

HAUNTERS

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Every location in this story is real.

Every haunting is based on documented experiences.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

A long corridor. Doors on either side of an elegant carpet, stretching into the inky darkness of a Gilded Age home.

Nothing but the GROAN of settling wood until -- one of the doors whines open. A blade of moonlight cuts into the dark, revealing an OLD MAN, motionless in the hall. His white hair a mess. His black frock coat and clothes from another time.

The dim figure steps through the open door just as ANDRE MASON, 27, with faded-twist hair and a vintage Ghostbusters tee, steps into the frame. He looks on edge. Unsure.

ANDRE

Hello? Anyone here?

He pads through the darkness of the hall towards the door, scanning every shadow for the smallest trace of movement.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - ROOM - NIGHT

Andre stalks into a stately-looking room... finding no one. Still, he lifts a blinking EMF METER out in front of him with an unsteady hand -- he's a ghost hunter.

ANDRE

If someone's here, gimme a sign.

He turns just in time to catch a glimpse of SOMEONE move right outside the window. He edges towards it -- he's on the second floor. A COUPLE laugh and scurry down the sidewalk twenty feet below. Must've been a reflection... IN THE ROOM!

Andre frantically looks behind him, sweeping the chamber with his EMF Meter when the light bar on the device flickers to a GREEN NUMBER TWO -- of a possible ten.

Cutting the tension with a disappointed SIGH, he pulls out his CELLPHONE, using its flashlight to cast murky shadows as he scans his somber surroundings: a tall wing-back chair, an ornate wooden armoire and the aged painting of a familiar, white-haired Old Man.

He moves close to the gold frame, reading the name inscribed:

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Francis Sorrel.

(then)

So this is your house, huh?

THUMP-THUMP -- behind him, the door of the armoire rattles like something's pushing against it from inside.

Like he's never seen a damn horror movie, Andre moves towards the armoire as the THUMP-THUMP repeats. His face reflects uncertainty with every step. THUMP-THUMP-THUMP.

ANDRE (CONT'D)
Francis? Is... Is that you, dude?

He's a foot away when the sound STOPS. He waits in the silence until... the door slowly opens on its own.

ANDRE (CONT'D)
Yooooo... Okay. Okay.

With a trembling hand... reaching for the armoire...

JASMINE (O.C.)
Boo!

Andre SHRIEKS and wheels around to find, right behind him, JASMINE SHAH, 25 dark clothes and a shock of dyed red hair.

ANDRE
Hell is wrong with you?!

JASMINE
(laughing)
What're you doing up here, nerd?

ANDRE
Looking for ghosts. Isn't that what we paid for?

JASMINE
I'm not getting anything.

She lifts her own EMF Meter which sits at a solid WHITE ZERO.

ANDRE
I thought I just saw something... I don't know. Think I'm still drunk.

JASMINE
The ghost of vodkas past...

A slow, growing smile cracks across her face as Jasmine presses herself up against Andre and steals a kiss.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Come on. We're missing the tour.

Oh, Andre's not a ghost hunter at all... he's a tourist.

Jasmine leads Andre from the room. He shoots one last glance at the portrait. The Old Man's eyes sharp and suspicious.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The couple descend the stairs and rejoin their TOUR GROUP. EMF Meters in every hand, each flashing different colors and numbers -- clearly a reliable technology.

JASMINE

He showed us where the old lady
killed herself. She jumped from the
balcony and their slave girl --

TOUR GUIDE (O.C.)

Right this way now. Don't dawdle!

The crowd pulls in towards an unseen TOUR GUIDE as they move deeper into the gloomy home. His voice high and precise. Odd.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT

The tourists huddle close as Andre and Jasmine stand in the doorway, only able to see the Guide's CRUMPLED GREY TOP HAT.

TOUR GUIDE (O.C.)

Many of these homes boast a
wonderfully haunted history, but
perhaps none so much as this very
abode. Having a ghost has become
something of a status symbol here!

Subtle laughs escape from the crowd as the Guide pulls open a heavy SLIDING DOOR, leading everyone into the next room.

Jasmine stares up at a painting of an elegant yet dower woman as the group thins out behind her. She seems entranced by the woman's unyielding gaze. The inscription: "Matilda Sorrel"

THUMP-THUMP -- a distant sound echoes from somewhere deep within the house. Jasmine frowns, turning her attention from the painting only to realize that she's all alone...

JASMINE

Really, Andre? Andre!

She steps back into...

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway seems darker now, illuminated only by the dim light of a few wall sconces which flicker for a moment.

JASMINE

We're missing the rest of the tour!

THUMP-THUMP! She timidly follows the noise to the balustrade of an open stairway. Digs up some courage and peers over the edge, nothing but darkness below. Then something moves.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

Babe? This really isn't funny.

No response, but he's definitely down there -- right? She moves to the stairs, slowly descending into darkness. Idiot.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

The cellar here serves as the ground floor, where large French doors open onto a connecting courtyard outside.

