

## Equinox Society Radio 005

My Dear Strangers,

Society member William Rook had a disturbing ghost encounter in his house last week. William lives in a haunted brownstone in Troy, NY. The audiobook *Ghostlove* tells the story of his first season there and contains the following description of his house:

“The building is a ghostly double-image of itself, like a picture painted brightly over an older, stranger picture. The house’s deepest secrets are subliminal. Infused. It’s an equinox place, where light and dark things are equally in power.”

A weird place, in other words. And it is. I’ve been there. All of which is to say William’s a full-time paranormalist, and even by that standard, his recent experience and his reaction to it were unusual.

The story comes mostly in William’s own words, but our mutual friend Amanda typed it up, for reasons they’ll explain. At certain points throughout the story, Amanda adds her own comments in italics. I’ll make note of who’s speaking along the way. Here goes.

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Dear Dennis,

A slow ghost stalked me in my house tonight.

Amanda’s here with me now, typing what I say, in part because of the injury I suffered, and also because I don’t believe what happened is important enough to share. She’s insisting on writing it down.

**Amanda interjects:** *Hi, Dennis!!! Sneaking in for a sec, which William doesn’t know I’m doing, typity-type-type. Just want to say the fact that William doesn’t think his experience is important is actually one of the most important parts.*

[Back to William.]

I was reading in my study and left the room at 9:15 P.M. to get a seltzer from the kitchen, and there was a ghost twenty feet away at the end of the hall. He was pale lavender and slightly translucent. Otherwise, he looked like an ordinary man in his forties, of average height and weight. His face was generic, and his clothes were so featureless, I wasn’t even sure if he was dressed or undressed. Talking about him now, I can’t remember a single unique characteristic.

He was the kind of man you could sit next to in a quiet bar without ever noticing someone was beside you.

**Amanda interjects again:** *I know it sounds like the story's flowing out of him, but he's concentrating wicker hard and frowning his eyebrows in the most adorable way. He's pausing every two of three sentences, working like crazy to remember what happened. I keep giving him Amanda-grade positivity smiles for encouragement. I'll let him talk more now.*

Despite the ghost's vagueness, he made a menacing impression. I was surprised by the intensity of dread I felt. You know I've encountered dozens of ghosts and entities before, but I hadn't felt so much danger since I went into the underhouse last year. I knew the ghost wanted to hurt me. I couldn't tell if the threat was physical or psychological. I just knew, in my gut, I couldn't let him touch me.

He stared at me with a dull expression, arms limp at his sides. I was standing in the dim middle of the hallway, and he was at the end, near a wall sconce, but I felt as if he could see me better than I could see him.

I said, "Hello. I'm William."

The ghost didn't answer. Instead he slowly walked toward me, and by slowly, I mean each of his steps took three or four seconds. He looked like a man pantomiming slow motion. I watched him come and asked him questions. What was his name? How had he come to be here? What did he want? He ignored everything I said and continued his slow, silent approach. The closer he came, the more uncomfortable I felt, until he was only a few feet away. I lost my nerve and walked backward, as quickly as I could, to the rear staircase at the opposite end of the hall.

The ghost kept walking toward me. I repeated my questions to no effect, and when he got close to me again—another full minute had passed, he moved so slowly—I was forced to go downstairs and stand in the first-floor hallway.

I waited and waited, craning up from the bottom of the stairs. He made no sound coming down, and eventually I saw his feet, and his calves, and his thighs very slowly descending, step by step, until he finally reached the lower hallway and we repeated the scene from upstairs. I backed away and asked questions, he walked toward me and didn't answer.

The slowness of the chase was oddly fatiguing. I felt a mix of bravery and fear, as if my fight or flight instincts were happening simultaneously while I stood to face him, backed away, stood to face him, backed away. My adrenaline pumped too long and seemed to run its course, and after about ten minutes, I was woozy and drained.

I had two options—let the ghost reach me and see what happened, or go about my business until he did something different. I picked the latter and went to the kitchen, easily outpacing him, and immediately knew I'd made the right decision. I was hungry and the ghost was nothing

to worry about. It seemed ridiculous I'd already wasted so much time on him. I opened the fridge and popped a seltzer, and then I made myself a turkey sandwich and sat down to eat it at the table. I don't even think we need to go on here. You see how boring this story is...

