

ROBERT RILEY

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The Messenger Arc: Astral Revelations

This story is a bit of a long one, so I will be short here. Activity during my stay here in Australia has reached a critical crossroads. I had no idea that the following story would ever come back to me. I thought this was one of those events I couldn't explain, but with the seed planted, it seems inevitable now that this little side step was not only linked many things together, but also was a vital turning point in my journey. The event that follows blended two areas of the supernatural: a haunting and also a mystery outside the realm of the dead that would be far too difficult for me to explain here. But behold an experience I never expected to happen. When two worlds collide, a mystery is created.

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Buildings come and go, these days especially. It seems that the terraced housing that was built in the recovery of world war two were not always well built, and so when the time came to pull them down and build new semi and detached housing...there would be disturbances. Spirits would often feel the change and their routine; their patterns would no longer fit. Realizing this, I was always on the lookout for new development sites just in case I could happen upon a spirit who needed direction. I never thought however that any disturbed spirit would ever give me the same thing in return.

I was awakened by the burning warmth that came from Jiri's journal. Once more I turned the page and read the words he had sent through to me.

19 Sturry Meadows Court, Sturry, Kent: new housing estate.
Learn to say a few things in Japanese before you go.

As cryptic as it was, I had a feeling this was something quite significant. I learnt never to question Jiri Ivanov's spirit messages as it took a tremendous amount of energy to form them, letter by letter. It was a bond that we shared, and that nobody else could see. It was a privilege.

In two days, I managed to break free from my commitments and head down to the Garden of England, known as Kent. Sturry was a small township with a railroad with a station, and a small spatter of shops. I found Sturry Meadows Court and located house 19. It always felt awkward heading up and knocking on the doors of strangers. That's why I never did this kind of thing. Avoided it like the plague, but I trusted that my few phrases of Japanese would be enough. If in fact, the residents of number 19 didn't speak English at all, then fear the trip might have already been in vain.

I knocked, and the door opened to a lady in her mid twenties, with dark straight hair. She was not at all Asian in any way, but I tried my luck:

'Konnichiwa.' I uttered first. She seemed puzzled, somewhat cautious as she closed the door slightly. I continued to read from one of my cue card I had written phonetically:

'AY-goh oh hah-nah-seh-moss-KAH?' – the phrase being, "Do you speak English?"

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She suddenly seemed shocked and closed the door. I stood, somewhat expectant of the reaction and decided to walk away. I wasn't sure if I should be there making the poor woman uncomfortable. I reached the side walk and then heard the door open again. Standing there was the woman, her husband and a little boy, no older than 6. The parents whispered into the bright little boy's ear. He was reluctant, but he finally plucked up the courage.

'Sumimasen. Konnichiwa!' the little boy shouted. He too was not Japanese, and looked the spitting image of his father who pushed past his wife and child and came up to me with a serious look of concern.

'Have you been talking to my son?' The look of annoyance was taunting. His thin lips were tight, as if he was straining from doing something he'd regret. He was a bulky man, bald with glasses; a business type with an edge of lost rebellion.

I turned smiled and decided to come clean.

'I don't actually know anymore Japanese. I was told somebody here did. I have to level with you, please, don't be angry. I will walk away and you won't see me again, but I was sent here. I understand you have some problems, and I was sent here to help you. I'm an investigator.'

'I don't want any police involvement.' The father seemed insistent. 'If you would please...'

I looked at the boy, and I could see in his eyes that he was channeling energy. He was translucent in his thoughts and I had one last chance to convince his father before leaving.

'I'm not the police. I work in the supernatural. Your son is having communication with somebody. You want to know what it is all about. I know bringing me into your home is a grave concern, so I will go and I'm sure you will figure it out in your own way.'

'Wait!' The father said quickly as I began to walk back to where I came from. 'Perhaps you can help.'

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Everything was easier after that. I was invited into their home, even though the mother, Christine was not comfortable with me being there. Then again, who would be comfortable when it came to concerns about your child?

The father, Paul explained as the boy, Bradley, played with toy trains on the carpet of the living room.

'He spends a lot of time talking in his room.' Paul started, 'we thought he had an imaginary friend, which is normal I would guess. But when he started saying Japanese words, and singing Japanese songs, I couldn't believe it. I asked his teachers if they'd learnt them at school, but they said no. His friends although ethnically diverse, don't speak Japanese in their family nor have Japanese descendants. My wife watched him learn a song the other day, phonetically learning as if being taught right there in the

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middle of his room. He faces thin air... and sometimes he tells me “he wants the photo, that’s all!” well that scared me... I don’t know what it means!’

