

The House Spirit

— Kids,Dad— I'm taking Miss Ketty to the vet and I'll be back soon, — said Mom as she left the house with the cat. — Dad,you're in charge!
— Roger that! — Dad joked back.

Meanwhile, the children — three girls, Emma, Lera, and Alina — sat in the playroom discussing who they should summon: the Queen of Spades or the House Spirit. Alina, the youngest, said fearfully:

— I don't want the Queen of Spades. I'm scared.
— Alright, then we'll summon the House Spirit. He's friendly, — Emma replied. — Yeah! — giggled Alina.
Lera rolled her eyes jokingly and whispered:
— Boo!

— I'll explain everything now. We'll take a candy, put it in a jar with a lid, hold hands and, with our eyes closed, we'll call the House Spirit. Got it? — asked Emma.
— Yeees! — Lera and Alina chimed in together.
— Then let's begin.

— House Spirit, House Spirit, come be friends with us!

They held hands around the candy jar, closed their eyes, and chanted the summoning phrase several times in unison. Then, after counting to ten, they opened their eyes. Emma opened the jar — it was empty. The girls gasped in quiet amazement.

At that moment, Dad peeked into the playroom:

— Well, well, what's going on here?
— We're guessing what's in the jar, Daaad! — Emma lied smoothly, feeling a bit embarrassed about the silly game with her younger sisters.
— Alright... maybe I can guess? — Dad squinted.
Emma held the empty jar in her hands.
— Go on, guess, — she said without enthusiasm. — You get one try.

Dad pulled a mock-serious face:

— Hmm... I think it's a candy. Did I guess right? — he asked, noticing her surprised expression. He opened the lid, put his hand inside—and pulled out a reeking clump of greasy, filthy hair.
— Ew! Girls, what kind of joke is this? Where did you get this filth?! Go wash your hands, now! — Dad grimaced in disgust and flushed the "joke" down the toilet.

That night, everyone woke up to Emma's piercing scream.It was the scream of pain — Mom knew it right away. They burst into the children's room.

Emma, howling in pain, sat on the bed in shock, as white as chalk. She was holding her bloody hand — her fingers were gone. Something had bitten them off.

— Press on her wrist! I'll get the first-aid kit and call an ambulance! — Dad shouted to the frozen-in-place Mom. He quickly led the younger children into the bathroom.
— Stay here. Mom and Dad will be back soon.
He shut the door behind them, grabbed the kit, and ran to Emma.

The ambulance arrived quickly. Then the police came.

A search with a dog turned up nothing. The dog just whimpered and pressed against the officer's leg, refusing to go deeper into the house.

Mom left with Emma for the hospital.

Dad, now alone with Lera and Alina, laid them down in the bedroom — and they, snoring softly, fell peacefully asleep in his arms.

But his sleep was filled with nightmares — dirty, stinking hair was everywhere. It slithered from under the floor, hung from the walls, writhing like worms — as if something was searching for what would satiate them.

The next evening, an exhausted Mom returned home.

— They put her into a coma. The doctor said it'll protect her mind... And about the wound, he said it was caused by some animal. But what kind of animal can bite like that, if everything was shut?

— Mom, Dad... we're scared. Can we sleep together? — the girls asked.

— Of course, my darlings, — Mom said, helping Dad move Lera's bed into their bedroom. After what had happened, they could no longer leave the girls alone at night. Dad checked the room and laid Alina down in the middle of the big bed.

— It was the House Spirit, — Lera whispered as Mom tucked her in.

— Tomorrow I'll deal with your House Spirit, — Mom replied and kissed her on the nose. — Sleep well.

They woke up in the night to Lera's choking shriek. Turning on the light, they were stunned by what they saw — something had bitten off their daughter's nose, and blood was gushing from the wound.

Dad ripped off his t-shirt and pressed it to her face.

— Call an ambulance, now!!!

They managed to save her. Mom, on the edge of madness, once again left for the hospital. Another police search with dogs yielded nothing — the dog simply refused to enter.

That same night, the grandparents came and took Alina with them.

What happened next was a blow to the dad.

Mom called him in the morning and said:

— They put Lera in a coma too...

And, sighing heavily into the receiver, she added:

— I am not coming back to that house. I don't give a fuck that you bought it for us. Our children became disabled because of it. Do what you want with it — I and my children are not coming back there.

And she hung up.

The dad slowly slid to the floor and wept from the helplessness and hopelessness of what had happened. All his efforts and dreams of a home where they would live happily were washed away in his kids' blood. He closed his eyes and saw their wounds, from which blood pulsed...

He was brought back to his senses by a text from his wife:

"Pick up the cat."

He went to the vet clinic, picked up the animal, and slowly drove toward the house. As soon as they entered, the cat in its carrier howled gutturally.

— What now, Kitty... You're all I need to top it off, — the dad said irritably. The cat just sat in the carrier, hissing and wailing maliciously.

— Screw it, Kitty, the food's in the kitchen... — and he left the carrier in the hallway, forgetting about her.

That night, he had a nightmare:

He was wandering the dark, empty house.

Hair was everywhere — writhing, reaching for him. He backed away in disgust, deeper into the house... Until, in the dim hallway light, he saw something — formless and foul, choking and making a disgusting chomping sound, devouring his cat.

He woke up in the morning on a soaked pillow and thought it was from his tears., but it was the saliva of the thing his children had summoned.

The End

19.09.25

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