

# The Mocking-Trumpet

By Daniel Black



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"Stop the car" I said. "This is it."

He wasn't convinced. "There isn't even an address" he said as he pulled out his GPS unit. He was exactly what you would expect from the type of guy who would use a GPS rather than look for the address which ten seconds of thought had so thoroughly convinced him did not exist, or, commit the atrocity of looking at the picture we were sent before our mission.

Nevertheless, he was useful. He was quite effective with all manner of gadgetry for detecting "spectral anomalies in the background flux", which was his supposed explanation for the odd phenomena that we had made our career investigating. I wasn't convinced. I'd like to think that there is something more out there that "waves and particles", but I guess he finds comfort in his science and his gadgets.

He fumbled some more with his GPS. It beeped a few times and the screen flashed a barely-readable, black and white(or rather, black and green) map. "It looks like the coordinates match" he said. "But I still don't believe any of your psychic nonsense" he said. I just laughed and ignored him. He probably stayed up all night playing NetHack or something, I thought. "Let's go" I said.

He parked the car and began to gather his equipment as I took a quick walk around the house. It was old, and by all appearances thoroughly Victorian in style. The most recent coat of paint was a light blue, though it was already flaking to reveal spots of white, gray, and what appeared to be a dark red. The house had been unoccupied for nearly fifteen years, and appeared to have been fled quite suddenly. The garden hose was still set up, you could see junk in the window, whoever was here wanted out much too fast to gather anything but their most prized possessions.

Along the perimeter of the house I cannot say that I felt any special or notable perturbations in the energy. It was, by all accounts, a normal house, with only the slight sensation that the normalcy was only being maintained through great strain to remind me that this was in fact, the house I had been directed to cleanse by our client.

Parker finally caught up with me, his dark brown hair evidently having been messed while putting on his giant contraption of a backpack. "I'm ready to start" I said, and we entered the house, the huge oak door creaking loudly.

The energy inside was much darker than outside. Whatever was here was definitely hiding something. Hiding something in the way an abusive husband hides his behavior. "I'd sure know about that" I thought to myself, beginning to feel more than a little self-pity.

What an asshole. He would drink and drink and think the most horrible thoughts, and every demon in town would jump for joy. Even the hitting was never as bad as all the entities he brought in.

Coming back to reality, I noticed a puddle of water beginning to form on the carpet. "Decay" I noted to myself. I took a brief tour of the ground floor and the upstairs, but did not find anything exceptional, save a few more mouldering areas.

I came back downstairs to find Parker seated in front of a collection of dolls, staring at a digital readout. He scooted a few feet farther and his screen lit up. Then a few feet closer and all was quiet. "There's activity here, but it goes away if you get to close" he said. He collected data for a few minutes, then moved on for the kitchen and suggested that I check the dolls out.

I picked up the smallest doll, held it up, and closed my eyes. Immediately I fell to the floor. It felt as if I was being punched in the face. Trying my best to hold on to the doll, hands shaking, I began to hear a voice. "You are Worthless" said the disembodied voice of a gruff middle aged man. "You're a disappointment to the whole family" said the voice. Suddenly I was hit again and this time I decided to put down the doll.

Gasping for breath, I shouted out "Diaries." "Look for the diaries". I needed to rest and think. I fell into an old leather chair which smelled faintly off-putting, and thought about what had happened. Let's see. The dolls probably belonged to a little girl, and I must have picked up the energy imprint of their former owner, The voice was probably her father. Families with only one kid were pretty uncommon. Better look for other victims.

After recovering for a bit, I met up with Parker again. He had indeed found the diary of the mother, and all was exactly as suspected. We had seen cases like this before. What usually happened in these cases was the negativity tended to concentrate in a few areas or objects, and each one had to be dealt with separately. The dolls were what we had come to call victim-symbols rather than "shrines of evil", and that meant that we had to start looking.

Usually in abuse cases, at least some of the cursed objects were often found to be among the abuser's favorite things, so I figured the garage was a safe bet for a first place to look. But inside I saw nothing that would raise alarm. In fact, I saw nearly nothing at all besides an oil stain below where a car used to park, and a dusty workbench with a pegboard of various old-fashioned looking tools.

Of all the rooms in the house, the garage felt the least tainted of anywhere. I wondered what happened inside. From the looks of things, not much ever went on in the years before the previous occupants departed. Perhaps as the father's anger and hate grew so to did he lose interest in his hobbies. Perhaps it wasn't important at all what happened. In any case I did not find any buildups of negativity in the garage, so I left.

I made my way up the stairs to the master bedroom, where above the bed and placed such that the sleeper could view it was a page from a magazine, showing a truck with what I found to be an exceedingly ugly paint job, resembling to my eyes a great variety of vomit and puke splashed on a truck. I touched and heard several very faint sentences in two different voices

“Why can't we take that down. It looks like a pukemobile.”

**“That was from the first truck magazine I ever had”**

“Why did you choose to keep *that* page?”

**“You don't know shit about trucks.”**

**“You don't let me build anything anymore”**

“I never tell you what to do.”

“Your favorite colors never used to be throw-up yellow and bile brown”

And so on. It was all starting to come together. As I had suspected in the garage, there was a time before he had lost his mind. The poster did not seem to be filled with much power, but at the very least I knew that I would feel better taking it down. It was taped up with Scotch tape and hung crookedly, and was falling off on it's own already. I angrily tore it down.

This was starting to remind me of how I got rid of a cursed object my husband had given me. It was just a simple necklace(or it would have been if the spring in the clasp hadn't been almost totally worn out long before I or he ever got it) but it always made me angry. Not just because it was ugly. Not just because he made a big performance of giving it to me while one of my friends was over. Not just because it was pink, and I hate pink. Not even because it came from a thrift store, and I am always careful with things that have been owned before.

The real reason I hated the thing was because of what happened the night before. He was watching some TV show(featuring a woman with a very similar necklace) and, in an off-hand comment, said in his usual angry tone, “you should be more like her.” That was why I hated it. Because it wasn't a gift. It was his way of saying, “I don't like you”. He was telling me that I needed to be someone else. What else could that mean except “I hate you”?

I made my way to the bathroom. It was the kind of bathroom that you don't want to stay in long. Not to say that it wasn't clean, but it sure was uncomfortable. It was just a little too narrow, the sink was just an inch or two to the wrong side, and if you opened the door to the medicine cabinet, you had to step back not to hit your head. I crumpled the page up and lit it on fire in the sink. Then I wiped up the ashes with a square of toilet paper and threw them into the toilet.

I was starting to get too involved in this case. I wasn't thinking clearly. I was getting angry. One should never get too emotional when dealing with this kind of thing. I had to fight just to keep my wits about me.

Nevertheless, I had found and destroyed one cursed object, albeit a minor one. Now to find the rest of the eight or so objects that were usually found in places like this. I went up to the attic, but the lights were out. Great. I stomped down the stairs to the basement, opened the breaker panel, and saw one breaker turned off. On it was a sticky note that said, in much harsher words than mine, to stay out of the attic. Uh Oh. This was bad news. I threw the switch and ran upstairs, half expecting to find boxes of skeletons up there.

What I found was much less noteworthy, though scarcely less disturbing. There were boxes upon boxes of old photographs. There were old books, there was even a box of baby clothes that looked to be at least a hundred years old. But what haunted me most was the box of letters. This box was a

standard issue cardboard box of the type you assemble yourself from the folded cardboard, and was labeled. "Don't fucking read this shit anymore" in angry red pen.

I moved to open the box, but when I touched it, I was taken aback by a loud voice. "She doesn't understand us. Don't fucking listen to her. She doesn't know me" Said that same gruff middle aged man. I pushed on and started reading

*-March 15, 1978*

*I am terribly sorry I have not had the chance to write you. But I need to tell you this. He is hurting you. You can't keep doing this. You deserve better. Don't try to tell me he didn't give you the bruises I saw last time I came over. I am not going to let you kill yourself for him.*

*With love,*

*-Your Grandmother.*

The letters were all similar. It appeared that she never received any responses. At the bottom of the box was a note drawn in crayon that simply said "I hope you feel better soon" In terribly messy writing. There was a yellow smiling sun and a tree, obviously drawn with as much care as the artist could muster.

Like the garage, there was nothing especially evil up here in the attic, so I moved on. I'd better see what Parker is up to, I thought. I arrived downstairs to find Parker in front of a closed door, using the same instrument he used on the dolls. I went in the room and found nothing. Parker seemed very sure something was wrong in here, so I checked it out as best I could. There was not much here.

From the diaries and from looking at the room, this room was shared by the oldest two of her children, and an assortment of toys was on the ground. Parker came in. The screen on whatever he was holding lit up very slightly. "This place freaks me out he said". "I thought you didn't believe in ghosts" I reminded him. "I don't" he said. "But this room still scares me".

I could see very little the matter in this room. But Parker had chosen this of all places to get creeped out. I could imagine that he may have come in here occasionally to give the kids another speech or rant about how worthless they are, or to occasionally watch them when he wanted to pretend to be a decent person, but whatever happened here didn't leave much of an imprint.

But he insisted that there was something very very bad in this room. Sigh. What had gotten into him? Before this he was always the straight man. The one to bring things back down to earth when my theories got a little out there. The dork who still uses a pocket protector and thinks science explains all. What changed so fast?

I was convinced this room was clean, so I left and told him I'd come back to it. He stayed in that room, looking over every inch of it. I on the other hand, went out to the back yard to check out a mound of stones that had given me the creeps when I first saw it.

The mound was about a foot and a half around, two feet tall, and made of smooth, round stones. The thing seemed to radiate malevolence. I noticed that fifteen minutes had past while I sat in contemplation of the thing, though it felt like only a quarter of that. Shit. I got up to find parker.

I found him, still in the children's room, and asked if he would measure something. He was occupied in poring over the room, and replied "You know how to use the meter". I wasn't getting anywhere. He was convinced. I grabbed the meter and returned to the backyard.

I always hated using these things. You had to adjust the amplifier gain, the frequency response, select your sensor type, and the gain of each axis, and it usually took me a few minutes at least to get any useful information. Luckily Parker had added an indicator in this version that at least lets you know when you got it right.

I set up the two antennas, and adjusted the device. The indicator showed that I had correctly adjusted it, but it showed nothing. Not even the usual background activity. Just an occasional bust a few times a minute. I took the meter back inside, to be sure I hadn't broken it, and it gave the expected readings. So there really was no activity. Shit. Time distortion. Nearly no activity. I've seen this before.

I went inside, got a candle, and lit it. I brought it close to the mound, and, just as I had feared, it extinguished. We were dealing with a demonic riftgate. That's when things get so bad, that they literally open a hole where demons can stream in. There's a couple of ways they can show up, and they are sometimes anchored to an object or a place.

Usually, they show up by accident, and dissipate pretty fast. But the ones that get anchored, like this one obviously was, are a major pain to get rid of. Riftgates appear when something happens that shouldn't, or when something doesn't happen that should. It's like in the movies, when they go back in time and fuck everything up, only without the time travel.

However, this one was anchored. It didn't just fade away once the cause was gone. Something major had to happen to create this, and I knew something major would be required to fix this. Without knowing the cause, it would be even harder. I returned to the diaries.

*Jun 17 1977:*

*Billy's hamster got into the rat poison and died. He's taking it pretty well but I found him crying last night. I didn't want to go to the beach that day. I was going to make dinner, Judi's favorite show was on TV, I should never have let him take us. This is my fault and I feel terrible. I'm going to regret that trip every time I see his little grave.*

Now it made sense. The Riftgate must have been the grave. Whether or not the husband knew, that hamster's death was a sacrifice. A sacrifice to open that damned hole to hell. It was too late to go back and fix things, but I could close the rift. It would be a challenge, but we had done this before.

The secret to closing rifts like this is to go back, and do all the things that should have been done instead of open the rift. In this case it was rather simple. Make dinner, watch TV, and offer the proper respects. How hard could it be? I thought to myself.

I was not prepared for the answer. We went home, and got up early the next day, ready to make spaghetti and meatballs and watch an old tape of the show, but our enthusiasm was soon dampened. It was raining hard that day, and the news reported that a storm was expected. An occasional clap of thunder punctuated the sound of traffic on our way back to the house.

We arrived to find the storm had cut the power. Parker slowly searched for the news on his PDA. A power line had been blown down, and it was expected the power would not be restored until Tomorrow. Great. The stove was gas, so we could still cook, and Parker never seemed to have trouble making things work in a blackout, so we could still set up the DVD, but it meant we would have to conduct the rest of the investigation in the dark. "This will be a long day" I thought.

Places like this are often quite different in the dark. You might hear a faint tapping, feel a gust of air, see a shape out of the corner of your eye. Things you wouldn't notice in the light. I sat in that same worn leather chair. I listened closely. The rustle of Parker setting up. A quiet creak. Then nothing. Quiet. The wind blew shut a door. While the echo was still fading I thought I heard a muffled 'Thump Thump Thump' but I wasn't sure. I listened for a few more minutes then got to work.

It wasn't nearly time for dinner yet, so we conducted an investigation of the basement, which up to now we had only glossed over. The basement smelled of mildew, and an area in the corner looked as if an attempt had been made but interrupted to properly finish the basement. There was the usual rusty old pipes, many electrical conduits(Uhg. EM waves interfere with both my sensing and Parker's equipment.), and buckets of paint in various colors. Altogether it looked like a normal basement.

Except for one closet. Upon approaching this closet one was immediately greeted by a sense of fear, sadness, and loss. Within the closet was an old, dusty, IV drip bag stand, some half-full boxes(all from different brands) labeled with such things as "food intolerance formula" and "hypo-allergenic supplement".

The diaries had not said much to shed light on the contents of this closet. There was, however, a mention of the baby going to the hospital, followed by a long period of several months where nothing at all was written. However it was clear from later writings that within the year he had recovered well from whatever ailment had afflicted him, and there was no further mention of any major illness.

Still, I found it odd that such fast recovery was made from what appeared to be a serious illness. I read over the diary's pages once more:

*October 15, 1977:*

*Ronnie released from the hospital. Husband away on vacation. I couldn't take it any more so I threw away some of his shit. I don't think he will notice. I can't deal with this. I wish I could tell someone.*

I found it rather odd that the timing of the baby's recovery and the husband being away were so close. I wondered if among "his shit" was some accursed object that was the cause of poor Ronnie's misfortune. Knowing that he got over whatever he had brought some measure of lightness to this otherwise dismal investigation, and I was glad that the mother may have done part of my work for me over twenty-five years ago by getting rid of whatever might have been the problem.

I looked at my watch. It was getting close to dinnertime. The power was still out, so we lit the stove with a match. I never liked those sparkers anyway. It was just starting to get dark, and it was a little difficult to read the old recipe card in the dark, but my old oil lantern worked well enough. Occasionally a flash of thunder would light up the city like daylight. The rain was pouring but for all their years, the windows still kept the water out. It was a good change of pace from visions of doom and gloom, talk of objects of evil and the constant threat of demonic attack.

We ate at the old, round wooden table, finished, and set up the TV. Parker had rigged up a lawnmower battery to an inverter, which, he said, would "Convert the direct current from the battery to alternating current the TV can use". He connected some kind of adapter from his old gray portable computer to a long cable that went to the TV. He typed a few commands into some program with a lot of text and odd symbols. The TV glowed and sounded that high-pitched whine that I have found all but the best TVs to produce. Dinner: check. TV: check.

We sat and watched for an hour and a half. I looked forward to finally being able to close that Riftgate, purify this place, and go home. It was dark and drafty, and not at all a place that I felt comfortable in, even ignoring the taint that had been placed upon it. The closing credits showed, I relit my old lantern, Parker took down his makeshift home theater, and I gathered up the needed materials.

This was always the part that was hard for Parker. He knew that spells did in fact, work, for he had seen it many times, but he was still convinced it could be explained by science somehow. Nonetheless he was quite competent even though he did not fully believe in the process, so I was not overly anxious.

We made our way to the backyard, I lit a sprig of sage and carried it as I approached the mound. I took a handful of lettuce, left it beside the mound, and whispered softly "whatever happened, whatever your name was, I am sorry" and got up. Taking a few steps back, I looked over at Parker, nodded to him, and thrice we spoke at once.

*"We have done what was long overdue. We have broken the evil cycle. Now let the time return to its proper progression. We declare this rift gate closed once and forever!"*

I thought I saw a very faint white glow from those stones, but when I asked Parker about it later, he said he didn't see anything. We both knew the riftgate had been closed. Though science or magick, something had happened here. But when we went back inside, it was clear something was not right. The faint smell of rotting wood has not left, and the air had a dampness to it that was not there before.

From what sounded like across the street, I heard a maniacal laughter. "Something is not right" I said. Parker agreed. Something was still here. We continued the search. I could see nothing wrong

with any of the rooms we had looked in, so finally, and reluctantly, we returned to the room that I had dismissed and which had so terrified Parker.

The room was just as we had left it, filled with assorted toys. Parker was sorting through a large pile of them. I noticed several faint blood-red marks on the walls, as if someone had cut themselves falling up against it. Still, the meters registered nothing much of note, nor did anything in the room seem to be imprinted. I was just about to leave the room when Parker dropped the toy he was holding. Visibly shaken, and said "This one".

It was a small yellow plastic trumpet, with a peeling sticker representing the buttons, and having in its bell-end the kind of white marks you often see in colored plastic when it is bent sharply. I picked it up and immediately was filled with disbelief. "I don't know why you have such a problem with this room, but you need to be professional and get over it. Your fancy toys don't show anything, I don't feel anything, you need to drop it." I said, launching into a rant. Before I could continue, however, he grabbed the trumpet from me and threw it to the ground.

It felt like being kicked in the gut. So there was something in this room after all. I would need a long hot bath later after having touched that thing. "What the hell" Parker said. "I told you there was something wrong". I apologized and set to examining the trumpet. From the box it which it was found, it belonged to the older brother. It was made of thin plastic and the white marks indicated that it had been handled roughly. I could think of no real purpose for such a thing that made sense.

In my mind, I pictured a little girl crying as her big brother chased her while making annoying and unmusical sounds. I pictured it as a gift from the father, quite eager to do nothing about his son's behavior. I could think of many different scenarios involving the trumpet, but all involved fighting. This thing should have been taken away, put on a high shelf, forgotten, and quietly thrown out. "And that", I thought, "Is exactly what we will do about it". I quickly ran through the plan with Parker. We would take the thing, put it atop the fridge, walk thrice around the house (to symbolize the time in which its owner would forget it ever existed), and then stomp on it and throw it away.

We had our plan. Another stroke of lightning lit the now fully dark sky. Parker grabbed the thing, chucked it up on the fridge, and we set to walking. CRASH! A clap of thunder rung in our ears. A loose piece of siding banged against the house. We kept walking. We knew we had to hurry. Things were taking notice. We started walking faster. We were halfway through the second time when the wind knocked over a barrel of water, soaking the already wet ground in front of us. We trudged through the mud and rain two more times before running to the front door.

I had lost the keys. Thankfully we quickly found them in the mud, and we rushed to unlock the door. We ran in. Another clap of thunder. Parker snatched the trumpet from the fridge as I raced to find a trash can by the lantern and candlelight. A draught blew down the fireplace and across the room, extinguishing two of the three candles. I finally found a trash can in one of the bedrooms. Racing downstairs, I found Parker violently stomping on the trumpet and joined in. A few minutes of stomping, and we stuffed the thing in the trash can as several flashes of lightning illuminated the kitchen.

The wind calmed down, just a bit, and I screamed "GET OUT". One more door slammed, the last candle went out, and then all was calm. We had finally cleansed it. Whatever awful demon brought here by hate and held up by evil forces was finally gone. And that meant we never had to come back to the ugly, drafty, old Victorian house.