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Dead Story

By Bruce W. Durbin

1

- In December 1914,
a series of horrific
murders were committed
at a remote ranch.
Police were never able
to identify a suspect.
In December 1944, again,
a series of horrific
murders occurred
at the same remote ranch.
Again, police were never
able to identify a suspect.
In December 1994, again,
a series of gruesome murders
took place at the same ranch.
And once again,
police were never able
to identify a suspect.

- Harold!

Harold, please!

Harold!

It's so peaceful way out here.

- Yeah, maybe
that's why it was so
inexpensive.

Honestly, I can't believe
this house was on the market
for over five years.

- Maybe it was just waiting.

For us.

- Yeah.

Yeah, I like that.

Hey, with all the
money we saved up
we should probably
knock out that barn.

Or like, build like a
shop or a greenhouse.

- Oh yeah.

A greenhouse sounds nice.

- Hey, you know what
else would be nice?

If Neil and Emma actually

showed up on time for once.

Just for once.

They were supposed to
be here two hours ago.

- Well, uh,

maybe we could go check out
the inside while we wait.

- Yeah, let's do that.

So...

About this furniture.

- What about this furniture?

- Maybe we can sell all
of it on Craigslist,
make some money and buy
some different furniture?

- Aw, I think it fits.

- Yeah, I think it'd
fit for somebody.

I don't think it
fits for us though.

- No, it adds to the
whole country charm.

- Yeah well, I bought this place
'cause you wanted to
be in the country.

Even though it added
an hour to my commute.

- Neil said it was
only thirty minutes.

- Well, Neil is thirty
minutes closer to the office.

- You sound just like Martha.

- When are you gonna
start calling my mom mom?

- Whenever she stops treating
me like Satan incarnate.

- She does not, she
treat you like...

- really?

She told me I was poisoning you.

- That's because you didn't know
I was allergic to shellfish.

- No, it was before that.

- Can we not talk about my mom?

- Um, hey.
- Hey.
- Hey, yeah, sorry we're late.
It's Neil's fault.
- What, my fault?
- Yes honey, I told you that
the truck would be ready
two hours ago but you said no.
- Yeah, well looks like
we timed this just right.
Otherwise.
- Alright man, you and me
on box patrol and girl time.
What's up, man, love you.
Boxes are right there.
- Over here?
- Yeah, yeah.
- Dude, you know this house
is wicked old.
- Yeah, tell me about it.
- You know...
You ever heard the story?
- No, what story?
- Neil, not tonight, okay?
I mean, they're just moving...
- there's no story.
- Oh, there's a story.
It was back in 1969.
Or '79, no 1969, yeah.
Their names?
Their names were
George and Martha.
- Neil can never
get the names right.
- Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, no.
Their names were Abe and Mary.
Abe and Mary Lincoln.
Abe and Mary Johnson,
I'm positive.
- Okay, really Neil,
I don't think that Anne
and Harold are in the mood
to hear one of
your ghost stories.

- It's not a ghost story.

It's...

It's a dead story.

It's the type of
story that'll get you
dead.

- Ooh.

- Anyways, I don't know
all of the details.

- He doesn't know
any of the details.

- But they say that one
morning at like 2:00 am,
that's the bewitching
hour and all.

You mean 12:

- Uh, Harold, you mind
if I tell the story?
Thanks, bud.

Anyways, it's 2:

because that's when
Jesus was killed or
something like that.

- Resurrected.

- Whatever.

But one morning Mary

wakes up at 2:

and just rolls over in bed
and plunges a butcher knife
straight into Abe's chest.

For no reason.

A few days later, when
the sheriff shows up,
he found good ol' Abe just
a-swinging in the barn.

All the while, good
ol' Mary's just sitting
in the front lawn just
catching some rays.

She was covered with blood but
it was like she didn't

even know what happened.

And here's the kicker.

When the sheriff asked

her why she did it,

she paused and said,

"I didn't do it.

"The ghost killed him."

The ghost.

She said the ghost

of this house.

Good old Mary gave Abe 40

whacks!

