

Karma

By

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FADE IN ON:

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dark, which is a blessing. That makes it harder to see:

Peeling wallpaper. Cracked windows. A narrow staircase leads to an even darker second floor.

While in the living room below: splintered floorboards surround a couch with mildewed velvet cushions. Even rats would avoid being seen here.

FOOTSTEPS tap eerily on an unseen porch.

At the top of the staircase, two curious voices call out. Let's call them "MAN" and "WIFE"... for now.

WIFE (O.S.)

(warbles, a strangled sound)

It looks like we've visitors, Humphrey!

MAN (O.S.)

"Looks like"? Since when can you see through walls, Sophia? Is there anything else you've withheld from me, all these years?

WIFE (O.S.)

Don't be so darned difficult. Visitors to our home is an event we've not been blessed with in quite some time!

MAN (O.S.)

"Time". Decades or centuries? Which is it, Dear?

WIFE (O.S.)

Enough with your bluster. Welcome our guests... or I will!

Heavy metal CLANKS against an unseen chain.

WIFE (O.S.)

Oooooo! Did you hear that?

MAN (O.S.)

Who couldn't? There's not many other signs of life around these parts.

Suddenly: SNAP. Then... silence.

The door KNOB twists slowly. SQUEAAAAAAAAAK. The wife's voice assumes a hushed tone.

WIFE (O.S.)
My stars. Who could it be?

MAN (O.S.)
Stop prattling. Then we'll find out.

The rusty door CREAKS open.

ALICE (19, red punk hair) tiptoes in. Not that graceful - she's weighed down with far too much "gear". A heavy bolt cutter, too.

CAMERAS, EMF GAUGES dangle from straps on both slender shoulders. Under those: a "Spirited Investigation" t-shirt. She's decked out in full ghost-hunter style.

Alice scans the room, soaks the vibe in.

ALICE
Ooooh, spooky. Spooky-Cool, I mean!

Upstairs, Wife giggles. A bizarre, choking sound.

WIFE (O.S.)
A cautious little mouse invades our home?
Oh, how cute she is!

Alice takes a few steps. The floorboard beneath her CREAKS. Starts to CRACK, too.

The teen side-hops the hazard and beelines to the center of the living room.

Alice drops her hardware on the floor, beside the couch. She flips switches. Batteries WHINE as gadgets power up.

With a satisfied sigh, the teen sits down. Feeling a dampness, she quickly rebounds back up. Runs a hand across the back of her jeans.

Goo and mildew coat her fingers. Alice flicks it off.

ALICE
Gross. Ew!

Wife's voice morphs instantly. "Amused" disappears, replaced with a "scandalized", harsh tone.

WIFE (O.S.)
Insulting my house keeping skills will
you, gutter snipe?

MAN (O.S.)

Now, dear - let's not be hasty. Given, well, everything... who are we to judge?

WIFE (O.S.)

What guest insults her host? Was that child taught no manners at all?!?

Oblivious to their banter, Alice drops back down on the couch. Plucks a MICROPHONE from her gear, hits "Record":

ALICE

Guys, it's official. Guess I'm good at B&E after all. 'Cause I made it in, safe and sound! So, here I am at-

(checks her watch)

9:22 PM, right in the beating, bleeding heart of McCullough House. Spook Central Cincinnati, as it's called by supernatural circles in the know.

WIFE (O.S.)

Spook Central?!?

MAN (O.S.)

Honey, you know how touchy you sometimes get. Please this time don't take offense.

Alice scans her nightmare surroundings. Shudders. Grins.

ALICE

Seriously. This place is whack, and soooo worth it. Eyeball it for yourself!

Whipping a CELL from her jacket, Alice pans around the room, records.

Cell phone view: Creepy stuff in every frame. Cracked mirrors. Antique furniture. A psychotic looking CHINA DOLL slumped on the floor.

ALICE

The McCullough Haunted House "in the flesh." Scene of a historic and epically grotesque shotgun murder. With a suicide just months later!

WIFE (O.S.)

She's implying those two are connected, Humphrey. Make her stop!

MAN (O.S.)

Well, they are connected... no offense.

WIFE (O.S.)

If blame must be assigned, *your* roving
eye is the true culprit. Even so, that's
slander of our good name!

ALICE

And a shitload of freak ghost sighting's
since. Home sweet haunted home. Where
yours truly will spend tonight!

Alice toggles the camera view to selfie, zooms in.

ALICE

Yep, Spirited Investigator and Ghost
Hunter Alice Proctor, at your service -
signing in. Gimme any Murder Mapquest
address, I'll download the truth. Digging
up ghost deets personally and streaming
them to you, safe in your beds!

Turning the camera off, Alice sighs.

She extracts a bundle of SENSOR PADS from a bag,
distributes them around the room.

MONTAGE

- Near a GRANDFATHER CLOCK.

Alice pokes it. The monolith CHIMES. The teen recoils.
Recovering quickly, she laughs at herself. Who falls for
such a simple jump scare?

-By a DARKENED CLOSET. Childish red handwriting on the
door screams: "Private. Stay out - You R Warned!"

Alice sticks a hand in, waves it around. Nothing chomps
it off. The teen relaxes.

ALICE

Whew.

She places a sensor at the threshold, continues on.

- Approaching the doll, Alice grimaces.

ALICE

Damn girl. Self-care much? You're
grotesque. Like Annabel diddled Chucky
'cause nothing was on Netflix.

Alice nudges the toy with a toe. Mercifully, it doesn't
move. She chucks the sensor at its feet.

ALICE
Seriously. What Manson Adams kid would
play with you?

A strange vortex sucks our attention upward, towards the
second floor.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

More furniture here, torn from antiquity. On a lounge, a
half-transparent MAN and WIFE brood.

Dressed in Victorian garb, they're both clearly deceased.
And by the looks of it - it wasn't peacefully. Yikes!

Man's face is half missing. Wherever that shotgun bullet
traveled, so did his cheek. He clutches a BOOK as if
were a bible. The title reads:

"FAQS for the Dearly Departed".

Wife is more intact - but disturbing, too.

A ROPE trails from her neck, down a petticoat. Her
spine's snapped at the base of her skull, face bloated
from strangulation - and time.

A face that's pouting. Real pissed off.

WIFE
Who does she think she is, that upstart
wench?

MAN
I thought we "welcomed" visitors?

WIFE
Not if they smear our reputations. This
"Alice" character can't be trusted, you
ask me.

MAN
You haven't even tried to get to know
her, Dear.

WIFE
Why should I? That rude imp barged in!

Wife stalks to the staircase, blinks down at Alice.

The teen types on a LAPTOP, has zero clue Wife's here.

ALICE
 (chats into her cell)
 Hold onto your short and curlies, peeps.
 Now I'm syncing the sensors for EMF
 activity. If a ghost even *farts* in
 McCullough House...

INTERCUT UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS

Man giggles at her words - tries to hide his amusement by
 raising a hand to his face. The exit wound in his palm
 makes that futile.

WIFE
 What in Hell's name are you laughing at
 now, Humphrey?

MAN
 Darling, the girl said "fart!" You know
 how riled you get when I -

WIFE
 Never mind your winds and sins. The
 stench we're facing now is *her*!

ALICE
 (still into her cell)
 ...the sound will be recorded, and you -
 my faithful audience - will be the *first*
 to know!

Man chokes back more laughter. Wife frowns. He shrugs.

MAN
 Sweetheart, give the child *some* credit.
 Whatever else one might make of it, this
 new generation is refreshingly direct!

WIFE
 She's communing with unseen spirits
 through unnatural devices. That's
 witchcraft. I will not abide such in my
 house!

MAN
 Honey, please. Just let her be.

He pats the "FAQs" book clutched to his chest.

MAN
 You know the rules strictly prohibit we
 do anything to the living which "causes
 harm or distress".

Wife crosses her arms, pouts. Man's argument falls on deaf ghostly ears.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Wife and Man transport to the couch, still invisible to Alice. Even inches away, she's no clue they're here.

Man watches the teen scurry around the room with a microphone, admiration on the remains of his face.

Wife looks even more sour. Man rolls eyes at his "beloved", patience stretching thin.

MAN

Darling, I thought you *wanted* company?

WIFE

Sometimes I do. But sometimes... no.

MAN

After I died in that ghastly -

(cough)

"Accident", you only lasted six months on your own before... Well, you know-what.

He thrusts a finger at Wife's twisted neck. She slaps his arm down, pouts.

WIFE

I was grieving. Who can blame me?

MAN

Not me. Er, anymore. But since company rescues you from doldrums-

WIFE

Company with *standards*. Which this heathen clearly lacks!

She watches Alice stick an EMF scanner into the closet.

WIFE

That's where I keep my delicates. How dare she violate our sacred privacy!

(beat)

It's bad enough those little electric birds flit outside our window on Hallow's Eve for hours now.

Wife flaps her hand wildly to pantomime.

WIFE

Whatever in God's name those blasphemies of nature are.

MAN

I believe those "electric birds" are called "drones". You should watch them some time. They're quite the scientific wonder.

WIFE

"Wonder" if you wish. I won't!

Poof!! Wife grimaces, teleports from the couch.

...into the closet.

Alice spots a leering female face inside. She SCREAMS. Wife cackles as the teen recoils.

Hands shaking, Alice grabs her cell, and records.

ALICE

Guys, you might not wanna believe this, but fucking do! I just witnessed a first level apparition in the downstairs closet. This is a no bullshit exclusive. For reals, I swear! And it's only 10PM. When we get to Witching Hour, things are *really* gonna break loose. I'd have recorded it, but it happened too fast. No warning. Mere words can't describe how ugly it was. Barely human, in my face!

