FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Body, Mind & Spirit

Grave's End: A True Ghost Story
Elaine Mercado
Llewellyn Publications
978-0-7387-0003-8
(April 30, 2001)

Just about everyone loves a good ghost story, but what does one do when the very fabric of reality twists and the vast gray face of the unknown peers out from the everyday rhythm of life? In Grave's End, Mercado addresses this issue with wrenching candor.

As an emergency room R.N., the author is used to dealing with the ragged edge of death. Yet when she and her family suffer continued dreams of suffocation, balls of light streaking around the ceiling, and dusky shadows flowing along the baseboards of their home (a Victorian house they had worked hard to obtain and had restored with love) Mercado's pragmatic nurse's training could not provide answers. "Denial plows very deeply into our souls," she states. "We would rather have a flimsy, semi-rational explanation, however irrational in reality, than have to deal with the unknown."

It is the unknown that stalks the author and her family in this true ghost story. They are pitched into a nightmare of skeletal brides huddling near the stairway, drinking glasses hovering in the air, and finally, sexual assault by things unseen. The author struggles with these manifestations and gropes for a rational explanation. When all the lights inexplicably turn on and the doors all unlock by themselves, well, perhaps the fuse box had shorted out and maybe the doors were not truly locked after all. Her two young daughters are alternately frightened and saddened, wanting to help whatever is bedeviling the house.

Soon the manifestations of the unseen escalate, forcing the author and her daughters to flee the house from sunset to sunrise. As the story progresses, neighbors and a search of historical records bring clues to the haunting, and the famous psychic investigator Hans Holzer brings hope. Although this may not be a book to read in an old, shadowy house at midnight, the story offers both fear and hope, and a sense of something eternal.

Carol Lynn Stewart