

*In 1997, I made a documentary series for Radio One of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This is part one of the 'working script' – a transcript of the content I presented on radio – the basis for the television version of HAUNTED HOUSE, HAUNTED MIND.*

LISTER: *Haunted House, Haunted Mind* - three IDEAS programs, by Don Hill.

DH: This is a true story.

In 1993, I saw a ghost. At the time I was certain that's what it was. But as a writer and a journalist, well... Later, I doubted my senses.

This is part memoir, part hallucination. There are three strands - side-by-side - interconnected.

DIARY: Put a circle around a body of knowledge, and examine its edges to get a sense of its centre?

DH: Follow the path of memory.

This is not a linear story. It's like looking for the source of a river. Sometimes the water goes underground - pops up in unexpected places - disappears altogether.

I have landed back home in Sudbury, a mining community in northern Ontario. I've been away twenty-three years, and I'm surprised to be here again. But up the hill from where I'm living now, I found a key to an enigma. And I'm no longer haunted by that presence - the ghost - that lives in my former home in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

For all their grandeur, the Canadian Rockies are also a landscape of strangeness. In the communities that share the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia, there are tales about unearthly places, mystical realms that reveal themselves only to 'those who can see' - a netherworld where supernatural powers, lights-in-the-sky, and wandering souls are part of everyday experience - the place between waking and dreams.

Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical movement at the beginning of the century, said that "hidden in the vastness of the Rocky Mountains lies a secret sanctuary where ancient adepts and sages live to this day, preserving the 'secret doctrine,' and guiding the destiny of the planet."

The Stoney Indian people who live in the foothills nearby accord the Rockies deep respect. "These mountains are our sacred places," says Chief John Snow, "a place of vision, where the Great Spirit speaks. One should never settle there." It's where one comes, temporarily, to learn about life - and the afterlife - a spiritual frontier.

I used to live in the Rockies. My home was in Canmore, a mountain community

on the gates of Banff National Park. Three peaks -The Three Sisters -'faith, hope and charity' - stand like sentinels, on watch over the river valley below. It is unspeakably beautiful.

I moved with my family to Canmore in 1988. The local lore spoke of 'vision quest' sites, friendly daemons, malevolent spirits, flying saucer stuff, the whole shebang.

It started innocently enough. We'd outgrown our half-duplex, and by 1992, we were in the market for a bigger home. Just about everything Anne and I looked at was either too small or cost too much. Then a friend of a friend tipped us to a house that was up for quick sale, under market price. A divorce, she said. It was a huge place spread out over a corner lot. Perfect. There was even a world-class trout stream nearby! We couldn't believe our luck! Of course, we bought it.

ANNE HILL: This is April 1992. I'm driving around with a real-estate agent. He showed me properties that are available in town. And one we drive by in a pretty nice location. Nice lot, nice looking house. He turns to me and said, "You know, I can't understand why that house is always for sale." And I looked at the house and said, yeah. Why would a house like that be always for sale?

DH: This is my wife Anne. We've been together for twenty-four years now.

DIARY : Moved in. Typical horror show - place was filthy. I remember setting up my stereo equipment, and felt compelled to play *Looking in the Eyes of a Stranger*, by the ELO over and over again...

DIARY : Frank the mover said, "I know this house." (He says) he's moved several people in and out over the past few years. Last marriage ended in divorce; one before that too.

DH: Moving is always a hassle, and at first, I thought it was just me, but Anne admitted to hearing the inexplicable knockings too. Household fixtures and pictures seemed to be always off kilter, and the general atmosphere about the place was oppressive; it felt like a heavy weight had descended on all of us. Even the pets were uneasy.

ANNE HILL: There was some intense spots in the house. And they were at the back of the house - like a cold spot.

After we moved in, we were sleeping and there was this loud banging at the door - like somebody had a baseball bat pounding the door. The dog was barking. We woke up, jumped out of bed, ran to that door, opened it and there was absolutely nothing there. And at that moment, I realised we had a presence in that house. It was there. And it was vocal.

DH: The house that we lived in for fifteen months, it was very close to a beautiful river, the Bow River, that winds between the Rockies on its way through to the Prairie.

We couldn't have a basement in this place because we were along a river bed; it was disallowed. We also happened to be close to a transformer on a power-line.

It was a very big house: twenty-five hundred square feet, a built-in sauna, a huge walkout deck that was stunning when you looked out on the peaks nearby.

The spooky situation escalated: several electrical appliances went wonky, and electronic devices - computers and the like - konked out for no apparent reason. Lightbulbs switched themselves on-then-off, or individually surged up and down in brightness (despite being on a shared circuit that wasn't turned on); some even exploded - that alone was enough to convince a friend from out-of-town that there were other 'guests' visiting for the weekend.

JUSTINE MIGUEL: I'd like to explain in total what I felt in the house...

DH: This is Justine Miguel. She's a friend of the family.

JUSTINE MIGUEL: When I was taken to the back of the house, the energy was different; there was a real shift. It was almost as if I was in a ship, and the back of the house was the ship that was sinking.

And as we walked through the back of the house, I went into the back bedroom. The coldness. It was that space that belonged to somebody else. Stay away. Leave it alone.

And we were standing under some lights in the hallway. All the lights were recessed lights.

ANNE HILL: I was giving her a tour of the house. She kept talking about the possibility of an 'entity' being in this house. She wouldn't be quiet.

JUSTINE MIGUEL: And my friend was standing right under the recessed light and telling me not to talk about it anymore. Well, when she expressed those very words, the light exploded over the top of her head into a million pieces. I've never seen anything like it. At that we dropped the conversation.

DIARY: Neurological tick - blinking left eye - tension. I felt uneasy and most people who wandered through did, too. As a musician I'm sensitive to feeling a groove - I don't know what it is - a gut feeling. There was something (there) and it made us feel unwelcome.

ANNE HILL: We had a terrible problem with the electricity in the house, as well. Different lightbulbs would go on-and-off; the fax-line was terrible - we weren't receiving stuff; the computer wasn't acting correctly. And this was particularly on the main floor where the feeling of intensity was quite present.

There were times when I was on the phone - it's like it would be cutting in-and-out. One-time - it was quite peculiar - I was on the phone and I heard the strangest noise. It sent shivers up my back. Like a cackling in the background. And I thought, Oh my god.

DIARY: One end of the house always felt colder - our bedroom - unbelievable fatigue, and a feeling of not wanting to get out of bed. Drained of energy.

ANNE HILL: Well, the kids were particularly sensitive. Particularly, little Martyn. I noticed about the second month, he started to talk about ghosts.

Is there ghosts in this house? I told him there were no ghosts up in his room. He was safe up here because that was the safest part of the house. And Leiann had dreams. She was particularly bothered at times as well.

I realised when the kids came to me with this sort of information - I was quite close and didn't discuss these issues with the children - it was affecting them as well. That was a major concern to me, as a parent.

DH: Dreams were full of anxiety. A deep depression settled in like a thick fog.

The kids rarely lingered on the main floor of the house, preferring to stay upstairs in the family room; my pre-pubescent daughter felt 'someone' was always looking at her. And I felt it, too - like I was constantly under surveillance.

A sense of the bizarre prevailed: spiders acted liked they owned the place, and try as we might we couldn't get rid of them. Occasionally, I had the strangest sensation of shrinking, it felt like I was getting smaller. Crazy, I thought.

TERRY WALL: There was a general sense of '*dis-ease*.' There was some sense of something other than just the space itself...

DH: That's Terry Wall - a town politician - a friend. He complained of cold spots during a visit and insisted on helping me locate the source of the draught. I hesitated to tell him about our unusual situation - didn't want to risk sounding like a nut. "Probably the squirrels," he said. "Little buggers get into everything if you let 'em. Betcha the insulation's all tore up." That made sense. Complaints about the local wildlife were common. "Let's have a look," he said. So, we ventured down into the crawl-space under the house.

TERRY WALL: There was a coolness in the air. There was that over-riding sense of hair lifting on one's arms...

DH: As we went down to investigate, a light fixture brightened then dimmed as if signaling its awareness of our intrusion. Seconds later, woosh! a rush of cold went up my spine. "What the hell is that?" Terry said. 'It' was some kind of presence.

TERRY WALL: I can picture us huddled in the cool of the basement crawl-space. And the flash of a light that took place when we actually mentioned the fact that there was this general sense of something other than just the two of us being there...

DH: Under a light fixture, adjacent to the furnace: a shadowy 'presence' - something akin to a slightly luminous cloud - transparent - a wash of something that seemed to morph and obscure the light. It was like looking through an emulsion of some sort - a streaky window. I was scared.