**Amanda jumps in:** *Ugh. I just had to stop typing for five minutes, trying to convince William to tell the rest, and we both got a little testy and I had to guilt him into sitting down and finishing the story. I said I know you think it's boring, but I dashed over here right away when you called and told me you were hurt, and you totally owe me a story no matter how boring you think it is. He's grumpy now, like an old person being forced to admit he needs help. Dennis, this is so not like him, am I right? OK, he's talking again, here goes...*

You know my kitchen's small. There's a door at either end, but one of the doors warped shut long before I bought the house, so there's only one way in or out. I guess that should have concerned me, but it didn't. I ate my sandwich without even watching the open door. I was really enjoying the iceberg lettuce and the ghost's appearance at the door shocked me out of my chair.

He'd known exactly where I'd gone when I left him in the hallway and had patiently followed. He slowly entered the kitchen and walked toward me on the right side of the table. His bland, lavender figure was even more disturbing than before. I remember being surprised that I'd let my guard down and calmly made a sandwich, knowing he was coming.

I circled around to the left, slowly enough to keep him directly across the table from me, until he reached where I'd been sitting and I ran out of the kitchen. I was horrified, realizing he might have cornered me and grabbed me if the table hadn't been an obstacle between us.

A lot of ghosts can't move through solid objects, and this one behaved as if he couldn't—using doorways, for example, instead of walking through walls. I figured if tables and walls blocked him, I could trap him, so as soon as I made it out of the kitchen, I shut the door behind me.

Once the ghost was out of sight again, my heartrate immediately calmed, and my fear of such a slow-moving threat almost seemed funny. Like now. It seems absurd, doesn't it? Not even worth talking about. OK, OK, I'll keep going.

I waited near the kitchen door, but he didn't pass through or rattle the knob, and after a few minutes, I thought I should get a good night's sleep and consider things with sharper wits in the morning.

**Amanda comment:** *See there it is again, Dennis—the important part about William's indifference. The ghost's visible presence is terrifying to him, but its unseen presence lowers his defenses. Out of sight, out of mind, in a really bad way. I feel like this is a metaphor for something in my life. I can't put my finger on it. Except it's not a metaphor. It's real-live ghost, and in case you're wondering, yes, it freaks me out as much as it doesn't freak William out. I've*

*been looking around the room every ten seconds, making sure the ghost hasn't crept through the door. Back to the story.*

I went upstairs, took a shower, brushed my teeth, and started undressing for bed. When I turned to switch the light off, the ghost was ten feet away and slowly walking toward me.

He'd not only escaped the kitchen. He'd entered my bedroom without a sound, and I had the strangest impression he hadn't passed through the closed door. It was as if he'd been with me the whole time, waiting for the right moment to show himself again.

I felt rubber-legged and nauseous. The sandwich I'd eaten was like a rotten sponge in my stomach. I backed between my bed and the wall, waited for the ghost to reach the footboard, and jumped onto my mattress. He didn't lunge after me. I easily evaded him and ran out, closing the door again behind me, and waited at the end of the hall to see how he managed to get out of the bedroom.

I sat on the floor for half an hour, repeating in my head, over and over, "Pay attention. You're in danger. Pay attention. You're in danger," even once the words seemed meaningless and dull. The hall was dim. My house was still. My body was crashing after the yo-yoing emotions of my earlier encounters. I didn't nod off, but I closed my eyes. They couldn't have been closed for more than half a minute, but when I opened them up, the ghost was in the hall, outside the closed bedroom door, facing me and slowly walking toward me again.

I was either becoming less afraid of seeing him, or a kind of hopelessness was taking hold of me, because I stood up weakly and had to force myself to move. I kept telling myself, "Pay attention. You're in danger," while I walked upstairs to the third floor of my house, and then I waited in the middle of the hallway for the ghost to catch up.

It took him four minutes to chase me up one floor. I took the back staircase all the way down to the first floor and sat at my dining room table, which was roughly the farthest point of the house from where I'd left the ghost upstairs.