Wife reappears on the couch. She arches an eyebrow at Man, who blinks - concerned.

WIFE

Did you hear that? The whipper snapper called me ugly!

MAN

Darling, you *did* just jump out unannounced.

WIFE

And "barely human"? Pffffft. She should take a good look at herself. What gall!

MAN

Yes, dear. The impertinence... shocks me too?

He droops, verbally hounded into silence.

Making little sounds of annoyance, Wife watches Alice scramble to set up cameras around the room.

ALICE
(into her cell)
Good thing I came prepared. I swear to God, on my Tik-Tok ranking and Youtube - the next EMF disturbance I witness, you will too! If I manage to stay alive and beat the McCullough House curse....
(gulps dramatically)
You're gonna witness supernatural history with me tonight!

Wife smirks.

WIFE
Oh, she'll be "history" all right.

Man reaches out, pats his beloved's shoulder.

MAN
Darling, you've a right to be angry. No-one's claiming you don't.

WIFE
They best not!

MAN
But surely we've both learned it's better to think things through. Give those dark feelings time to subside...

But POOF. Wife disappears off the couch!

This time, she rematerializes beside the China Doll.

Still invisible to Alice, she picks the toy up - and frog marches it towards the teen.

Laughs evilly as Alice's eyes grow wide.

WIFE
You messed with the wrong hostess, little girl. I'll eat you up and spit you out. Go ahead - run and hide. Reveal yourself a coward to all your unseen friends. Like the uh....erm....

Whipping around to Man, Wife's head flops on her neck. Straightening it with both hands, she glares.

WIFE

What's the insult the young ones hurl
these days?

MAN

I think they call it "snowball". Or snow-
something....

WIFE

Snowflake - that's it!

(to Alice)

That's just what you are. Boo!

Wife thrusts the doll at Alice's face. Alice SCREAMS in
terror. She drops her cell, stumbles back.

Over a rotted floorboard. Which SNAPS in two!

Alice plummets straight down, into an unseen basement.

ALICE

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!

THUNK. Wife and Man materialize at the hole, peer down.

MAN

Well darling, it appears you're not a
snowflake either.

WIFE

Of course I'm not!

MAN

I mean, you're not unique.

(points)

Look. Our guest has departed.

WIFE

Don't be ridiculous. She's right there.

MAN

Yes, but with a broken neck. Rather
similar to yours, it seems.

WIFE

So, she's dead?

MAN

As much as we are.

(squints down harder)

Though fresher. I'm quite sure.

He groans, throws the book aside.

MAN

So much for "rules". I do believe you
just broke 1-5.

He shrugs at Wife. What now?

MAN

Those glass eye things-

WIFE

The cameras?

MAN

What shall we do with them?

WIFE

Toss them into the pit with her!

WOOSH.

The two stumble back as a NEW apparition erupts from the
basement hole.

It's the soul of a now dearly departed Alice! Broken
neck, scratched face. The "Spirited Investigation" t-
shirt glows on her half-transparent chest.

Alice touches down. Shoots Wife the stink-eye. AWKWARD.

ALICE

A word to ghouls; don't touch my shit.

WIFE

(stammers)

Language, child. Hold your tongue.

Ghost-Alice whips out a (now ethereal) cell phone, and
points it at wife. Zooms in close.

ALICE

Hold *this*, you floppy necked bitch.

WIFE

You don't look so intact yourself, child.

ALICE

Which is something you're gonna hafta pay
dearly for. First, by answering a few
questions for my audience. I was gonna
split in the AM. I had my alarm all set!
Why'd you have to go and *kill* me for?

MAN

(mutters)

Now, *there's* a reasonable line of inquiry.

ALICE

And what's with the whole Poltergeist schtick? Do you get some sorta cheap thrill outta scaring people? Huh?

Wife stumbles back, but Ghost Alice advances.

ALICE

Who are you people? Gimme details. Now!

WIFE

Please. Just leave me - us - alone!

ALICE

Not gonna happen. I'm haunting *you* now.

Wife turns, flees. Through a wall, up the stairwell. Disappears.

Leaving Man and Alice alone. The two exchange looks.

MAN

Glad to have you here. Sophia may be prickly with strangers, and her temper's... quite a bear. Believe you me, I know that well! But she's - quite gracious and accommodating once she warms up.

(beat)

By the by, you fancy threesomes?

ALICE

(groans)

With you, it'd be two and a half. Yuck, no!

Shoving Man away, Alice stomps up the stairs - yells.

ALICE

Mrs. McCullough, you can run, but you can't hide. I've got a lotta questions. And all eternity to ask 'em, sis!

Alice vanishes into the darkness upstairs. An unseen Wife screams in frustration.

In the living room, Man rubs his half face... smiles.

FINAL FADEOUT: