A HORROR NOVELLA

THE CURSE OF THE BASEMENT HOUSE

"The Curse of the Basement House"

Psychological Horror / Graphic & Illustrated Novella

"Some things wait in dark places
for someone to open the door."

THE MIKA KING

Michael Spehner Ortiz

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THE CURSE OF THE BASEMENT HOUSE

A horror novella by The Mika King (Michael Spehner Ortiz).
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THE CURSE OF THE BASEMENT HOUSE
A Graphic and Illustrated Psychological Horror Novella
PROLOGUE

There are houses that harbor far more than mere walls and ceilings; they guard living memories, layers of accumulated pain, and presences that refuse to fade away with time. In the depths of certain foundations, darkness is never merely the absence of light, but rather a dense and deliberate force. When financial despair and the hope of a fresh start cross cursed thresholds, hidden forces awaken. Yet, even in the corners most corrupted by ancient malice, an unwavering faith in goodness, divine light, and ancestral wisdom possesses the absolute power to dispel any shadow. This is the tale of how innocence, friendship, and earthly love confronted the abyss to shatter a cycle of eternal terror.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

The Mika King (real name: Michael Spehner Ortiz), born in Seville, Spain, is a renowned multidisciplinary artist at forty-eight years of age. With a prolific career spanning over 140 internationally published books and holder of 48 art and painting awards, his work stands out for a profound aesthetic and narrative sensitivity. A poet, philosopher, musician, writer, filmmaker, and illustrator, he channels his artistic mastery into this, his very first graphic and illustrated horror novella, fusing a detailed, eerie visual atmosphere with a narrative of psychological suspense and spiritual redemption. His work is published and distributed in both Spanish and French, cementing a unique and unmistakable artistic universe.

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— CHAPTER —

1

THE HOUSE ON PECOS ROAD

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The house sat at the end of Pecos Road like something the town had forgotten to demolish.

Bella Harrington parked her old Toyota in the gravel driveway and killed the engine. The engine ticked as it cooled. In the passenger seat, Alice was already unbuckling herself, nose pressed to the window, her small hands leaving prints on the glass.

"It's bigger than the photos," Alice said.

"Everything's bigger in Texas, sweetheart," Bella answered, forcing lightness into her voice. She had said the same joke twelve times since crossing the Louisiana line, and Alice had laughed at every one of them, which was the kind of grace only a nine-year-old could give.

The town of Corinth, Texas, had eleven hundred and forty-two residents according to the sign on the highway, and Bella suspected the sign was optimistic. The main street had four businesses: a gas station, a diner called Rosie's, a small church, and a laundromat with a broken window that had been broken long enough for weeds to grow through it. That was all. Everything else was quiet houses on quiet roads, most of them for sale, most of them for a long time.

They had chosen Corinth because of the hospital. Twenty miles south there was a regional medical center that had been advertising for nurses for eight months without finding any, and Bella needed the work. She needed it the way people in the desert need water: not as a luxury, but as the difference between continuing and not continuing.

The house had been listed for six hundred a month. In Houston, six hundred wouldn't have paid for a walk-in closet. Here, it bought you three bedrooms, a wraparound porch, a fenced yard, and a basement.

Bella hadn't wanted the basement.

But you didn't get to choose which parts of a cheap house you took and which parts you left. The basement came with the rest of it, and she had decided, standing in the realtor's office four months earlier, that she would simply keep Alice out of it and forget it was there.

That had worked, so far.

"Mom," Alice said, still looking at the house through the windshield, "is someone watching us?"

Bella felt her stomach tighten. She looked at the house — the dark windows, the empty porch, the closed front door. