

Strange Smells in Dusty Hallways

by

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FADE IN ON:

**INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

The essence of a haunted house. Dusty, Dank. Deeply dark. Cobwebs sway in an unseen breeze.

Suddenly: a beam of light pierces the air. Rats squeak and scurry for a hiding place.

Nearby, broken floorboards creak. Three figures inch along. Flashlights in their trembling hands.

CURT (18): The chunky leader. Sarcastically smart, with ice blue eyes.

NICK (16): Hipster, from the tip of his shoes to goatee. Clearly stoned - or developmentally delayed.

ROB (15): A reedy bundle of nerves. Bags of ecto-gear hang off his frame.

Curt slashes his flashlight across the hall.

The beam rebounds off a clean spot of mirror. The ray shoots back, oh-so-bright. The teens shield their eyes.

Nick twists sideways - plunges face-first into a spider web. Homeless Daddy-long-legs flow across his face. Nick yelps - brushes them off as quick as he can.

NICK

Spiders! Why'd it have to be spiders? No-one told me they'd be here!

ROB

We're in a "haunted house", bong-boy. What the fuck did you expect?

Curt raises a finger to his lips.

CURT

Shhhh.

Curt whips out an EVP recorder. He scans the hall, ceiling to floor. The machine blips - picking up...

...something. Who the hell knows what it is?

Curt squints down the corridor. Peeled wallpaper hangs like shredded skin from dirty walls.

SOMETHING faint and foggy glows at the other end. The mist almost looks human. Quick as a wink, it disappears.

Curt waves to his friends.

CURT  
Mobilize. Stat. This way!

Rob passes out gear like hot potatoes. The trio scans every wall.

They tiptoe down the hallway. Curt looks even more determined. Rob and Nick awash in fear.

ROB  
What do we do if that's a ghost?

NICK  
Chat him up? Ask for email?

CURT  
Don't chicken out. Keep going. You guys signed on as volunteers.

ROB  
Yeah. Me and Shaggy. The Mystery Machine's on its way!

Rob extends a microphone. Despite the bravado, his hand shakes. The mike clatters to the floor.

Nick jumps at the sound.

Rob bends down to grab his fallen gear.

Red-brown goo puddles on the floor. Rob avoids the sludge. Grabs the mike. Stands up.

And sniffs.

ROB  
Hold it. I smell something... weird.

NICK  
You think *I'm* being a pussy? Give your nose a rest. That's got to be mold.

Rob ponders Nick's words. Sniffs again.

ROB  
I know what mold smells like. Something about this - isn't right.

CURT

You some kind of expert, Rob?

ROB

In a way. My mom makes me clean my bathroom. I haven't touched it in weeks. This smells - real nasty. Like that time I drank strawberry soy, and took a shit.

The microphone sputters. Ethereal sounds hiss through the cylinder - with sinister, evil undertones.

Curt snatches the mike from Rob's hand.

CURT

A message from the other side!

ROB

(shrugs)

Nah. That's just static. I bought the kit from *The Discovery Channel* online store. Everything's made in China there. I get feedback like that all the time.

Rob stops - distracted by that smell. The skinny teen lifts his head; sniffs the hallway, side to side.

ROB

There it is again. Smells like death!

He stops in front of Nick. Sniffs his friend up and down.

ROB

You take a shower recently?

NICK

Hell, yeah. Wednesday!

Rob circles Nick like a bloodhound; nose thrust high in the air.

ROB

You gotta be the source. I get it. Ew.

Curt points the mike down the hall. The static-sounds get eerier. Curt grunts at his ghost-busting friends.

CURT

We've got the scent. Don't stop now!

Nick and Rob comply. They venture further down the hall - inch by inch. But Rob keeps on sniping; he won't let the "smell issue" drift away.

ROB  
(to Nick)  
I told you to not eat at Wendy's, Dude.

NICK  
You think I cut one? Don't point your  
finger at me.

CURT  
You're innocent. Right. Whatever you say.  
Remember *The Conjuring's* premiere?

ROB  
I remember. That was rank!

NICK  
*The Conjuring* was 2013. Let it go!

CURT  
Let it go. That's precisely what you did.

ROB  
And you blamed it on Suzie, for Christ  
Sake! I was trying to get laid that  
night. But then you pulled that "Smelt  
It/Dealt It" line. She didn't even give  
me a kiss. And positively zero trim.

The microphone static increases with a nasty hiss.

The teens gasp, but forge even further down the hall.

But now Nick's ego is at stake. He unzips his pants and  
flashes a pale, pimply backside at his friends.

NICK  
See? No toxic waste in *my* jeans.

They've almost reached the other end.

Curt wields his flashlight one more time. The battery's  
weak; the beam growing dim.

SOMETHING glows before their shocked eyes. Almost close  
enough to touch. Just a few creepy feet away.

Rob drops his gear bag in shock. Thunk.

NICK  
Ow! Fuckin' watch it, Man. That's my toe!

Nick bends over the bag, and digs in quick. His hand  
closes on a vector display.

Suddenly - a horrible sound rends the air...

RIIIIPPPPPP. It's an epic FART for the ages. The other boys turn and stare.

ROB

Shit on a shingle. What was that?!?

CURT

(mutters)

"Shit". Nice phrasing, Shakespeare.

NICK

Guys, that wasn't me!

ROB

Don't try to deny it, Nick. You bent over, pointing right at me. I saw those Under-Roos ripple...

NICK

Gimme a break. That was a breeze!

The aftershock smell hits the teens like a Mack truck. They sputter and gasp, paralyzed.

Curt chokes - waves his hand before his face.

Inadvertently, his arm passes through the glowing apparition. And hits something tangible - BAM!

It's a hanging mirror. Cobwebs cling to the glass, diffuse the light. Explaining the illusion away.

Curt's eyes fill with disappointment. And smell-irritated tears. Still gagging, he grabs his friends.

CURT

Mission aborted. We gotta go. Before Nick's burger baby Agent Orange's our ass!

Flashlights jiggle in the night. The Ghost hunters grab their gear and run.

They dart out the front door - SLAM.

Followed by silence. Leaving the house to its proper occupants. Lots of spiders. Hordes of rats.

The creatures creep from the shadows, relieved.

Three misty forms coalesce down the hall: PHINEAS, HAMILTON and EDGAR - classy, proper antique GHOSTS.

Hamilton eye-rolls at Phineas, a disgusted look on his pale face.

HAMILTON  
 Seriously, Phineas. Again?

EDGAR  
 I've been dead for nigh two centuries.  
 And I still cannot abide your stench!

Phineas clutches his stomach. His hand sinks down, through translucent flesh.

PHINEAS  
 Gentlemen, I cannot fathom it myself.

EDGAR  
 (chuckles)  
 Heh. "Fathom". Good one.

HAMILTON  
 That's "Phantom", not "Fathom." For God's Sakes, Man - get it right!

EDGAR  
 "Fartasm", then. That's appropos.

PHINEAS  
 I have consumed naught for millennia.  
 Surely, I must be bereft of gas.

EDGAR  
 Well, taketh thy emissions elsewhere.  
 You're frightening the moderns away.

HAMILTON  
 Indeed; 'tis a crying shame. Their antics keep us entertained!

Phineas hangs his head and slinks away.

PHINEAS  
 The living are so touchy.

HAMILTON  
 (yells after him)  
 We deserve final peace now we're dead!

FINAL FADE OUT: