

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS PRESENTS

# ROBERT RILEY

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## SHADOW INVESTIGATOR

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### 1# SHADOW INVESTIGATOR - PART 1

In order to understand who I am today, I need to take you back to 1992. This was not my first experience with the supernatural, but it turned out to be one that really grabbed my attention.

At only twelve years of age, I had been busted at school, in possession of a packet of light cigarettes and a small flask of whiskey. I explained to the head teacher that the “goods” weren’t meant for me, they were meant for the school janitor who’d died earlier that summer.

Yes, I know how that sounds; an offering to a dead guy, but my intentions were justified. The cigarettes and the whiskey were gifts. For the purpose of paranormal research they would act as a trigger object; just a little positive provocation. My intention was to provide comfort to the spirit of the janitor that had remained; the part of him that still harbored needs and cravings.

I was that young and wise to the ways of the paranormal investigator before the time it became a popular past-time, and yes; I do sense, hear and see the dead, and they know that I see and hear them too.

My risky exploration of the paranormal resulted in a late after-school detention, the ones where the parents are called and asked to make special arrangements to have somebody come and pick me up. My parents were not in when the head’s secretary called home, and being that I was a smart-ass twelve year old; they gave me no choice but to cycle home in the dark. That was all fine by me, although I without foresight of my incarceration, I didn’t bring lights, nor did I carry any reflectors.

Taking off on my bicycle, I really didn’t care to take the busy main road home so I hiked up one of the side roads. I rode on with nothing to distinguish myself as being present to anybody else traveling that night. For the sake of safety however, I push peddled off onto the soft grass verge each time car light beams threw up in my direct path.

One such car came from behind extremely slowly. I willfully rolled myself off the road and onto the grass. I waited, and watched as the car passed on by. The driver was extremely distinctive; let me describe her exactly as I remember. It has been a while, but here goes:

She was a middle aged woman. She had very light red hair, very loosely curled, quite greasy and distressed. She had sickly pale skin, somewhat blotchy. She appeared to be upset, but that was all the detail I could find in the hazy moment as her car passed on by. All I held onto was that sudden moment where time stopped, and the image of her face as she stared across at me with a tense glint in her dark troubled eyes. Along with that look came a great sense of pain and fear. A chill brushed down my back and I froze.

The car passed me but as it headed up the road, it started to slow right down to a crawl, virtually matching my speed as I tailgated onwards staying just out of the rear red car beams. I never once thought that the car's slow crawl had anything to do with me. The car broke suddenly and stood still without any indication, lights hazard or otherwise. I carried on moving towards it regardless. It seemed I was drawn to it more than I feared it. It was not as if I had any other choice but to move on. There were no other side roads. All that surrounded me were fields and trees.

I approached curiosity got the better of me. My initial impression of the red haired woman was correct, though understated. She was more than a little upset. Panicked and shaking fretfully would have described her better. I was even more unnerved when I noticed, as if for the first time, that there was a passenger sitting next to her. I thought it was a man... perhaps it was, I was not entirely sure. My gut told me otherwise, but whatever it was I saw sitting next to that red haired woman, it embodied nothing more than pure darkness, without form or detail.

Ahead and peddling away at my best possible speed, I felt relief lift from my chest as the car lights fell behind me. The dark silent road lay ahead with a great sense of comfort to me. I gratefully allow myself to be swallowed by it.

The road beneath me began to light up as car lights blanketed the road once more. I could hear the roar of the car engines getting closer. I knew had to get off the road once again but something inside told me to just keep going. I knew I should have turned the bike towards that grass verge, but it would only have slowed me down. I was convinced that that car knew I was there and would surely going to pass me, so with naïve faith, I stayed put, along the edge line of the road.