Ho ho, but they never could

find the murder weapon.

Who the hell's that?

- Mom.

- I hope I'm not intruding

but I knew this was

your first night.

- No, come in.

- Well, I am intruding.

Well, just for a moment.

- Hi.

- It was such a long drive.

- You remember Neil and Emma.

- Well, I might be old

but I'm not senile.

They were at your wedding.

I see that you have

prepared a delicious meal

for your guests.

You might want to save

this for another night.

- Okay.

- I see that you have

drank the cheap stuff.

Well...

I will talk to you tomorrow.

It's good to see

all of you again.

- You too.

- I want the best

for you, my son.

It's the way of the world

that sons just don't
listen to their mothers anymore.

Goodnight, goodnight everyone.

- God.

Wow.

Well, who needs ghost
stories when you've got her.

- Enough.

- She's unbearable, man.

- So Harold, Anne tells
me that you're starting
a new project at
working or something?

- Yeah, it's...

Well, it's not that
big of a deal but
it's a promotion and
a little more pay.

A lot more hours.

But it's good.

- Neil, no more, okay?

We really should be going.

- Honey, you're the
designated driver, remember?

- Oh yeah.

- Maybe you two
should just spend the night.

- What?

In some house where some
angry wife killed her husband?

- A story you made
up, by the way.

- It's a true story
and it happened here.

- That's okay.

I haven't unpacked the
butcher knives yet.

- Psycho.

- Why did Emma marry that guy?

He's such a jerk.

- Hey, why did you marry me?

I mean, I'm sure
your mother gave you
an extensive list

detailing the reasons
why you shouldn't
marry me and...

- Anne, stop it.

You gotta get these ideas
of her not liking you
out of your head.

She knows I love you.

Because of that,
she loves you.

You just gotta try harder.

- Me?

You want me to try harder?

- Mhm.

- Harold, your mom hates me.

And the reason why we moved
here is because of your mom.

- You picked this house.

You wanted this house.

- Yeah, to get away from her.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

I don't want to fight.

This is our first
night in our new house.

Please?

- Okay.

- So our first night in the
new house and all we have is.

- Neil's story.

- Yeah.

- Is it true?

Was somebody actually
killed in this house?

In this bed?

- No.

No.

I even checked the
public service records.

There's nothing.

It's just a story.

Okay?

- Okay.

- Okay.

- Okay.

- I'm just really sick
of you making my friends
feel so uncomfortable.

- Babe, it was just a joke.

- Well, it was a bad joke.

- Well, whatever,
why would I care?

- You know, if
you need anything.

- I know, you're
just a few minutes away.

- Yeah, well when we
get back from Maui.

Well, thank you.

- Oh, no problem.

- God, it's about freakin' time.

- I have to get to the office.
The commute, it's gonna
be a long day, long night.

- Okay.

- I'll miss you.

- I'll miss you too.

I love you.

- Love you too.

- Oh, shit.

Hello?

Is someone downstairs?

No, no, no, no.

Please no, no, no, no.

It's all in your head.

It's all in your head.

It's all in your head.

We talked about this.

- Babe, we got the house,
we're out of the city.
It'd just be a really
good spot to raise a kid.

- Harold, not yet.

Please.

- I don't get it.

I mean, it's not like
you have a career.

- I don't have a career?

Harold, your car?

The last calendar shoot
paid for your car.

And the down payment
on this house.

- I'm sorry.

I misspoke.

I didn't mean to say
it like that I just,
you don't have a typical job.

You don't have to go to an
office from nine to five
and you don't have a commute.

You're just at
the house all day.

And I just really,
really, really want kids.

- So do I.

Did you speak to your mom?

- No, why?

- Don't lie to me.

She spoke to you
again, didn't she?

- Anne, it's not crazy.

She wants grandkids.

And with last year's scare.

- Scare?

- She was in the hospital, Anne.

- Yeah, she was in the hospital
because she had an infection
from a Botox injection.

- The point is, she's
not the only one.

I don't want to be 50 and
my son be in kindergarten.

