

Playing the Devil's Game

CATHLYN DORÉ LAW and BECKI ROGERS



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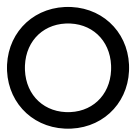
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Ouija Nightmare

pen the door! *Open the door!*" I recognized my kid sister Cindy's voice screaming above the persistent pounding of her fists at the front door. A friend and I had been deep into the thriller on TV, but it couldn't compare with what was going on back home at this very moment.

Swinging the door open, I found Cindy standing on the porch shaking her hands in helpless distraction. "Becki," she blurted, "you have to come home. Something's wrong with Mom!"

Not waiting for an explanation, I darted out the door. My mind shot in all directions searching the possibilities. *Heart attack? Accident?*

Breathless, I bounded up the steps of our house and rushed in. Mom's friend, Debbie, was sitting across the dining room

table from her. Debbie's face was distorted with fear. Seeing me, she whispered to Randy, my older brother, "She's here." Though my family had come to regard me as a bit of a spiritual freak, there were times they appreciated my leanings toward God.

"What's going on?" I asked in bewilderment.

"The spirits are trying to get into Mom." DJ, my younger brother, stood staring at Mom as he spoke.

I saw the Ouija board in the center of the table.

It was nothing new in our home. Mom regularly played the game with friends and relatives. Many mornings I had seen little scraps of paper littering the coffee table where my aunt had jotted down answers Ouija had given them the night before.

As a youngster, I had been awakened one night by a rhythmic chant. Drawn downstairs by my curiosity, I had peeked into the dining room, where I saw Mom's friends and some of our relatives with their hands lightly resting on the table. In unison they were repeating, "Rise, table, rise," their voices increasing in volume to an urgent crescendo.

Though I wasn't quite sure what they were doing, the scene left me with a creepy feeling, so I tiptoed back upstairs wishing I had never seen it. But it was just a game, wasn't it?

However, this time the game had morphed into a nightmare.

"She's not breathing!" Debbie erupted with a scream. Trembling, she backed as far away from the Ouija board as she could, flattening herself against the wall.

"Get that candle," Randy snapped at DJ. Going to the counter, DJ brought the candle and a lighter to the table. The

blackened wick showed that the candle had been lit before. Lighting the candle again, Randy held it directly in front of Mom's mouth.

"Watch. See, the flame doesn't even flicker," Randy said. He was right. There was no movement from Mom's chest to indicate she was breathing. Her eyes stared blankly into space. DJ pulled the candle away and put out the flame.

Then Randy said, "Watch this." Flicking his fingers close to Mom's face failed to bring even the slightest flinch from her. Coming close, he blew into her eyes. Again, no movement. "I've even thrown water into her face, and that's all we get!" He gestured toward Mom who looked more like a statue than a human. *What caused this?* My mind scrambled for an answer.

Debbie suddenly exclaimed, "Look!" Her finger pointed shakily at the heart-shaped message indicator on the Ouija board. Our eyes followed the moving device. Before coming to a stop, it cruised over the two rows of letters that arched in rainbow fashion across the board. We could see the needle clearly pointing at the letter *K* through the lens. Knowing the indicator would spell out a message, we watched uneasily.

DJ and I repeated the letters aloud as the indicator moved and stopped at each one: "*K . . . I . . . L . . . L . . . S . . . U . . . E .*"

I stared in disbelief at Mom's name. My heart was pounding. The message indicator continued: "Let me in. . . I want your body. . . KILL SUE!" This brought another scream from Debbie as she slid under the table like a cowering animal, putting her hands over her face in an effort to shut out the horrible drama.

"Becki, *do something!*" she pleaded hysterically.

This Ouija nightmare had been years in the making. My mom had grown up attending church with her mother. Then an aunt had introduced her at an early age to a new game: the Ouija board.

"It's just a game," Mom's aunt coaxed as she displayed the board and began to show Mom how to play it. Mom was intrigued with this new pastime. When she turned sixteen, her boyfriend gave her a gift.

"I made it myself," he said proudly as she admired his masterpiece. The homemade Ouija board was 14 inches by 18 inches with neat sapphire letters and numbers written in calligraphy. In each upper corner was a picture—a moon with the word *no* on one side and a sun with the word *yes* on the other.

"Let's ask Ouija some questions—any questions," he urged. "Let's see . . . I know. Will I graduate from high school?" Nothing happened for a moment. But then, as Mom rested her hand on the message indicator, it began to move. Bristling with excitement, they watched as it came to rest over the word *yes*.

"See!" Mom's boyfriend exclaimed triumphantly.

Mom was thrilled to have a Ouija board of her own. I don't know if Mom knew that the Bible clearly prohibited having anything to do with divination (Deuteronomy 18:10–12), but the Ouija game began Mom's lifetime fascination with the occult.

Mom eventually married her boyfriend. And with his gift of the Ouija board, she stepped into a spiritual realm she knew little of. It was a world that promised the entertaining

excitement of communication with what she referred to as “the spirits.” Neighbors and friends began to seek out Mom to get a peek into their futures. She enjoyed this new influence with people. It carried an appealing sense of control—a power—she had never known before.

Sadly, Mom’s marriage ended when I was eight weeks old. During this time she had a nervous breakdown and was taken to the hospital. As an infant, I slept in Grandma and Grandpa’s dresser drawer. After a few weeks, Mom recovered and was released from the hospital. Shortly after my first birthday, she married my stepdad.

When I was about five years old, we moved to another house. After getting the furniture in place, my parents went to bed. In the morning I wandered out to the living room and sat on the couch. About that time my dad came into the room, stretching and yawning. He stopped short, looking around the room.

Puzzled, he called out, “Hey, honey, why did you rearrange the furniture? I liked the couch over by the window.”

Coming out of the bedroom, Mom asked, “What are you talking about? I didn’t rearrange anything.” Then she gazed around the room.

“Becki,” Dad said as he turned to me, “did you move the furniture?”

Mom sniffed. “She’s not strong enough to move all this furniture around. Besides, we would have heard it if she had done that.”

Shaking his head, Dad started to put things back the way they had been the night before. Strangely, the next morning

the furniture had been moved again. After this happened two more times, my mom gave up.

"OK, fine. If you want the furniture this way, I'll just leave it," Mom sighed. Looking at me, she said, "You know, Becki, I guess the spirit thinks it looks better this way." She shrugged and walked into the kitchen to fix breakfast. Mom was beginning to accept the presence of the spirits in our home as if they were harmless neighbors.

I, on the other hand, was not quite so trusting of them. One day, when I was a preschooler tagging along after Randy, we began exploring the garage, trying to find something to do. Spying a paintbrush, I picked it up. "We could finish painting the garage," I suggested.

"Nah." Randy shook his head. He well remembered the last time we'd attempted a paint job. We had mistakenly used black wheel-bearing grease instead of paint. It had created quite a mess, and Dad had been pretty upset.

I spotted a hammer. "Hey, we can pound some nails into a board," I enthused. "Wouldn't that be fun?"

"No." Randy waved off my idea. Then his eyes lit up as he pulled down a shovel. "Let's dig into hell and see what the devil *really* looks like," he said excitedly.

Now I was scared. "W-w-w-w-hat if that old devil gets mad at us?" I shivered at the thought. "I mean, he may not like us just dropping in while he's torturing people." It's hard to say where I had gotten such an idea of the devil and hell, but there were plenty of TV cartoons and horror movies to suggest such things.

Considering my objection, Randy picked up a hammer. “Here,” he said, holding it out to me. “Take this and watch while I’m digging. If you see the devil coming out of the ground, smash him with this hammer.” He made a fast pounding motion with his hand, showing me just what to do. “And then I’ll throw dirt on him and stomp him back down into the ground.” With considerable misgivings, I followed Randy’s suggestion.

As Randy had instructed, I knelt on the grass, watching while he dug. My hand ached from the intense grip I had on the hammer, but I was thoroughly convinced that I would see those red, crooked fingers coming out of the ground to grab us at any moment.

When Randy was up to his knees in dirt, I asked, “Is it hot yet?”

Shaking his head, Randy kept digging. Though we persisted in this project for about two weeks, we never did hear tortured screams or moans from the pit.

As I grew older, I saw things in our home that shaped my understanding of the supernatural world that remain hidden to most people. I believed there was a devil, but I didn’t understand his connection with the seemingly harmless spirits that were in our house.

One day Mom had visitors. Their talking and laughter drew me into the living room to see what I was missing. Aunt Ciara had just poured herself a cup of coffee. As she entered the living room where Uncle Reece was standing, I saw a spirit suddenly appear. He was tall and thin, wearing a long coat and hat. Reaching out, he took hold of Aunt Ciara’s hand and

poured her coffee onto the floor.

Dumbly, Uncle Reece and Aunt Ciara stood there. They didn't see the spirit, and he smiled as if he was enjoying his little joke. Then he disappeared.

"Why did I do that?" Aunt Ciara asked, baffled.

Uncle Reece shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. Why *did* you do that?" They both laughed as Aunt Ciara went to get a towel to clean up the mess.

As Mom got acquainted with the neighbors, they told her that a man had died in our home before we moved in. So it was no surprise that they referred to it as a haunted house. This image was enhanced when, after we were all tucked into bed one night, a babysitter heard marbles being rolled across the room and rowdy kids jumping around in our bedroom. She hurried up the stairs to get us settled down only to find everyone sound asleep.

"Something's not right," she complained to my parents later. She never came back.