Jasmine moves past a fireplace; a glowing lantern nestled in the hearth casts dancing light and shadows about the room.

JASMINE

Okay, you got me back. You can cut this shit out now!

THUMP-THUMP! She jumps and turns to find a paneled door bumping against its frame. THUMP. THUMP. Her breathing hastens as she moves towards it... lifts her hand...

THUMP! Jasmine lets out a CRY as the door slams shut hard.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

You're such an asshole!

She yanks open the door to reveal an empty room. No Andre. No tourists. No one. Her heart is fucking racing. Then...

A faint VOICE wafts through the cellar, barely audible:

VOICE (O.C.)

Quiet, quiet. Keep quiet. The house is quiet...

Suddenly the EMF Meter in her hand SHRIEKS to life. The display a constant, threatening RED TEN. Assuming (hoping) it's just faulty, she hits the device against her palm.

The battery dies with a WHIMPER.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

A sound from somewhere deep within the house turns Andre from the tour, and he finally notices that his girlfriend is gone.

ANDRE

Jazz?

It's his turn to "seek" as he steps away from the tour.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Jasmine looks up from her EMF to find a SLAVE GIRL (Molly, 20s) huddled by the stone fireplace, her neck bent at an odd angle, muttering to herself. Her words are much clearer now:

WOMAN

Quiet, quiet. Keep quiet. The house
is quiet. Quiet, Quiet. Keep quiet.
The house is quiet. Quiet, quiet --

She's dressed in servant's clothing from the early 19th century with a scarf on her head, looking incredibly meek and sad. Jasmine's startled SCREAM morphs into relief.

JASMINE

Oh shit! Sorry. I didn't see you...
You work with the tour company?

The woman ignores her, still muttering. The room gets colder.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

Did you see a guy come down here?
Ghostbusters shirt, kinda cute,
very annoying? Hello? Hello?

Jasmine shakes her head and moves to exit through the French doors. As she steps onto the courtyard, the woman's muttering stops. Jasmine turns back only to find that the woman is gone, the fireplace dark.

She freaks and turns to run. Suddenly, from above, the BODY OF A WOMAN SLAMS onto the hard brick with a sickening THUD.

The woman's long grey dress, bare feet, and lengthy black hair lay crumbled before her -- Matilda Sorrel.

Horrified, Jasmine opens her mouth to scream, but the worn, emaciated HAND of Molly wraps around her face, dragging her into the darkness. Her EMF Meter falls to the floor as the French doors slowly drift shut, and everything goes quiet.

INT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Andre moves down the stairs, his EMF Meter still silent.

ANDRE

Jasmine? Babe, you down here?

CRACK! He hops quick as his foot lands on something hard. Reaches down and brings up Jasmine's broken EMF Meter.

Rigid silence. Then out of the corner of his eye, he turns to see a glowing ORB gently float through the room. Barely the size of a golf ball. It drifts right past him, disappearing up the stairs.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

What the hell...

His gaze drifts into the surrounding shadows... Both EMF Meters fall to the floor as he stares helplessly at something hidden in the dark. Sheer terror engulfs his entire face.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Jasmine? JASMINE!!!

EXT. SORREL-WEED HOUSE - NIGHT

The rest of the Tour Group casually exit the old manor. Each passes a sign reading: THE SORREL-WEED HOUSE, EST. 1835. They laugh and chat amongst themselves -- completely unaware.

We PULL BACK to showcase the manor's full southern charm against the night sky. The rapid CHIRPING of cicadas is deafening.

INT. SCAD CLASSROOM - DAY

The last frame DISSOLVES into an old, weathered photograph of the Sorrel-Weed House. A date etched in the corner says 1883, yet the house looks remarkably the same.

WIDEN: the photograph is being projected onto the wall of a classroom housing about twelve weary STUDENTS.

Katrina "KAT" Mendez, 23, flyaway hair, heavy eyes and bad posture, takes notes as her TEACHER, 48 continues her lesson.

TEACHER

And because of regulations like this one, historical preservation can, at times, prove to be... complicated. Especially here.

STUDENT

Because of all the ghosts?

The classroom mutters a handful of earnest chuckles. Kat rolls her eyes.

TEACHER

No, that's actually a good point. Some restoration projects have literally halted work or've been canceled altogether due to claims of paranormal activity. Whether you believe in ghosts or not, there's no denying their influence here. At the very least, it boosts tourism!

Kat's heard enough and begins to gather her things.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

That's it for today. Use the weekend to decide on a topic for your thesis. I want them Monday!

KAT

(sotto)

Shit.

Kat takes a moment as the class filters out around her.

EXT. SCAD CAMPUS - DAY

The boho students of SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) mill about -- basically just a lot of "artists."

Kat tightens the straps on her backpack as she moves to unlock her bike from an overcrowded rack. Her cellphone RINGS, and she answers it with some trepidation.

KAT

Hey Mom... Good. Yeah, just got out of class... Gabby's anniversary?

She fumbles with the bike lock, pausing for a calming breath.

KAT (CONT'D)

No, I don't think I can make it... Because I have school, and work, and school... I'm sorry. I just... I gotta go... Love you too.

Kat hangs up, finally wrenching her bike free from the rack.

EXT. SAVANNAH STREETS - DAY - INTERCUT

Kat pedals beneath curtains of Spanish moss, passing rows of centuries-old, beautifully preserved homes. Each practically oozing with the history of the charming antebellum South.

SUPER: SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

EXT. OGLETHORPE HOUSE - DAY

Kat locks up her bike and enters a six-story, modern-style dormitory, "haunted" by pierced and tattooed SCAD students.

INT. KAT AND MANDY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Kat enters to find her roommate, MANDY LIU, 22, eyes as bright as her outfit, furiously feeding fabric through her sewing machine whilst impressively devouring a sleeve of Girl Scout cookies -- Thin Mints of course.

MANDY

Kat! Perfect timing.

Kat tosses her heavy bag onto the floor and deposits herself into a well-worn sofa. Their dorm is cluttered yet well ordered, with touches of thrift-shop whimsy. Architectural blueprints and old photos of restored houses dot the walls.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Try this on for me real quick?
Can't get the sleeves right.

Mandy comes over with the article of clothing that she's been working on: blue, low-cut, long, and puffy -- it's hideous.

KAT

Why does a prom dress need sleeves?

MANDY

This is a blouse.

KAT

Can you grab me a beer?

MANDY

Can you wear my blouse?

KAT

Please, Mandy. I'm really not in the mood to model right now.

MANDY

Well, we don't have any beer.

KAT

Since when?

MANDY

Since you drank it all.

KAT

Perfect. Tight. Awesome. We got plenty of Thin Mints though, right?

MANDY

Always.

Kat sulks, considering her diminishing options for the night.

KAT

We need to go out.

MANDY

No, we don't.

KAT

I do. You do. We do. It'll be fun! Have some drinks, meet some guys.

MANDY

I just wanna finish this blouse before my show on Monday, okay?

KAT

You wanna distract yourself with homework so you don't think about that hipster boy who dumped you.

MANDY

Brett's not a hipster, he's an urban minimalist. And besides, that was like, five months ago! Ass.

KAT

And it's been eating you up inside.

MANDY

It really hasn't.

Kat looks to a photo of Brett pinned to Mandy's dressmaker mannequin. Man-bun + horn-rimmed glasses = hipster. A pair of velvet devil horns have been sewn to his head while SCISSORS stab into his long beard -- yeah, she's "fine."

KAT

Then help me get my mind off things!

MANDY

What's on your mind? The complexities of restoring the old Davenport House?

KAT

Sure, let's go with that. Leave at seven?

Kat makes for her bedroom.

MANDY

I really don't wanna go out, Kat.

KAT

But I do, and you're my wing-man and my best friend and my confidant. Please... What do I have to do to convince you?

Mandy looks down at the unsightly blouse in her hands and smiles. Kat grimaces -- really?

EXT. SAVANNAH STREET - SUNDOWN

Mandy beams as she trots alongside Kat, who uncomfortably pulls at the gaudy sleeves of her prom-centric blouse.

KAT

So much for getting laid tonight.

MANDY

I'm going home.

KAT

No, I was joking! It looks great.

MANDY

It does, doesn't it?

Mandy threads her arm through Kat's as they approach a crowd of TOURISTS gathered before an old house ahead. Kat groans.

KAT

I hate all these stupid haunted tours.

MANDY

I heard that some guy murdered his daughter in that house.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Stabbed her fifteen times and then hid her body in the walls.

KAT

How original.

She looks up towards the quiet structure at 432 ABERCORN STREET. Cracking paint, not a single grime-clouded window lit. It's not just unwelcoming, it's practically foreboding.

MANDY

Place gives me the creeps just looking at it, right?

Mandy's gaze is broken as Kat forces their way through the group of tourists like a New Yorker through Times Square.

KAT

Excuse me. Thank you. Move.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Sorry. Excuse us. So sorry.

Kindly move. There you go.

They get to the front to find RICHARD, 46, dressed like an out-of-shape Civil War soldier, addressing his tour group.

RICHARD

In fact, many believe that this house here at 432 Abercorn was once the home of a dark voodoo temple!

Gasps and shivers overcome the crowd as Kat moves past them.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Leaving so soon?

KAT

Nope. Not part of your silly tour.

RICHARD

You think ghosts are silly?

KAT

No, I'd have to believe in them to think they were silly.

MANDY

You don't believe in ghosts?

RICHARD

How long've you been in Savannah?

KAT

How do you know I'm not from here?

RICHARD

Because you don't believe in
ghosts.

Richard smiles. Kat sneers as Mandy pulls them away, past a flickering gas lamp, laughing as they weave through more tourists.