had been found, but they had found a pile of neatly folded clothing, together with a watch, a ring and some money wrapped up in a towel, hidden behind one of the lifebelts. The man had been known to everyone as 'Percy'. My mother informed me that he had been a really nice man who had spent his life at sea working as a steward but had recently lost his job.

I was shocked! I told my mother the events that had occurred in my circle.

'D'you think it was Percy?' she whispered.

To this day the authorities have still not found Percy's body,

but we know exactly where he is—safe in the world of spirit.

There were many, many occasions when I experienced wonderful demonstrations of spirit communication whilst sitting in the circle with other mediums and occasionally I would be called upon by the spirit world to be used as a channel for them.

One evening, when we were settling into our seats to begin our meditation, I began to experience an amazing amount of mental imagery. I seemed to be walking along a pavement when suddenly I was felt an irresistible urge to look down at my feet. I could not believe what I was seeing. I was looking down at a pavement which was full of gold stars with famous names inscribed upon them—Greta Garbo, Cary Grant, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne—they went on and on and on. I had the impression that a man was approaching me. I could not believe my eyes! He looked like Tony Curtis and he was asking me for a cigarette. I was vaguely wondering why somebody like Tony Curtis would be approaching me and asking me for a cigarette when I became aware once more of my surroundings and the people in the room. I remarked to the head of the circle that I had just had the oddest experience.

The head medium had begun giving messages to different members of the circle. When it was my turn to receive a message, he told me that his guides and inspirers were telling him that quite soon I would receive an invitation. This would come out of the blue. I would have to travel a great distance by aeroplane to a country which would allow me to stand up and demonstrate

my mediumship. I asked for more details. The medium's guide said Hollywood Boulevard was just the right setting for people to sit up and take notice. This was just too much to hope for. Here I was, a medium who had only demonstrated in Spiritualist churches and conducted private sittings for people. Now I was being informed that I would travel to Hollywood. I was confused!

I asked once more whether a little more information could be afforded to me and also for the identity of the communicating spirit. I was informed that he was the person who had taken me to the pavement to show me the stars a few moments earlier. His name was Michael and he needed to come back to tell people close to him that he was doing well in the world of spirit. There the message ceased. No more information was forthcoming. I left the circle later that evening feeling more than a little bemused.

Three days later I received a letter from a friend named Geoff, who was an established medium, telling me that he had agreed to take a trip to California. He told me that if I could afford the airfare, I could accompany him. I immediately thought of the message I had received in the circle and wondered whether this could be what Michael had been talking about. Unfortunately, my finances did not allow me to accompany Geoff on his journey to California, but I asked him to call me upon his return.

Geoff returned from America couple of weeks later and we met up for lunch in Liverpool. He informed me that he had received an opportunity to demonstrate his mediumistic gifts whilst visiting the country and had been very well received. He

showed me photographs of himself with the people he had met in California.

I commented that it looked as though he had had a wonderful time. ‘Oh I did, Derek!’ he replied.

After lunch had finished, we parted company and I returned to my office feeling slightly disappointed that I had not been able to afford the trip.

Time went by and I continued within the development circle. After a year or two, it disbanded, as we had all begun to go our separate ways, following our own different destinies. By now I had almost forgotten the message I had received from Michael.

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