I was so tired—so desperate to clear my head and sharpen my senses. I estimated it would take the ghost eight to ten minutes to reach me in the dining room, so I set my phone alarm to seven minutes and took a power nap.

Now that I've said so much of this out loud, I see how weird it sounds. I don't feel terrified now, but I did whenever I saw it, and when I think about the way I acted—scared, indifferent, scared, relaxed—it's like watching a badly written version of myself. It's incredible I napped, but at the time, it seemed like the best, smartest thing to do.

Apparently, while I slept, the ghost reached me in the dining room in less than seven minutes. Once he got close enough, he touched my left hand. The bones in my index finger and thumb

immediately cracked. The pain made me yell and jerk backwards in my chair. I fell on the floor, clutching my hand and looking up.

The ghost was standing over me, slowly moving forward with his arm outstretched. His face was so vague... like a face that was somehow underneath his skin. Except he didn't have skin. I could see right through him. Still he must have had some sort of physical essence. As far as I know, he'd barely touched me, but his split-second touch had cracked my fingers like a hammer hitting icicles. What if he'd touched my face, or my chest, instead of my hand?

I scrambled away, stood up, and ran out of the room. He didn't follow me out. I left the dining-room door open and waited a long time. The pain in my fingers kept me scared longer than usual, but eventually the fear wore off again and I walked back to the dining room to see what he was doing. He was gone. I walked all around the house and couldn't find him.

And then I called Amanda instead of going to the E.R. because she's great with broken bones, and because after everything that happened, I just really wanted her company tonight.

I'll let Amanda finish this email on her own. I hope we didn't bore you, Dennis. I'll talk to you soon.

Love,  
William

*Amanda here. Full disclosure: William didn't say, "Love." He ended with, "Sincerely," because he's Mr. Formal, but I know he loves you, Dennis, so ta-da.*

*I also know we didn't bore you.*

*I reset his broken fingers, wrapped them in an herbal poultice, secured them with splints, and started giving him cups of that collagen syrup I perfected when Hank broke his sternum. The full Amandaland bone-repair treatment. William's fingers'll be good as new in a week.*

*He's acting more like himself now. He just apologized for being difficult and getting snippy with me earlier, and he brought me passionflower and skullcap tea, and he's set me up all cozy with my laptop in his favorite reading chair. We're in his study, by the way—I love this room so much—and we're going to stay awake all night, keeping watch in case the ghost comes back.*

*Here's what worries me, Dennis. If the ghost's unseen presence in the house is what caused William to fog out and downplay the danger, and he was downplaying the danger the whole time he was telling me the story, does that mean the ghost was with us in the house? And now that he's starting to take it seriously, does that mean the ghost is gone? And when both of us inevitably start talking about other stuff tonight, how will we know if it's ordinary conversation or a sign that the ghost is coming for both of us?*

*I'm going to cast a circle of protection around us for the night. Maybe tomorrow, William can figure out a way to summon the ghost on purpose. And then we can deal with it together.*

*Last thing. William never listens to the podcast, so this is safe to say: That part of his story where he went, "I really just wanted her company tonight," made heart-eye emojis bubble out of my head.*

*That's it for now. Wish us luck. I'll check in with you tomorrow. Good night, Dennis!*

*xoxo  
Amanda*

*\*\*\**

I don't have much to add, dear strangers, except to say that I've been checking my own room nonstop during this recording. Not that my own house is anywhere near as haunted as William's. Plus, like Amanda said, the unseen ghost creates a *lack* of nervousness. As long as I'm creeped out, I'm probably OK. It's the minute I relax when I really need to worry.

I agree with Amanda, by the way. This feels like a metaphor for something in my life. But maybe reducing it to metaphor is just another way of getting comfortable with something real that I should be afraid of.

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*Equinox Society Radio is produced by Dennis Mahoney. New episodes appear sporadically.*

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*Our three-note theme is played by Jack Mahoney.*

*Imagine our closing song is "the miserable vision" by American Pleasure Club.*

Until next time, dear strangers... take care and look beyond.