

THE NOT SO SCARY GHOST

HAL AMES



Michael and Emma Rydell were excited to be moving to the countryside. They had lived in the city all their lives, so moving to a farm was going to be an adventure; only what happened when they moved in was not what they had expected.

Their children Jimmy and Sandy were not happy about the move. They would have to leave their friends and everything they had known behind.

Dust flew up behind the car as they drove up the long driveway. In front of them was a big old house. There had been a lot of work done on it to make it look better. It had new paint and some repairs to the roof.

Michael and Emma were happy the house was theirs.

The first day in the new house was tiring. Unpacking and finding where things needed to go took more time than they thought it would. There were so many things to unpack they had to leave some of the boxes for the next day.

Dinnertime in the house was quiet. No one felt like talking because they were just too tired.

After dinner, they sat in the living room and watched a movie, which helped them to relax.

After the movie, the children headed to bed for their first night in the house.

Jimmy's room was in the corner of the house, so he had windows on two walls. He could look out over the entrance to the house and see when people were coming. And from the other window, he could see the garden with the swing hanging from a tree. Their dog William slept on the floor next to his bed on a big rug, just

like in the old house.

Sandy's room was at the back of the house. From her windows, the light from the orange setting sun came through as it dipped below the rows of corn.

Before going to bed, Emma and Michael sat on the front porch and listened to the crickets chirping. The open night sky was bright with more stars than they had ever seen before. It was quiet and relaxing.

They had gotten a really good price for the farm, much better than anything else they had looked at.

They sat together for a long time talking about the plans they had for the farm. They wondered why the house had been empty for so long and why no one had bought the house before them. It wouldn't be long before they would find out why.

In the middle of the night, when everyone was sleeping, William began to bark. He wouldn't stop, even when Jimmy yelled at him. He just kept barking.

When Jimmy opened the door, his family was already out of their rooms wondering why William was barking so loudly.

William ran out of the room and stopped at the top of the stairs barking at something below. Then he stopped, turned, and returned to the room, lay down and went back to sleep.

Everyone looked at each other wondering what had just happened. William had never done that before.

Michael went down the stairs quietly to see if everything was alright. The family stood at the top of the staircase listening for anything unusual.

When he came upstairs, he informed them, "The doors are locked, and the windows are closed. Nothing seems to be out of order. Everything appears to be okay, but I wonder what got the dog so worked up. Maybe it was a squirrel or something."

Since it was now quiet, they went back to bed.

The next morning, when they got up, they were surprised to see that the boxes they had unpacked were now repacked. The things they had put in the kitchen were now back where they started, in the boxes.

“What’s going on? I thought we put those things in the cabinets yesterday,” Emma said, very confused.

“I’m sure we did that,” Michael agreed.

The children laughed.

Jimmy said, “I think you might have dreamed that. How could those boxes be full again?”

No one could answer the question.

Emma and Michael put the things back into the cabinets again, while Jimmy and Sandy cleaned their rooms and unpacked their boxes.

After lunch, they went to see the horse they had gotten from the neighbor. The horse’s name was Brandy. William went with them. He chased some squirrels up the tree and barked at them. Then he began to run in circles.

“Is William chasing his tail?” Sandy laughed.

“I’ve never seen him do that before,” Jimmy remarked.

They walked to the barn and went to the stall where the horse was put the day before. Brandy came to the gate and greeted them with a whinny. Sandy stroked her face and gave her an apple she had brought with her from the house. Brandy ate it quickly.

“Do you want to go for a ride?” Sandy asked Brandy.

“Let me get the saddle and bridle and then we can take her to the pasture,” Jimmy suggested.

To their surprise, Brandy did not want to leave her stall. She pulled back and wouldn’t let Jimmy put the bridle in her mouth.

“That’s weird. She was fine yesterday. Maybe she’s not happy here. Let’s

come back later when she's settled down," Jimmy said.

They went back into the house. They saw their parents were still unpacking and deciding where things should go.

"Can we help?" they asked.

Michael gave them chores to do.

Jimmy was asked to clean the floors in the hallway and the living room, while Sandy was asked to clean the dining room.

"If we work hard, we will finish this in no time. Then we can go to town to buy some groceries. While we are there, we can get some ice cream. How does that sound?" Emma asked.

"Great!" they said together.

In the afternoon, the family got into the car and drove to the town, which took about fifteen minutes.

As they entered the town, they saw a sign that said, 'Welcome to Andyville'.

Living close to a small town was new to them. There weren't many stores and only one cinema. In the middle of the town was a single stoplight.

The grocery store was just past the light.

They parked the car and got out. The town was like what they had only seen in movies.

When they went into the grocery store, they went down the aisles looking at the novelty things they had for sale. There were small toys, candy in glass jars, games, hats, clothes, and even boots.

