
THE NIGHT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

The Story That Started It All

An excerpt from

THE WARREN LEGACY

What a Lifetime in the Paranormal Taught Me About Consciousness and the Nature of Reality

by Chris McKinnell

Director, Warren Legacy Foundation for Paranormal Research

Grandson of Ed and Lorraine Warren

In August 1981, a sixteen-year-old boy was sent alone into a room where something was actively tormenting a family. He had never done anything like this before. He did not know what he would find. What happened that night, and what he understood when he got home, set the course of the next forty-four years.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EDUCATION OF FEAR

It was the first week of August, 1981. A typical sweltering and humid day in New Hartford, Connecticut, when my grandfather Ed Warren called me with an unexpected and unwelcome request.

“Chris, there’s a poltergeist terrorizing a family in Lee, Massachusetts, and I want you to join me tonight.”

I was sixteen years old and about to enter my last year of high school. Growing up with Ed and Lorraine Warren, world-famous ghost hunters, had left me terrified of the dark. I had spent my childhood shuffling between social workers and psychologists because of my extreme fear of what I sensed in the darkness. The idea of going into a haunted house where a family was being physically and spiritually abused was not something I had ever considered. Unfortunately, my grandfather had other ideas.

“Sure, Gramps,” I replied automatically, “but why do you want to take me?”

“Your grandmother can’t join me this evening. I’m going to need your help. My assistant, Paul Bartz, will also be with us.”

“I’ve only gone on lecture tours with you. I don’t really know anything about this. How on earth can I help?”

My grandfather chuckled. “It’s time for you to start learning.”

We arranged a time early that evening, and I went to tell my mother what was going on. Judy is their only child and she has avoided the paranormal her entire life. It terrifies her, and

she never wanted me or my sister to have anything to do with it. To my surprise, she seemed to have no problem with my joining my grandfather.

She gently suggested it might be good for me to face my fears.

She wasn't wrong. But she had no idea what she was sending me into.

At 7 PM my grandfather and Paul showed up, and I was on my way to what would become the most terrifying night of my life. Paul Bartz was a student activities director at the University of Connecticut who had been assisting my grandparents occasionally for the past few years, a young man with long blond hair and a friendly, easy-going nature. Just having him along put me at ease.

As the evening turned unseasonably cooler, on the forty-minute drive up to Lee on scenic old Route 8, my grandfather explained what he knew about the haunting.

"Daniel and Liz Scout inherited their home from his uncle. He died several months ago, and they moved in with their two girls. The very first night, the couple were in their bed when the glowing white figure of a little boy appeared in their bedroom doorway and said, 'Where do all the lonely people go?' Liz had converted from Judaism to marry her husband and was now a devout Catholic. She was terrified and contacted her priest the next morning to come and do a house blessing. After Father Scarpelli finished his blessing the child never returned. Unfortunately it was replaced by something much worse."

Gramps was always a natural storyteller. "Daniel had found work at the local mill and was working rotating shifts. That night he was on third shift. Liz had put the girls to bed in their bedrooms across the hall. Just as she was settling in, a massive black figure appeared in her doorway, filling it completely. Liz had her rosary on the bed post and it reached over and picked it up, twirling it as if to say, 'You think this is going to stop me?' She ran around the figure to her first daughter's room directly across the hall. She tried to open it, but the door knob refused to turn. The pull-down stairs to the attic above her head came crashing down on her, knocking her senseless. The whole time the figure loomed ominously at her back. As she struggled to her feet, she managed to open the doors to each of the girls' bedrooms and

get them out of the house. They spent the night in the car, waiting for Daniel to come home from work.”

I sat in the backseat, watching the Farmington River as we drove northward. I was terrified. But I also knew, somewhere beneath the terror, that I had been moving toward a night like this one for my entire life.

It started when I was three years old.

My grandparents kept a museum in their home in Monroe, Connecticut, a room filled with the artifacts from decades of investigation. Dolls. Masks. Statues. Objects that had been removed from cases because their presence alone was considered dangerous. I had wandered in there alone one evening and the door swung shut behind me. It was already getting dark outside. I couldn’t get out. Ugly figurines stared at me from every surface. A tiger skin with its snarling head seemed poised to devour me. I stood in the middle of that room and screamed the way only a three-year-old can, until my grandfather heard me from his office in the back of the museum and came to rescue me.

He got me out in moments. But something stayed behind when I left that room. It followed me home and it slept with me every night for the next thirteen years.

Fear. A cold, specific, unreasonable fear of the dark. Of what moved in it. Of what I sensed at the edges of rooms that I could never see clearly enough to name.

I grew up moving constantly. By the time I was eight we had lived in eight different homes. Every new bedroom was colder than the last, it seemed. I could hear things moving in the dark. I could feel presences at the edges of my perception, just beyond what the light could reach. My parents sent me to social workers and psychologists and none of them could explain it, because none of them knew what I was actually experiencing. My father didn’t believe in the paranormal. My mother was terrified of it. And my grandmother Lorraine, who could have helped me more than anyone alive, was trying to preserve a family peace too fragile to survive the truth. So she stayed silent, and I stayed afraid, and I slept with the light on every single night.

What I didn't know then, what I couldn't have understood, was that I wasn't imagining things.

I was perceiving them.

There is a difference. I would spend years learning to understand it.

The first time I began to grasp that difference, I was fourteen years old. I had been traveling on a lecture tour with my grandparents when a television crew from PM Magazine joined us. After several hours of interviews in a hotel lobby, they brought us to a house with a reported haunting. We were not allowed inside. We stood on the street in front of it.

A local newspaper reporter stood beside me. He had been preparing a story on the case and had his notes in hand, the family's account of what they had experienced, documented before we arrived. He had not yet published it. He had not shared it with anyone.

My grandmother stood in front of that house and began to speak.

An apparition of a large man with a bloody apron. The smell of rotting flesh rising from the kitchen. Specific incidents the family had reported in their own words.

I was standing next to the reporter. As my grandmother spoke, I was watching his notes. Detail by detail, she described what was written in front of him, things she had never been told, from a house she had never entered, confirmed by documentation that existed before she opened her mouth.

I watched the reporter's face change.

I understood something in that moment that I have never been able to unfeel. Whatever my grandmother was doing, it was real. Whatever she was perceiving, it was there. And if she could perceive it, then what I had been sensing in dark rooms my entire childhood was not fear playing tricks on my mind. It was information I didn't yet know how to read.

That was the beginning of a question I would spend the rest of my life trying to answer.

Two years passed. I turned sixteen. I had a beat-up old car with bald tires and I drove it on dark country roads in the rain as though I were invincible, the way sixteen-year-olds do.

One night that summer I was driving home from a party through rain-slicked roads that were pitch black, when I glanced into my rearview mirror.

There was an old man sitting in the back seat.

I spun around immediately. No one was there. I turned on the overhead light, checked every corner of the car, and drove home as fast as those bald tires would carry me.

About a week later I mentioned it to my mother. She went to the cupboard and pulled out the family photo album. She found a photograph and held it up.

“Is this him?” she asked.

“Yes. Who is he?”

She told me it was her grandfather. Jim Moran. Lorraine’s father. He had died when I was four years old. She had been worried about me that night, my terrible car, the rain, the dark roads, and she had prayed to him to watch over me.

The evidence was specific. I described someone I had no conscious memory of ever meeting. My mother confirmed the identification from a photograph. The description matched. The timing, the very night she had prayed, matched.

Love, it seemed, did not end at death.

I carried that with me into the car on the drive to Lee, Massachusetts, two months later. The terror was real. But underneath it, something else was present too, a question that had been forming for years, growing sharper with every cold bedroom, every presence at the edge of vision, every impossible moment of confirmation like the one I had watched my grandmother deliver.

What is actually happening here?

The house in Lee was small and sandwiched between a dozen others on a side street, and a young couple, Daniel and Liz Scout, were sitting on the porch in the dark when we pulled up, waiting for us with the particular stillness of people who have run out of ordinary explanations.

As we entered the front door, the house was filled with the resounding pounding of massive invisible fists, slamming the walls in repetitions of three.

My grandfather calmly took it all in. “These repetitions of three are an indication we’re dealing with something demonic.”

My terror ratcheted up to an eleven.

My grandfather looked at me calmly. “Chris, I want you to sit in the dark in the master bedroom while we go downstairs and provoke this thing with holy church incense to make it reveal itself. Let us know if anything happens to you.”

My first thought was: what exactly did he think was going to happen to me?

What happened over the next several hours I have written in full in the pages of this book. The claw marks. The steel pot flying through the air. The two hulking black figures on the stairs at 3 AM. And the moment, just before Liz and I ran out of the house into the dark, when I stood next to something I could not name and felt the door open by itself.

I got home. I got into bed.

I reached over and turned off the light.

For the first time since I was eight years old, I lay in the dark and did not need to turn it back on.

The darkness was the same darkness it had always been. I was different. And somewhere in the distance between those two facts was everything I would spend the next

forty years of my life trying to understand.

The full story continues in The Warren Legacy.

Forty-four years of investigation across six continents. Ten thousand cases. Ancient wisdom traditions and cutting edge science arriving at the same address. What consciousness actually is. What happens when we die. Whether love survives the body.

Early access and launch pricing:

chrismckinnell.com/warren-legacy

The Special Edition includes Ed Warren's final recorded work, lost for twenty-five years and recovered under circumstances described in this book.