I want to go out there and
throw the football with him.

I don't wanna throw out my back.

I really, really want this.

I need this, Anne.

- I know.

I hear you, okay?

Just next year.

I promise.

- You promise promise?

I promise promise.

- I mean, it's
just really weird.

Why wouldn't you
put the light switch
inside a closet?

- I don't know, maybe it
was just an afterthought.
Baby, you always do this.
You overanalyze and you
overthink everything.
Just let it go, it's
not that big of a deal.

- Yeah, but I mean, what
about the other things
that were moved,
like the furniture?

- We're just stressed out.
It's a new house,
you just finished a huge
photo shoot with Duncan.
You know how you
get on photo shoots.
You're not getting
a lot of sleep.

- I know.

- We both know ghosts
aren't real, right?

- Right.

How was your day?

Was the commute better?

- Yeah, I mean no.

It's a little bit
longer but it's okay.

It was a long day at
the office though.

I'm getting pretty tired.
Maybe we should go to bed.

- Really?

- Yeah.

Come here.

Upstairs.

- Babe.

Harold!

Harold!

Harold, please!

Harold!

Neil and your stupid stories.

- Hey.

How are you?

- I'm fine.

I'm sorry, just a new house
and Neil's stupid story and...

It's probably

just too much pizza and wine.

I'm fine.

- Good.

Those boxes, do you think
you could take 'em out?

Out to the barn?

- Yeah.

- I mean, if
you're not doing anything.

- No, it's fine, I got it.

- I just, I come home

at 12:

- Yeah, I know.

I know, I can do it.

- Okay.

Gonna walk me out?

- Yeah.

- Okay.

- Bored, really?

Drive two hours.

Spend 12 hours trying
to impress the boss
because I'm a company man.

Then I get to come
home to a loving wife
that does not want kids.

And apparently is
seeing a ghost.

Must be nice being bored.

- Harold, you should really
just audio books or...

Emma!

Hey, how how are you?

Yeah, you all packed?

Aw.

I know, I really wish we could go with you guys but Harold has a huge project so yeah, it's not gonna work out.

Hey, Emma, can I ask you something?

Do you hear noises?

No, I know, I just.

Maybe it was just this old house that needs to be updated.

But I brought it up to Harold and we got in this huge argument and...

Yeah, no we're fine it's just that he said photography isn't a...

I'm sorry, yeah he said photography isn't a career.

Yeah, and then he brought up the whole kids thing again.

No, yeah, you know, I do want kids it's just that

I want to make sure it's what we want

and not something that his mom is pushing, you know?

Yeah.

Hey, okay this is a stupid question again but,

was there really a woman that killed her husband in this house?

I know, it's Neil.

Where did you find that guy anyway?

I hope you have a great trip.

Well, I'll let you go and get packed and have a safe trip to Hawaii.

I love you too.

Babe, it's so late.

- I know.

It's probably gonna be
like this every night
until the project is done.

- Is it worth it?

- What'd you say?

- Is it worth it?

- Yeah, it's worth it.

Of course it's worth it.

I mean, a it shows Mr. Jones

I can handle an

executive level account

and b it's that much

closer to the promotion.

Which means a lot of money.

- Yeah, but it's just money.

- It's just money.

Well, you need to

understand that just because

my family comes from money

does not mean it didn't

take a lot of hard work

and sacrifice.

My dad worked his ass

off for his family.

- Yeah, and he died

of a heart attack.

- He died from a heart

attack from his lifestyle,

not his work load.

You wanted this house

and I'm trying my hardest

to make sure that happens.

- No, we wanted this house.

- My point is that

I'm in the office

12 hours a day.

Not for me, for us.

I work my ass off for us

because I need to provide, Anne.

I have to provide, do

you understand that?

- I'm sorry, it's just

that I'm so lonely here.