The car pulled up alongside and yet again it matched my speed. The woman was clearly attempting to keep the steering wheel steady. Two dark, blurred hands appeared to be reaching over her, forcing against her will. The moment the front of the car passed ahead of my bicycle I caught a glimpse of the black hands as they shunted the steering over to my direction. I reacted instantly and as the car sped off

at high speed ahead into the darkness, I lost control, ran my bike down the grass verge, hitting a root or a branch before being thrown clear over the handle bars and into the hedgerow. Silence came all but briefly as the sound of a spinning bicycle wheel was drowned out by the furor of hard resounding metal crashing in the distance, the sound of glass as it shattered and the hum of a car engine rumbled until it could no longer hold a note.

I was startled, bruised and shivering. My face was white with fear. I stumbled to the top of the roadside and noticed up ahead; that car had struck a tree and was steaming heavily, rear lights still on despite the impact. I didn't dare walk up to the wreckage and within a moment's breath I felt giddy. My legs gave way and I collapsed onto the grass verge, lay on my back and waited.

The face of the red haired woman was fixed like a slide, back lit and imprinted in my memory. I knew that the shadow man that sat beside the red haired woman was still there, watching. I felt his presence and it terrified me.

The rest was a blur. Pretty soon a car came by; its driver alerted the emergency services. I should have only been slightly shocked, but for some reason, I felt heavy, I felt exhausted. I waited until the ambulance arrived.

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After several days in the hospital for observation, I finally came home. My family had all come "out of the wood-work" to see me arrive and welcome me back, as if I' had been away for the longest of times. *I've never been one for family sentiment.*

I was lucky to have come out from the accident with nothing more than a few sprains and grazes. The fogginess was attributed by all as being a slight concussion, but I knew differently. I did not hit my head. Something else happened when I lay on that road that night, and I wasn't about to explain it to anybody. As first night home progressed, the conversation dropped to the minimal, and like most families who run out of conversation, they all sat watching the television, watching whatever could hold their attention from the possibility of further conversation.

I heard a firm knock on the door. Nobody wanted to go, quite obviously. I started to get up, but my father rose with me with an unfazed motivation to go and answer the door himself.

"No Dad." I urged. "I'll get it. I need to keep moving. It will be good for me; it will probably be one of the neighbors following through on their curiosity."

My father sat back down, happy with my choice to go and answer the door. Before I got to the hallway, I heard three heavy solid knocks, the type you expect from squared off closed fist. Not the happiest of greetings.

I crept into the hallway and looked at the door - which was half solid wood, but with frosted glass split panels at the top half.

I looked straight at the frosted glass, and I froze.

I felt my arms and my legs stiffen and I held my breath. Through the frosted glass, I saw the outline of the woman, the red haired woman; her head tilted and her body obscured. Her hair was unmistakably messy, her face was distorted. She raised an arm and knocked at the door again, and in that moment, I suddenly regained control of my legs. Immediately I turned and headed back through the hallway, straight into the living room and seated myself back in the chair where my family were still sitting, watching the television. I really didn't know what to do, and what did it matter.

"Who was it dear?" My mother asked. I'm sure that my face was full of fear. I did not want to answer, I remember that much, I mean, who would've?

Moments later there was another knock at the door; the same resounding thumps. I felt terrified, and didn't want to get up for anything. This was the first time, that first experience where I felt such fear, a lack of control. Something had focused purely on me.

This one time, as the knocking continued my father got up from his seat and went into the hallway. I expected him to come back within moments, but something else caught my attention. A reflection in the television set, as the screen changed to black during a transitional fade in the show they were watching: the chair where my father sat, there was a solid black form with hollow eyes that illuminated slightly in the ambient light of the room. I looked around, and it seemed I had been the only one who'd noticed it. Of course they didn't see it... and my father returned to the room as if nothing had happened. He sat back down, and the black form disappeared.

"Nobody there." my Father said in response to the knock at the door.

*Nobody there...* I could only keep those words running around my head in order to get through the evening. "There was nobody there... there was nobody there..." I've heard those words being uttered by so many people, and I could never forget that moment, when I knew that the world of the paranormal harbored a dark side.