When they paid for the food, the clerk asked them, "Are you new in town?"

"Yes, we just moved into the old Murphy place west of town yesterday. We had a lot of work done on the house and it's really nice," Emma answered.

"The Murphy farm?" she was surprised.

"Yeah, the Murphy farm. So far, we like it just fine," Michael spoke up.

“Nobody has lived out there for years. There are a lot of stories about that place. Have you heard any of them?” the store cashier asked.

“Nope, we haven’t heard a thing,” Emma responded.

“Some people say the place is haunted. That is why the last family moved out. No one has wanted to live there since. I’m surprised that you weren’t told about this,” she informed them.

“Ha, we don’t believe in ghosts,” Michael chuckled. “There’s no such thing as ghosts.”

“Well, you will find out soon enough. Good luck!” the clerk said as she handed them their grocery bags.

Jimmy and Sandy laughed about what the clerk had said.

“Wow, wouldn’t it be cool if the house was really haunted? We could tell our friends back home all about it,” Sandy said.

“I bet they wouldn’t believe us, even if it were true,” Jimmy laughed.

They walked around the town while eating the ice cream. It was fun to walk up and down the streets looking into the windows.

The ride home went by quickly and when they got to the house, they took the groceries to the kitchen, and to their surprise all the boxes were full again.

“What’s going on here?” Michael said, very angry at whoever was doing this to them. “I would have to say someone wants us to get out of here, but that is NOT going to happen!”

“Do you think the clerk was right? Do you think this place is haunted?” Jimmy asked, while looking around the room. “It would be so cool if it is.”

“I don’t care if the place is haunted, we are not going to leave!” Emma said in a loud voice.

She looked up at the ceiling and spoke to the air, “If you are a ghost, we don’t care! We are not leaving!”

The dog began to bark at the door to the kitchen. Michael ran over to the door and pushed on it, but it did not move.

“Come here and help me!” Michael yelled over to his family.

Together they pushed on the door. Then all of a sudden it flew open and they fell to the ground on top of each other.

William was still barking at something in the living room.

When they looked up, in the middle of the room, was someone they had never seen before. He was laughing at them.

“WHO ARE YOU?” Michael screamed.

“This is MY house. You need to get out of here NOW!” the stranger said to them.

William ran over to the man, but when he tried to bite him, his mouth didn't find anything. It was like nothing was there.

“Do you think you can scare me?” asked Michael.

A loud sound shook the house. They held onto each other.

As Michael stood up to the stranger, he did not budge.

“You have to do a lot better than that!” Michael yelled. “We bought this place, and we are not leaving!”

“I want you to leave. I have scared away everyone else before you. You don't want me to make your life miserable, do you?” the stranger in the living room tried to scare Michael.

“Bring it on. We can handle whatever you try to do. I know you can't hurt us!” Michael retorted.

The man disappeared.

“Dad, was that really a ghost?” Jimmy asked, while still sitting on the floor.

“There is no such thing as a ghost, I told you that,” Michael answered.

“SO, what *was* that?” Emma asked.

“I’m not sure. Maybe someone is trying to play a joke on us. Whatever it is we can figure it out. I’m sure of it. For the time being, just let it do what it wants, and don’t let it know that you are scared,” Michael instructed his family.

“Not be scared? How do we do that? That thing made me so scared, I almost wet my pants,” Sandy spoke up.

The rest of the day was quiet. They decided to leave the boxes packed for a while since they knew they would just have to unpack again.

That night, after they fell asleep, there were loud sounds coming from the first floor. William began to bark again. When they went down to see what the noise was, they found the house a mess. Everything from the boxes was scattered on the floor.

“Well, I guess that idea didn’t work,” Emma stated. “I guess we can’t win. What should we do?”

“Let’s clean up the mess,” Michael suggested. “After we are done, I will sleep down here, and if he comes back, I will talk to him, okay?”

It took an hour to clean the room, and then Michael took a blanket and lay down on the couch.

In the morning, nothing more had happened.

“Maybe I need to sleep down here every night,” Michael offered.

It was Sunday.

Emma made pancakes and sausage for breakfast. The smell carried up the stairs to kid’s rooms. They came running down to eat.

To their surprise, the stranger was standing in the living room again, and he was making strange noises. He sounded like a seal, then like a lion, then like a chicken, and then like donkey. The kids laughed at him.

“Why are you laughing?” the stranger asked.

“You sound just like a zoo,” Sandy laughed as she talked.

He then made an ugly face and smoke came out of his mouth.

Again, the children just laughed at him.

“Aren’t you afraid of me?” he asked.

“Not really. You’re funny. You’re like a clown. We like you,” Jimmy answered.

“Nobody likes me! I hate it when people like me!” he then vanished in a puff of smoke.

“That was cool! Our friends won’t believe it when we tell them about this,” Jimmy commented.

“They’ll never believe us. They’ll think we are making up the story. I think we should just keep this in the family,” Sandy suggested.

After breakfast, they decided to clean up the house again, knowing that it would probably get messed up once more, but it kept them busy.

In the afternoon, Jimmy and Sandy went to the barn to visit Brandy again. They had to clean her stall, which they did not want to do, but it is part of life on a farm.

Sandy brushed Brandy just the way she had been taught by the old owners. She seemed to like it a lot.

They fed the chickens, and cleaned the chicken coop. They found eleven eggs and took them to their mother.

When they walked into the kitchen their mother was angry.

“What’s wrong, Mom?” Sandy asked.

“Nothing is working. The stove won’t fire, the water won’t run, the refrigerator is off! Nothing is working!” she answered very frustrated.

Michael walked in while she was telling the children what was going on.

Michael yelled, “OK, knock it off. We get it, but we are not going to leave! If you don’t stop, we will get someone out here who can make you leave. We will call the Ghostbusters and they will take care of you!”

A voice came from out of nowhere, “GHOSTBUSTERS?! NO! Don’t call the Ghostbusters. I will try to be nice.”

“That’s better,” Michael answered.

Everything began to work again.

Michael asked, “Can we just talk, please?”

The stranger appeared in the middle of the kitchen.

“What do you want to talk about?” he asked.

Michael wanted to bargain with the stranger.

“Are you really a ghost?” he asked.

“Yes, I died here two hundred years ago in an Indian raid on my farm,” he answered. “Since then I have been stuck here with nothing to do. It is fun when I can scare people, but you are the first ones who moved here who aren’t afraid of me.”

“How do you know about the Ghostbusters?” asked Jimmy.

“A family that lived here many years ago, watched a movie about the Ghostbusters. They threatened to call them, but I scared them away before they could call. I believe you when you say you will call them. Please don’t. I don’t want to become a green blob.”

“What’s your name?” Michael asked.

“My name is Henry Farnsworth. I’m originally from Boston, but I moved here to start a new life,” he answered. “As I said, there were problems and the Indians got angry. My family got away, but I wasn’t so lucky.

“Since then, I have been stuck here. My only fun has been scaring the people who want to live here. I don’t like people, I never have, so getting them to leave was my goal in life.

“You came here and I have not been able to get rid of you. What am I supposed to do now?”

Henry and the family made an agreement to live in the house together. It

worked out really well. The ghost entertained the children and when guests came to the house to visit, the ghost would do things to make them scared. Then everyone had a story to tell when they left.

On Halloween, the ghost made it a lot of fun to trick the children who came to get candy.

VOCABULARY (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. aisle _____ | a. halter, way to control a horse |
| 2. groceries _____ | b. top of room, where the light is |
| 3. haunted _____ | c. frighten, make afraid of |
| 4. ceiling _____ | d. place to walk in a store or on an airplane |
| 5. stall _____ | e. having a ghost, spooky |
| 6. bridle _____ | f. unhappy, depressed, gloomy |
| 7. bark _____ | g. food from a grocery store |
| 8. scare _____ | h. room for animals inside of a barn |
| 9. miserable _____ | i. sound from a dog |
| 10. budge _____ | j. move a little bit |

TRUE OR FALSE

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. The dog's name was William. | T / F |
| 2. The family were afraid of the ghost. | T / F |
| 3. The ghost's name was Johnny. | T / F |
| 4. The ghost helped to clean the house. | T / F |
| 5. Sandy rode Brandy to town. | T / F |
| 6. Sandy and Jimmy found twelve eggs. | T / F |
| 7. William chased some squirrels. | T / F |
| 8. The farm grew corn. | T / F |
| 9. The ghost was taken away by the Ghostbusters. | T / F |

10. Jimmy and Sandy had many chores to do.

T / F

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. What was the name of the town? _____

- a) Johnville
- b) Andyville
- c) Murphyville
- d) Michaelville

2. What was the name of the horse? _____

- a) William
- b) Sandy
- c) Brandy
- d) Candy

3. What did they buy when they went to the town? _____

- a) boots
- b) novelties
- c) toys
- d) groceries

4. What was the name of the ghost? _____

- a) Henry
- b) Willy
- c) Carson
- d) Murphy

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. Who was Michael going to call?

2. What could Jimmy see out of his window?

3. What happened to the things that had been put away in the kitchen?

4. Who told them the house was haunted?

5. What did Emma say she would buy for the children in town?

6. What did Michael and Emma see in the sky at night?

7. Who brushed Brandy?

8. Who tried to put the bridle into Brandy's mouth?

9. What kinds of things did they see in the grocery store?

10. What happened to Henry that made him a ghost?