Okay, I'm here all day by

myself in this big house and...
You know, one of the things
that I love about you
is that you are like your father
and that you do make
sacrifices for your wife.
And your future family.
I'm sorry.
- Thank you.
- Hello?
Who are you?
Hey!
Who are you?!
- Ah.
Shit!
Holy shit, Anne!
What are you doing?
What the fuck is that?
Anne!
Anne!
Put the knife down.
Put the knife down!
Holy shit!
What the fuck are you doing?
What is this?
Where'd you find this?
- I'm sorry.
- Anne, where did you find this?
- I'm sorry!
- What are you doing?
You don't know?
- It was just in my hand,
I don't know what it is.
- Fuck, Anne!
You can't answer me, you
don't know where you've been.
You're trying to stab
me while I'm sleeping.
- I'm sorry.
- Are you, fuck!
- Harold.
Harold.
Harold.
Harold, I'm so sorry.

- Anne, you scared
the shit outta me.

- How many times do I have
to tell you that I'm sorry?

- I didn't know that I had
the knife in my hand and...
She led me.

- I am so tired of going
over this again and again.
I got less than four
hours to go to bed,
there's no way I'm going to bed.
Might as well just
go to work right now.

- I'm sorry.

- You know, if you don't
like this house just tell me.
I'll understand.
What I'm not gonna
understand is this:
You playing games.

- You know what?
I'm not sorry.
You never believe me so why
should I expect you to change?

- Okay.
Well, I believed you
when you told me that
someone stole your lenses.

- They did.

- Well, your assistant found
them in the laundry room.
And I believed you
when you said you lost
your engagement ring.

- It was stolen.

- Yeah, about that.
My mom found it in
your jewelry box.

- I saw a ghost or something.
From Neil's story,
the woman who murdered
her husband in this house?
I mean, maybe she wants

my help or something.

- Okay, listen!

I want you to

listen to me, okay?

And listen good.

If Neil's story was true

and this ghost needed

your help, why, why?

That doesn't make

any sense to me.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

I'm tired.

And all I want to do is go

upstairs, take a shower,

regroup and get to work.

- Well, it's still early,

why don't we just

go back to bed?

- No, no, no, if I go to work

then I'll get there

before anyone else does,

I'll finish that project

and I'll get to leave early.

Then see you sooner.

That's good, right?

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

I need to start doing

this more often.

I mean, I hit no traffic today.

- Yeah, and that way we

can have dinner together.

- So how was your day?

- It was fine.

Just fine.

- Well I'm starving and

this looks delicious.

- Me too.

Hey, um, forgive me?

- For what?

- Last night and this morning.

Ghosts.

- Listen, if it makes you

cook my favorite dinner.
And makes you dress
like that every night,
then baby, you can keep
seeing whatever it is
that you think you're seeing.
- I'm gonna go get the wine.
- I'll get it.
- Oh, no.
- To our new lives.
Cheers.
- No.
No, please.
Not again.
Please, leave me alone!
- Anne, Anne, look at me.
Baby, look at me, look at me.
It's okay.
You were out for pretty
much the entire day.
I called Dr. chambers,
you remember him, right?
- Anne,
can you tell me what happened?
- I, um...
I saw a ghost and I followed
her out into the woods and...
I thought she was
trying to kill me.
- Alright.
From what you've told me
about the stress of
moving into a new house,
the ridiculous story of
a murder by your friend
and possible marital problems.
Look my dear, what
your husband told you
about ghosts not
being real is true.
That story by Neil about
the murder, didn't happen.
I know the mind can
be very persuasive.

Anne, there's no
reason to be alarmed,
this is not a lasting condition.
- Condition?
- Now, if I thought that
the ghost you were seeing
were individuals
of people you knew
and you were possibly involved
in some sort of violence
in some way or vice versa,
then I would be concerned.
You see, psychological disorders
usually manifest themselves
in a patient when
they see themselves
exerting control and power,
usually displayed in
the form of violence
over an adversary,
someone they dislike.
Now, this ghost that you saw.
Was it someone you knew?
- No.
- A former boyfriend?
A former employer?
Your mother-in-law?
- No!
- That's it then.
I'm gonna prescribe
a mild sedative.
And this will help
you get some rest,
get some sleep.
You know, and get you better.
Look, dreams can seem very real.
That's why in the rare occasion
when somebody's
dreaming and they fall,
they can actually die.
But I know that transferring
the blame may help
but ghosts aren't real.
My point is that sometimes

dreams and visions,
they're just that, they're
dreams and visions.

Alright?

So, this sedative will
help diminish the stress
and diminish the feeling
that these dreams
and visions are real.

You'll be fine.

- Do you have any questions?

- No.

- Get some rest.

- Thank you doctor.

- She'll be fine.

- They are real.

Harold, why don't you belie...

Why is your mother here?

- Babe, she's here to help.

- We saved you some supper.

Harold's favorite.

Meatloaf with mashed potatoes.

- Yeah, hi Mr. Jones.

Yeah, I know what time it is.

But it's important.

Well, my wife Anne, she
stumbled and hit her head and...

No, she's okay, I took
her to a doctor but
he wants her to stay home
just in case she's concussed.

No, I think she'll
be fine but um,
I guess the reason I'm
calling you is because I'm...
I'm not gonna be able to
make that 10 o'clock meeting.

Yeah.

No, I mean, I know, I'm the one
that set it up but I just...

Yeah, Mr. Jones, I
completely understand.

I get how important it is and...
Yeah.

No, this is...

Right, and no I do love
working there at the office and
you can definitely
count on me I just...

Right.

I understand.

Okay.

Sounds good.

Talk to you then.

Fuck.

- Hey babe.

You know that guy that
found me in the woods?

- Yeah.

- Do you think you could ask
him to come out here tomorrow?

Tell me what happened?

- Do you think that'll help?

- Yeah.

- Yeah, I'll make
the call tomorrow.

- Thank you.

- Hey honey, hi.

This is Doug, he's the one
that found you in the woods.

- Nice to meet ya.

This is my son here.

- Thank you so much.

- You're welcome.

- Harold, the
weather's getting bad.

- Can you show me
where you found me?

- Well, yes ma'am, of course.

You stay here.

Right this way.

- You know,
we really should
have her committed.

- Mom, I don't.

- Just for observation.

Think about it.

We really want to do what's

best for Anne, don't we?

- I have to go to work.

- Maybe it's not proper for her
to go out in the woods
with another man.

- Mom, I love you.

- I love you too.

- So, what were you doing on
the day that you found me?

- Oh, well I was
actually hunting deer.

- Really?

I didn't know it
was hunting season.

- Oh no, ma'am, I have a
license to hunt all year 'round.

I could show you if you like.

Well, you were right here,
this is where I found ya.

You were in a real bad way.

- What do you mean, bad way?

- Well, your face was
pale, your body was cold.

I thought you were dead.

I didn't do
anything ma'am, I promise.

I just checked your pulse and...

- She's a tramp.

She's nothing but
a god damn tramp.

- Well, I hope to never see
ya out there again like that.

It was nice to meet ya.

- Thanks, you too.

- I need to go to the store.

You don't have one percent milk.

Harold has to have
one percent milk.

And there are evidently
a few other things

that you don't

think that he needs.

- Martha, I...

- now, I'll be gone for an hour.

Do you think you can keep
from going completely bonkers
for one hour?

Answer me.

Are you a monkey?

It's a yes or no question.

- I will be fine.

This is my house!

Come on.

Okay.

Pick up, pick up, pick
up, pick up, pick up.

God damn it!

Hi, yes this is Mrs. Harris,
may I speak with Harold please?

No, this is really
important, please.

Thank you.

Hi Harold, please.

Please, there's
somebody in this house.

You need to come home.

No, she left!

Harold, please.

Please, Harold,
please just come here.

Please.

Okay.

- Anne!

Mom!

Anne!

Oh, thank god.

What's going on?

I just hauled ass all
the way from the office.

- Harold, we need
to get out of here.

- Why are all these bags out?

- We need to leave,
it's not safe.

- Where are we gonna go?

What are you talking about?

- I don't know.

- Where's mom?

- She left.

- Why are you packing,
what are these bags?

- Harold, it is not
safe here, okay, please?

- Where are we gonna go?

- I don't know.

But baby, this house, there's
something really wrong here
and you need to trust me.

Please.

- Okay.

Okay.

Just grab that and

I'll grab this.

- Harold hurry, come on.

- Okay, hold on.

- What is going on?

- I don't know, it's
just not starting.

I don't know what's
going on with it.

- We have to go.

- Fuck, I can't
go anywhere, Anne.

It won't start.

Just calm down, just...

Fuck.

My mom's here.

- Harold, honey...

- mom, you were not
supposed to leave Anne!

- I was only gone for
just a few minutes.

- She called me in a panic,
I left the office early.

I didn't even tell Mr. Jones.

Now my car won't start!

- It'll be fine.

Anne and I will

have a nice talk,

I'll fix her a glass of tea and
you need to get on back to work.

I'll tell ya, you

need to keep your job
and thank goodness Mrs.
Jones and I are good friends.
- Mom, my car won't start.
- Here, take my car.
It's gonna be okay, okay?
- Alright.
Just talk to Anne please.
- I will.
If you don't get out of this car
and march up to that house
right now, I'll kill you!
- Anne, sit down.
Look at me.
I have to get back to work.
But mom promised me she's
gonna stay with you.
Listen, here take this.
Take that.
Trust me.
- You better hurry.
I'll take good care
of her, I promise.
- Okay, mom.
Okay, mom, I just
gave her a pill
so she's gonna be asleep for
at least a couple of hours.
- Asleep?
No, I don't want to go asleep.
The ghost...
- Ghost, really?
Everyone knows
ghosts aren't real.
I told you before you married
her that she was loony.
- Mom, I can't do
this right now.
I'm sorry.
You might be right.
Maybe she does have some issues.
But the point is I need you.
- You could move.
I mean, there's a nice

house just two blocks
from where I live.

- There's no way I can do that.

All of my savings I put in
for a down payment
on this house.

And with the market
the way it is,
there's no way I'll
get my money back.

- I could give you a loan.

- A loan?

Why is she here?

- See?

She's hallucinating again.

She doesn't even
remember that I was here.

- Mom, stop.

I just gave her a pill.

- I've been here all day, honey.

- Why can't you stay?

- Anne, you have got to
stop acting like this.

I have to go to work
and you know that.

Look at me.

Mom's doing us a huge favor
by staying here with you.

Do you understand that?

I don't have time for this.

I have to go to work.

She'll take care of you.

Mom, please take care of
her because I love her.

- So...

My son has gone and
married a crazy bitch
who thinks she sees ghosts.
Now it's just you and me.
All alone.

I wanna ask you something.

Why the fuck did
you marry my son?

Is it for the money?

No.

He said you had your own money.

From selling those slutty
calendars of naked women.

Yeah.

I've seen your work.

You call yourself
a photographer?

You're nothing but
a pornographer.

And you know what?

You're gonna go to hell,
that's where you're going.

You're afraid of ghosts?

The only thing you need
to fear around here is me.

You little tramp.

I'll kick your ass.

Trying to take
over my son's life?

You're nothing but
a little bitch!

I'll show you.

- No, there's
a ghost in the closet!

No!

- The ghost is in
the closet, eh?

Okay.

I'll show you.

- Let me out!

When Howard finds out
what you're doing!

Martha!

Martha, the ghost is in here!

Martha!

- You know what you are?

You're a whore.

- Please, Martha!

Please, the ghost is in here.

- You're a harlot!

- The killer is in here, please.

Please, please, help me, Martha!

- That ghost's in here!

- There's no such
thing as ghosts!

Anne.

Anne, honey.

Are you alright?

You little bitch!

I'm gonna kill you!

Where are you?

- Anne?

Mom?

Anne!?

Mom!

Anne!?

Mom?

Fuck.

- Can you tell me what happened?

I know this is a
difficult situation
but I have to ask
you some questions.

Do you know where
she could've went?

When was the last time
you saw Mrs. Harris?

Does she have a history
of mental illness?

Is she on any medication?