ANNE HILL: Well, the time that you and Terry went into the basement, Cindy and I were sitting at the kitchen table. I guess something went on in the basement. Cindy and I didn't see it. But at the moment that it happened the light at the kitchen table went on and off very slowly - like with a rhythm - it was the strangest thing. And I said to Cindy, There we go again!

DH: Terry - the eternal politician - tried to engage the spectre in polite conversation, but it had already vanished. He talked at it anyway. We even whistled. "An old Inuit trick to bring down the Northern Lights," he said. Nothing happened. Silence. "Looks like you've got a boarder," Terry said. "You're gonna have to apply for re-zoning."

TERRY WALL: The moment was profound. But, in the retelling of the tale, of course, tremendous drama is evoked and all of these things make for a fantastic story. The fact of the matter is there was an essential truth there that at the moment we could not deny.

DH: Who do you call for help? I was stuck for a sensible solution to a predicament that made no sense what-so-ever. Science makes fun of people who claim they've been spooked by ghostly phenomena, and I'm not inclined to put much faith in New Age practitioners. Being Canadian, I compromised.

LINDA JAINE: When you called I thought that you were apprehensive - that you were embarrassed - I believed you had indeed seen an apparition in your basement, but you seemed to be embarrassed about it. And worried...

DH: This is Linda Jaine, a Cree lawyer who at the time was a professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

LINDA JAINE: Worried perhaps about not being believed. Or worried about perhaps about what you knew that you saw.

DH: I do remember feeling a tad foolish on the phone, but not embarrassed enough to not quiz Linda about 'ghosts' and the idea that Stoney Indians didn't live in the valley because, well... no-one was supposed to.

LINDA JAINE: Well, it's only considered perhaps to be superstitious by people that don't believe that there are, in fact, spirits on this earth; I don't have a problem with it. I know that they exist.

DH: She suggested a ritual: First: smoking the basement, and purifying it with *sweetgrass* making sure to cover all corners; followed by an offering of tobacco, animal fat on a plate or some such thing. "Leave it for a day," she said, in the basement where I thought the bad business was and then to bury it in 'clean' ground (which I did by the railway tracks - perhaps that wasn't clean enough).

It didn't work.

Next, my Catholic upbringing recommended the liberal sprinkling of holy water and plenty of prayer - all to no effect.

My wife Anne put out a call for help.

AUDREY WATSON: She phoned me and said, "Audrey we have a ghost in the house." And it was very hard to believe...

DH: Audrey Watson. A family friend. And a long-time Tibetan Buddhist practitioner.

AUDREY WATSON: It was hairy (laughs)! She was very excited - trying to

really get across to me that this was really happening. And I was intrigued. I asked her lots of questions. And she told me the house had a ghost. I said, C'mon Anne. What do you mean a 'ghost'? She said, "a ghost, Audrey!" She said, "it jumps up and down; makes noises. We're completely haunted by this thing - especially in Don's area, where Don works. I've got to get rid of it. I want you to help me find someone to get rid of it." And that was the beginning of it all.

DH: Audrey had an idea. Her solution was to call in the big guns: a Tibetan Buddhist lama.

AUDREY WATSON: He was extremely relaxed about it - took it as an everyday accordance - and said, "I'll go and deal with this ghost."

DH: Lama Kaldan confirmed there was definitely something odd about the house. He felt it, too.

The lama poked around under the house. He burned a special concoction of seeds blessed by the Dalai Lama and powder and incense in our black iron frying pan. He fanned the smoke around the house (it was strikingly similar to the *sweetgrass* ritual).

He also performed an elaborate Tibetan ritual by the box-stove in the living room. I was asked to assist. Earlier, he asked me to fetch fresh bread, some meat - a pepperoni stick as it turned out. He took the loaf and fashioned a likeness of every member of our family: the dog, cat, fish, and bird 'Suzy' was also included. Little bows were tied as an aesthetic touch; they kind of looked like benevolent voodoo dolls. The food on the plate was for the 'hungry ghosts' that didn't know they were dead.

AUDREY WATSON: So: I asked him at the time what a ghost was. And he said it was a person who was trapped between life and death and hadn't managed to die fully and was left adrift between two worlds. And he said it was quite common.

DH: The lama then asked me to carry the plate with our family likenesses out of the house - to the laneway where it could be tossed to the birds. After that was done, he assured me that we would no longer be bothered by the ghost. "Don't talk about it," cautioned the lama gently, "to do so is to give it life." I sort of got the idea that if we paid it no attention - didn't 'cognize' it - it couldn't exist. Typical of Buddhist detachment, I suppose.

"You're lucky," he smiled. Luck meaning we were fortunate people. And we were at the time. Nice house, nice mountains. Moments later, he warned sternly "be careful." He repeated it several times.

AUDREY WATSON: Being a Tibetan, I suppose he has knowledge the rest of us don't have. He's always willing to step into areas where he knows he can be of help.

DH: For a time the house was quieter. The Lama's ritual seemed to alleviate the stressful situation. But soon the terror was back - along with more sounds of banging and thumping.

ANNE HILL: The decision came to move when I realised there was just too many incidents. The kids were being affected. My husband was terribly

affected, his moods were up and down. He was chronically tired all the time in the house. I noticed, too, after eight or nine months, I remember looking into the mirror and I looked very tired. Rings under my eyes. I just didn't look very well. I realised the house was draining us. It was draining me. It was draining the kids. And it was draining my husband of all our vitality and energy. And I thought was have to do something.

DH: We put the house up for sale. We were fortunate to get out the money we put into it, and we moved to Vancouver where I intended to carry on my career making television.

We left our mountain home for the coast on Hallowe'en night. A light snow dusted the air, the house looked lovely. It was silent for the moment. The new owners were set to move in the next day. Part of me wanted to stay, to hang on. This place, this kind of house, was pretty much what Anne and I had wanted all these years.

Our intention was to put the Bow Valley behind us for good. But these mountains never really leave you.

LISTER: This is IDEAS. You're listening to *Haunted House, Haunted Mind* by Don Hill.

DH: I became obsessed with coming to terms with what had happened.

Culture tells me it was a ghost or some such apparition, just like contemporary culture tells people who claim to see 'lights-in-the-sky' that it must have been a flying saucer. Intuition told me to investigate.

DIARY: Just had a splendid conversation with (my sister) Cynthia. Myth is a representation of facts, I said. Facts as they appear to be at the time of cognizance, without understanding.

In Yi-Fu Tuan's book *Space & Place*, he writes: Myth is often contrasted with reality. Myths flourish in the absence of precise knowledge.

Diary : Edmonton. A meeting. Chris Holyk persuaded Simon Lewis to let me write an outline for the television world music show. Rejecting the outline, Simon said "it reads like you're looking for God." Perhaps I am. Maybe that's what's at the source, the flow that feeds the fount of the water...

SFX: seashore

DH: Vancouver. On the shore of English Bay near trendy Kitsilano. Father Thomas Berry is surrounded by a small enthusiastic gathering of admirers. He's got a new book. It's been reviewed and given two thumbs up by the New Age gang that habituates the of cafes, book havens, and pleasure shoppes that line this part of the city.

Tom, as he tells us to call him, has an intriguing message.

THOMAS BERRY: At the present time we're between stories. The Genesis story that guided us for so long, the biblical story, is not functioning. We've developed another story of the universe through our empirical enquiry into the universe.

My claim is this new story of the universe that we have is the story of a spiritual process as well as a physical process. Everything is present in everything. Every atom is immediately influencing every other atom in the universe, no matter how far distant in time - billions of light years away. And that's one of the ways we know that the universe is spiritual. If we are spiritual then the universe has to be spiritual...

DH: We go later for lunch. "The story is everywhere," Tom continues. "The old story about who we are and how to live doesn't work anymore," he says. "And while we don't yet know what the new story is, we desperately want to find it."

DIARY: There's a passage in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, "...and the trees clapped their hands." It's also the title of a book written by a Catholic nun in celebration of nature. If only we would take the time to see what is being presented to our senses, rather than interpreting with our mind what we think nature is telling us. Nature is applauding our efforts, she says.

DIARY: If I had a heart attack, there's tons of books to consult. Ditto for business information. But for a 'spiritual' crisis? You're on your own. What you get is the *Celestine Prophecy*; drum-beaters, hollow advice from the parish priest and wild-women sages with monikers like Starhawk. It's the realm of flakes, the advocates of a witches & goblins society.

SFX: solo swimmer in a pool

DH: I like to swim. And I had a habit of putting in a daily kilometer at a neighbourhood pool in Vancouver.

Putting one stroke on top of another, I sometimes run a silent mantra through my mind.

One time, finished with my swim, I sat quietly on the lip of stairs that descend into the pool. Closing my eyes, I again went into a meditation. I could feel undulating currents of water - nothing unusual in that. But, I also felt the subtle energy of water pulsating in reaction to a swimmer at a considerable distance. I felt that person - got a sense of who they were. The water lapped gently, at first, and then radiated vigorously as the swimmer pulled closer. The invisible casts a shadow, I thought. What a minute!

Perhaps energy casts a shadow? All kinds of energy.

Two books really got my attention: *Fire in the Brain* by Ronald Seigel (it's about hallucinations of all sorts). And another about synaesthesia. It's a rare neurological condition - one in a hundred thousand experience it - a crossing of the senses, where one sensory stimulus involuntarily produces another. For instance, the taste of chocolate mint caused one subject to feel smooth, cool vertical columns; in another the sound of a beeper made her see bright red lightning bolts.

Musicians like the Byrd's Roger McGuinn claim to have 'coloured hearing.' Mozart claimed that when he heard individual notes, he saw specific colours; purple was a favorite.



RICHARD CYTOWIC: To most people today, the first response is well, this is incredible. How could this be real? And that was the reaction of my colleagues ten, fifteen years ago.

DH: Dr. Richard Cytowic is on the line.

RICHARD CYTOWIC: On the surface these people are normal. They're very, very bright. They have excellent memories. They come from all walks of life, and hold different sorts of jobs. And they find it strange, they're surprised to discover the rest of us aren't synaesthetic - don't perceive the world in the way that they do. But when you study brain metabolism and do psychological kinds of probes, their brains are remarkably different from the rest of us. And that's another paradox because the metabolism, the energy flow to certain parts of the brain, is so different. And yet they have no clinical symptoms. They should have paralysis, blindness and things like that. They seem perfectly normal. So, when you answer one question about five more puzzles pop up.

DH: He tells me about Carol Steen, an artist who uses her synaesthesia in her work - sculpture and painting. Lives in New York. You should talk to her, he says. I'm intrigued by the idea that something like a sound, for instance, can trigger a hallucination of colours. Maybe I'm a synaesthete or something. That might explain the ghost in my basement. In the fall of '97 I visit Carol Steen at her loft in Manhattan.

CAROL STEEN: For me, one of the interesting things in my life was that I needed to have acupuncture treatments. The kind of surprise was that during acupuncture I saw colours. I saw shapes that would move; they would gather on a black background that suddenly changed and burst into this incredibly colour. And these shapes - which were not completely, purely geometric, but were very simple - they start to appear. And sometimes they would go racing across this visual - like a moving screen - that I was watching. Like a herd of coloured shapes. And then they'd disappear and another herd of coloured shapes would coming galloping back another way.

But once the treatment was over - it would only last twenty minutes - the needles were taken out. The movement would stop. The colours would fade. And all I would be left with was a black screen.

DH: A blank slate. Upon which ghosts are written? A scribble screen filled with imagistic shorthand? In my case, maybe I was merely taking dictation. But who was the author of my apparition?

ANNE HILL: Don being the individual he is pursued this. It became an issue with him. I guess you could say he did become obsessed with it to a certain degree because he wanted to get answers to what exactly went on. I was more willing to let the issue go. Don explored this issue far more and pursued it to the n'th degree, and did come up with some answers.

DH: Vancouver. Moving around the community of 'drumbeaters' and 'spirit guides.' Sure there were charlatans; plenty of those guys - sleazy fellows who aligned the *chakras* of middle-aged women by sleeping with them. But I also ran into sincere people explaining as best as they could what they knew to be true - from experience. The problem was the vocabulary - words

were limited - limited in the sense of 'labeling' a shared experience. And sense is an important word.

DEBORAH MCGREGOR: Actually, I see pictures. I might hear my own voice talking to me, telling me, explaining a symbol that I'm seeing. I feel.

DH: This is Deborah McGregor. At the time, she ran the Fraser Valley Awareness Centre in Vancouver. She calls herself a psychic.

DEBORAH MCGREGOR: If I go into a room and somebody is angry, I'll feel angry. Anxious. Sad. Melancholy. All of that.

How do you define psychic? Somebody that can go beyond the five senses. Information comes from resources that are not in the everyday normal world. How do you explain it? It comes from the 'etheric.'

DH: I was intrigued by Deborah's reference to seeing pictures and picking up on emotions - especially in spaces that are charged with intense feelings. There was a clue in this, I thought.

Another woman - she only wants to be identified as Heidi - had been troubled by an apparition too. It seemed to follow her around Vancouver. She also complained of a recurring 'out of body experience.'

HEIDI: I don't know what an OBE is. I really haven't read very much on it because when you have these kind of very personal experiences, it's very easy to begin transferring someone else's experiences into yours. And I've endeavored, in a sense, to keep mine pure, so that I could think about it more and try to understand my experience more clearly.

DIARY: Vancouver. A mystical experience will always come in the absence of perceptions. The trick, if there is one, is not to think too much. Many of us find it troublesome to be still - to clear the mind of pre-conceptions and desire - to open up to the other possibilities that lay awaiting in Canada, Portuguese for 'nothing there.'

DH: Edmonton. The *Ganden Jangtse Monks*, a group of Tibetan Buddhist overtone singers were touring western Canada. I was asked to see if I could put together some media opportunities. The producers of the World Music Project at ACCESS television hadn't given up on me. So, I arranged for the monks to be captured on video.

There were piles of people in the television studio. The monks patiently stood inside the bright pools of light that illuminated their mark. I was in my Leonard Cohen outfit, dressed in black. I was near the back of the studio wall with people in front obscuring me. I ought to have been invisible.

One of the monks - somehow - made eye contact. It must have been tough for him to see past the bright lights. Then he darted across the studio floor, grabbed me firmly, yet gently, and pulled me down to my knees. He then ground the crown of his head into the top of mine. Mumbled a few words, smiled, and returned to his mark. A few minutes later, another monk did the exact same thing. I was bewildered. Why me?

AUDREY WATSON: · It's a recognition, a transmission of sorts.

DH: Audrey Watson.

AUDREY WATSON: If a high lama rubs his head on yours, he's making a contact with you. Because he wants you to pick up and realise that he recognizes you. Sort of like putting you 'in the club.'

SFX: monks chanting

DH: During the "peace incantation" I felt a wave of nausea and a rush up from my spine to my mouth, and a distinct feeling of wooziness - a feeling of wanting to throw-up. Audrey Watson suggests it's an awakening of the unconscious, the sensation removes a blockage. I guess like a natural body response the mind is trying to rid itself of toxins or invasions of mental bacteria and viruses, an attack on the immune system of the unconscious.

DH: You know the expression 'the room changed when so-and-so walked in'? It's true for the Ganden Jangtse monks. I following the monks around for a couple of days in Edmonton and caught up with them a week later in Vancouver. Mundane events seemed to take on great significance. People acted oddly around these guys. Sure there was the psychology of the moment. But I felt like something very 'electric' was going on. Maybe it was the bonks on the head? Maybe it was just me. Maybe I'm some kind of reception device, a kind of radio for extraordinary transmissions...

SFX: several phone rings. Pick up handset.

DIARY: A phone call from my sister. Cynthia told me about meeting a 'kinesiologist' from Parry Sound, an elderly gent of sixty-five or so, who claimed to have performed exorcisms for people haunted by electro-magnetic fields. He said the first sign is 'coldness' in certain spots. And that EM energy manifested itself in concentrated 'hot-spots' particularly in mountainous terrain. She had this conversation at Grundy Lake Provincial Park, and he waved his hands over her head claiming she had a build up of metal (this guy sounds like a flake).

Cynthia then had a long chat with a Bell Telephone billing agent - of all people - about possessions and electro-magnetic fields. He claimed that he was possessed when he was thirteen (weren't we all? Har-har). Now this is interesting: Cynthia recalled her dream of confronting the Native man trying to get at her through the window of our 'haunted' house in Canmore. She distinctly recalls having to fight keep the window latched and the man at bay.

"That's how they get you," said the telephone billing agent. "They confront you in your dreams - that's where they have power - something they can't do in 'reality.'"

LINDA JAINE: Spirits can come back to us in our physical waking presence and it's not a dream-state that we're in. Although, I think there are times spirits do come back during the time we are dreaming.

DH: Linda Jaine.

LINDA JAINE: My belief is that - and my knowledge is - that spirits exist in the waking state; they're a physical presence around us.

There's ceremonies that are often conducted that call back spirits. And the spirits can have a presence in our waking life.

A spirit could, for example, make itself visible to a person who didn't originally believe in spirits, but the presence of the spirit could be visible to that person.

I think it's a lot easier to see the presence of spirits and to understand spirits if your mind is open to it.

DH: In the Bow Valley, there are several 'vision quest' sites. These are the sacred places where young aboriginal men used to come - alone, usually in a state of deprivation - to find their dreams, and write them on the rock. The sites themselves are typically found along geophysical fault lines. One area, very close to where I lived, is Grotto Canyon. Along the walls are fading ochre designs, curious looking things that speak to the space between waking and dreaming.

I had been in touch with Charles Tart, the transpersonal psychologist. He suggested there may be a connection between my encounter with an apparition and the mountain locale. He said I should get in touch with two Russian professors. I phoned them.

OLGA LUCHAKOVA: In our travels, we found that certain places on earth, they have the possibility to enhance meditations. It becomes easier when people camp on the specific 'power spots' - how we call them 'the power spots...'

DH: Olga Luchakova and her colleague Igor Kungurtsev are professors of philosophy and religion at the *California Institute of Integral Studies*. They earned their degrees in St. Petersburg, Russia, and have traveled extensively studying mystical traditions and how different regions of the earth affect people's states of mind and their spiritual practices.

IGOR KUNGURTSEV: All people are the subject of this influence whether they are aware about it or not.

Generally, this influence of the earth is acting upon all people. But the majority of people are not aware of that in terms of they do not attribute they're state of consciousness to the area that they're in.

DH: I remember being excited by this piece of conversation. And by another thread that wound its way into the fabric of my quest.

I had been reading about this other guy Michael Persinger, a scientist - neuroscience, actually. And then I heard him on the radio. The old *Sunday Morning* programme, here, on the CBC. He was talking about a device he created; a piece of technology he used in his lab, that could stimulate the sense of 'a presence' and other ghostly phenomena.

The device generated weak, pulsed-patterns of electromagnetic fields, he said, which were transmitted to a person sitting under this 'device.' What's more, he claimed electromagnetic fields - naturally-occurring in the earth itself - were responsible for all kinds of other weird reports: poltergeists, UFOs, even people hearing the voice of God.

Dr. Persinger was at Laurentian University. That kind of stunned me,

because Laurentian is in Sudbury, my old home-town; in Ontario, the province and place I grew up.

I called him.

MICHAEL PERSINGER: What I'm most interested in are the portions of the brain that generate experience.

My process of research, in fact our primary operation philosophy is if something is really true no amount of challenge will ever change it.

We're not interested in demeaning people's beliefs. What we're really interested in is finding the parts of the brain that mediate the experience.

DH: Okay, I said. But what of my 'ghost'? Although, I didn't ask him that directly. Sort of hinted at it - talked around my personal story by invoking others. Likely the temporal lobes at play, he suggested. Oh, yeah. What's that?

It's part of our brain.

MICHAEL PERSINGER: The significance of the temporal lobes in mystical and religious experiences are based upon three factors.

DH: Michael Persinger.

MICHAEL PERSINGER: One: Portions of the temporal lobe, the deep portions of the temporal lobe contains structures that are key to memory; memory consolidation and the retrieval of memories. After all, who you are are your memories...

DH: The temporal lobes are a kind of head office for stored memories and information gleaned from our sense; they're just above our ears, one on each side of the brain.

MICHAEL PERSINGER: So, the importance of the temporal lobe has to do with the three features. It's involvement with language; it's involvement with memory; and it's involvement with attributing positive or negative experiences to sensations; those three things together allow us to have mystical experiences.

DH: I arranged to visit Dr. Persinger's lab.

I needed to know if I am a 'temporal lobe personality,' the kind of person, according to Laura Pearsall, a friend and former student of Persinger's, "who's likely to screech the car to a stop to look at the beautiful sunset" That's me alright, I thought. "But do you find yourself moved by it - find some meaning in the sight and the moment?" she asked. Yeah, often I do. I'd like to think that I'm witnessing God's handiwork. Does that make me some kind of nut?

When the temporal lobes are continuously functioning at a high level they're prone to 'kindling.' That means stimulation to other parts of the brain will kindle temporal lobe activity. Hence, visual or auditory stimuli will have a corresponding meaningfulness a lot of the time. A gorgeous

sunset acquires even greater significance for the temporal lobe personality. People whose temporal lobes are not working at such a high level, will probably say 'gee, look at that, eh?' and continue along driving.

Far from being crazy, the temporal lobe personalities are the creative ones; they find a great deal of meaning in the world.

But, specifically, I also needed to be sure of the poltergeist - the knockings, objects moving around - the terrible negative feelings that lingered about the house. Was that all in my head? And my wife and friends, too? Were we all possessed by over-stimulated imaginations? Or am I some kind of magnet for the phenomena (since I was the principal recipient of most of the attention)? The answers were lurking in Persinger's research facility.

DIARY: August 29th, 1997. Laurentian University. First Session.

Walking into the isolation chamber was a Hollywood experience, a kind of boldly going where I hadn't been before. Having my eyes taped, head mapped with electrodes, then further isolated inside a rejigged motorcycle helmet, wires streaming out in all directions, was kind of neat.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Testing one-two-three. Good afternoon shoppers...

DIARY: The playfulness of my initial babble disguised a genuine worry: What if nothing happens?

SFX: a heavy door thud

DIARY: Just before the thud of the door locked out the real world, I heard a peculiar ringing, a burst of intertwined harmonics like a cacophonous drop of a xylophone.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Can't be certain. But I'm feeling a tingling along...

DH: The tingling along the right leg was familiar, as was the shaking from left-to-right of my eyes. Then came a monochromatic hallucination: eyes just short of materializing into a distinct form; shadows; blurs.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Humph. A definite rush there!

DH: A blitz of energy right up from the base of my spine through and out the top of my head; a kind of zapping.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: I'm getting a tingling...a dryness in my throat. And I have to report too that I'm feeling tense. There's something behind, a kind of tension. Behind my shoulders...

DH: A distinct feeling of being watched. Unpleasant. My guard is up. A feeling something dreadful is about to unfold. Fear. I've known this fear before, when I was living in my mountain home in Canmore.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: That's interesting!

DH: Brief flashes of white light, a muted soapstone colour; smudges; mere shadows.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Yes, architecture. With depth. Some geometry.

DH: I see architecture, gothic-looking stuff. A cathedral-like entrance way.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Errrr. I'm rushing. Shaking.

DH: It's about here the dreadful feeling begins anew.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Whew!! A rush of cold! Whew!!! And also visual effects like a green pulse. My shoulders are very tense, up towards my ears right now...

DH: Panic. Discomfort. Twitching. And lapses of focus.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: This! This is close to the experience I had in the house! What happened... this last... that, er... yeah. Eyes. Definitely seeing eyes here. Very fearful. I have to apologize. I'm looking past, I'm trying to look past the fear. Definitely saw that. Yes!

I see stars. Everything is tingling. Definite visual effects. Don't stop this! This is getting close to the apparition...

DH: The morphing bits of light have colour, reddish dots in among the swirl of formless form.'

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: My hands are sweaty. And my palms are... That's it! My palms are sweating. I'm seeing this - this visual dits & dots. There were some colour, ah yeah. Humph.

I think I found what I was looking for.

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: Okay, Don?

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Yes, hi.

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: We're coming in, okay. Just relax.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Sure, thanks.

LAB ACTUALITY/SANDRA TILLER: You made it.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: That was very interesting.

LAB ACTUALITY/SANDRA TILLER: I'm going to give you a questionnaire to fill out.

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Ah, whew.

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: So...

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: Did you mind me talking through it? I was just...

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: Not at all. Most people don't, but...

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: I'm doing it deliberately. I was reporting on the experience.

There was a period of time where I was completely confused. I could not keep track of anything. And this involuntary spasms - bizarre. Like I was just going... I have no idea what it looked like over there.

But it was that feeling of manipulation. Almost like being a string puppet. Like not in control. I'd be interested to see if there are an spikes on the EEG...

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: Well, I can show you...

LAB ACTUALITY/HILL: ...after the fact. Or if this is all just my imagination.

LAB ACTUALITY/PERSINGER: Ah, no.

DH: No, he said. A decisive sounding no.

The session confirmed a hunch that my Canmore ghost was literally in my head. I had recognized - 're-cognized' - the unsettling experience in a lab in Sudbury, thousands of kilometers from the Rockies.

What other ghosts are in that machine? And in the landscape?

What on earth does it all mean?

LISTER: *Haunted House, Haunted Mind* - by Don Hill - continues tomorrow on IDEAS...

*Haunted House, Haunted Mind* by Don Hill, was produced by Max Allen, with Dave Field and Lawrence Stevenson. I'm Lister Sinclair.

END OF PART ONE

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