‘The pictures you say?’

I looked over at Christine. She refused to give me any eye contact. She did however call over to Bradley to sing a song for me. He said nothing. Paul asked him with a stern voice, asking specifically for the “Cho-cho” song. The boy thought for a moment and then went straight into singing:

Cho-cho, cho-cho, na no ha ni tomare!
Na no ha ni aitara, sakura ni tomare!
Sakura no hana no hana kara hana e
tomare yo! Asobe! Asobe yo! Tomare!

I was amazed. I asked if they knew what he was singing and Paul shook his head.

‘For all I know, he could be singing about death and killing, and all things bad. So you can understand our concerns.’ Paul looked over at his wife. ‘Christy doesn’t believe in ghosts, and neither do I... so you can understand that we’re not—’

‘Wait. I never said I didn’t believe...’

‘Yes you did. You said you’re not into this kind of stuff.’

‘If you’d seen Bradley talking to nothing, you’d want to know for sure right?’

I watched as the couple argued the virtues and issues of their belief systems. They weren’t happy with accepting any possibility of there being a connection to the spirit world. I had to point out to them clearly:

‘Look. I’m here. I can easily walk away and let you figure it out on your own. You don’t HAVE to believe. But it’s worth looking into right? If I could see the room where he learns Japanese so clearly, I’ll know if there’s something there.’

Christy put her hands on her face. She didn’t like the idea of anything being there at all. It was all a bit too much for her. Paul however nodded and led me up the staircase, leaving Christy with Bradley. Just as we left the living room however, it amazed me when Bradley said, “Sayōnara” which to anybody would be a known phrase... goodbye. The mother laughed nervously for a moment. It didn’t seem to bother her if she already knew a word or two, but it seemed the unknown was high up on her list of fears.

It was a typical boy’s bedroom although very tidy. Everything seemed to be arranged just so. When I commented on the fact, Paul said ‘My wife likes things to be in order...’ which made perfect sense. I was not in order, and her unwanted guest certainly wasn’t a part of her ideal vision of control.

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Paul watched as I sat on the carpet. I sat there for a good ten minutes before Paul returned and asked if I'd seen anything.

'He's not here yet.'

'How do you know it's a he?' Paul asked.

'Because he's hiding.'

Paul's eyes went wide as he looked about the room for anything unusual. He shuddered. Hairs on the back of his neck most likely getting the better of him. Paul told me I had all the time that I needed and left me with the room in peace.

I sat for a while longer. I closed my eyes and allowed the energy to grow around me. I felt a tug on my jacket. When I opened my eyes, I saw the face of a little boy. His Japanese features were youthful, strong and unmistakable.

'Konnichiwa.' I said with a gentle smile. The boy said nothing to me. Instead he hopped up and with a chill of air, he stood next to a picture of Bradley in his school uniform. He pointed and then said clearly.

'Watashi no namae wa Akio desu.'

I quickly took out a pen and wrote on my hand a phonetic sense of the words he was saying. He then said something I couldn't understand. He was excited about the photo. He was exhaustingly emphatic about it meaning something. After writing all I could on my hand, I stood and walked over to the photo. He shouted "lie!" which I knew was a definite "NO!".

He mentioned the word Akio several times and pointed again, walking to another photograph of Paul and Christy with Paul. He covered Paul up and said Akio, and then pointed just to Christy and Paul. The Japanese boy started to get nervous and scared. I blinked and he was gone. I rubbed my eyes and called out "Akio!" – it seemed as though he'd said what he needed to say. He also appeared to have told me exactly what I needed to know in order to help him. I however needed to figure out several things. I had to get a history of the house, and find out specifically if any Japanese children had lived there. I wanted to find the link between the school photograph and the significance of the parents within the photograph.

I didn't want to leave the house without telling Christy and Paul everything I had seen. I also asked Bradley if he knew what Akio meant. He told me straight.

'His name. The boy's name is Akio.'

Christy started to cry. Obviously it was a shock for pieces to come together with a slant to the supernatural, yet she felt brave enough to ask a question.

'Did Akio used to live here?'

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Bradley nodded.

I told Paul and Christy that I was extremely dedicated to helping them out. I needed to find out more about the house history and get back to them. Again I put off my commitments elsewhere and stayed in Sturry for three days until I discovered the truth behind the mysterious Japanese boy.

I managed to creep around several Council workers. Something I had gotten into the habit of doing; Getting the records on old buildings... inhabitants with names ranging from difficulty to easy depending on the country. Forget about getting this information anywhere in Europe! Luckily, when I alluded to the idea of a Japanese boy, one lady's eyes widened. When approached, she couldn't wait to tell me that she remembered reading in the newspaper about the mysterious Japanese boy, who she understood had been abandoned at the Shrove Side School one afternoon. Nobody knew where he came from. A teacher at that school was granted temporary custody of the child until the matter had been cleared up. This to me was incredible. Sure, it was a small town, and still a localized community. Naturally I wanted the news story. The lady at the council joined me at the Canterbury archives. We found what we were looking for: Small news clipping recounting the event of a child being abandoned at the Shrove Side School. No pictures were present, but I had my next lead. The Shrove Side School was again mentioned, along with a quote from the teacher who found him.

'I saw him playing with the children. At first I didn't see he was new, but when I realized, we were immediately there to find out who he was. But he spoke no English.' – Nina Hope.

Nina was still working at the school. I arranged to meet with her that afternoon. She was more than happy to turn up, simply because she wanted to know what I knew about the boy. What's more, she had a photograph of the boy standing with friends. She gave me a copy of the photograph, and a chill went down my spine. This was the boy in the room alright. He was neatly dressed; a little out of sorts when it came to being completely at ease with his surroundings. I let her tell me her story first before explaining what I had found:

'It was **1983** when it happened. We noticed a Japanese boy playing with the children outside. We immediately went out to ask him where he'd come from, but he couldn't say. He spoke no English. Naturally we had him stay until the end of the day expecting his parents to return to get him. We assumed he was just dropped off, told to stay there until the parents came back... oh we had so many theories that day, but as all the children went home, he sat there on a chair. He seemed frightened, but calm. He seemed to be taking it all in as if he'd never been in a room like it before. He was perfectly dressed; quite an adorable and polite little boy. We made sure he was comfortable. Nobody came back for him. We had to contact social services. When they said they would be taking him away, I suggested he stayed with me just in case his parents came back for him. It took some wrangling, but they agreed, and I took care of him. He seemed confused a lot of the time, but still he did as I said, and eventually seemed to be happy just joining in with the children. There were times when he got very

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upset and would cry himself to sleep. He must have been crying out for his parents. Anyway, I brought him to school one day. I was in a meeting with Social Services when two boys came to me and said that ‘Cho Cho’ as they called him went into the sandpit but never came back. Obviously, their little imaginations had gotten away with them. But he’d gone. The police got involved. They called it abduction but things were dropped soon after when they realized there was nothing to work with. No name, no identity, nothing at all. It was as if the boy had appeared and then disappeared within the space of two months. Nothing else came from it. Case closed.’

I told Mrs. Hope that his name was “Akio” – she asked me how I knew that. I didn’t know where to start. I started to explain who I was. I told her about the house, and it was true: she used to live on the terrace house that had been pulled down earlier that year. This being 1999, she said she’d often thought about Akio, that by now he would be 22 years old, give or take a year. She didn’t believe me that there was a child spirit there, and that the boy was likely to have died young.

‘It is possible,’ I explained, ‘he might have died at his age, or the spirit is merely a mimic of his energy, and he may have died much older after all.’

I felt bad as I saw Mrs. Hope’s face drop. I told her about the song that Bradley had sung. She remembered parts of it.

‘He sang that to help him sleep.’ Mrs. Hope shook her head, ‘But why did he turn up in the first place, and where did he go after 2 months? How could he have died, and why is his spirit visiting this young child?’

It was then I had to give her, an honest answer to all of those questions. ‘I don’t know.’

I thanked Mrs. Hope for her time and for the photograph. I went back to the house of Paul, Christy and Bradley and I explained all that I knew. They seemed puzzled, but relieved. Christy accepted the photograph, especially when Bradley smiled with excitement that he could see his friend in the picture. I explained that it didn’t seem as though Akio was causing any distress, ‘But if you would like me to ask him to move on... I will try, but to be honest, I don’t like doing that.’

Christy shook her head. She asked Bradley, ‘Do you want Akio to go away?’

Bradley said “no” bluntly with a whine of disapproval at the mere suggestion. Christy looked at Paul who then nodded. She replied, ‘No, it’s not necessary. Thank you Mr Riley.’

That felt good. Although there was so much I didn’t yet understand, so many gaps about the mysterious child, I was relieved now that the family was able to move forward. I gave them my details and told them that I would be here for them if they needed me to engage with him for any reason. Little did I know... this wasn’t going to be the end of it.