

The Drowned Phantom

A storm grumbled across the sky, lightning sparking through the rain that lashed against the windows. The power had flickered out hours ago, and the property's new family huddled beside a sputtering fire, wind setting the old house moaning. The parents tried to soothe the children's fear, telling stories across the tattered old rug; but the children still jumped at every clap of thunder, and every flash of lightning.

In the oil-thick darkness of the hallway beyond, the phantom grinned. It was the *perfect* haunting night.

Like a shadow carved of ice, he slid along the corridor, leaving droplets in his wake. Water coated his figure—a permanent reflection of the moment when he lost his life breath at the bottom of the nearby lake. A permanent reminder of his vow to terrorize anyone who sought to claim possession of this land. His land.

The door ahead stood ajar, welcoming his torment in toward the struggling fire's warmth and the unsuspecting family.

He could see them sitting there, oblivious and trembling. He could hear the children's little shrieks and whines, and the parents' voices growing less confident by the second.

The phantom's teeth flashed again. Light from the fire illuminated a thin line down his body, glinting off the droplets that fell from him. He reached out a hand, unfeeling the coarse wood and pushed. . . . The door opened without a sound.

The phantom froze. He tried again, pushing the door further, but it was still silent. With a huff, he grabbed the knob, pushing it back and forth in a heat of aggression. *When did they oil this door?!* The hinges slid flawlessly, and despite the wildly flinging door, the family did not notice him.

He threw up his hands, spraying water across the hall. *Well, now I'm not doing it!* If they didn't have the decency to appreciate his efforts, then he wouldn't bother haunting them. The phantom pouted. Maybe he'd try flinging some things around in the kitchen tomorrow. He scoffed, *That's such a poltergeist move. Those things lack so much flare.*

Grumbling and punching the walls, he retreated toward his damp, neglected basement, leaving only a few splashes of water as evidence he even existed.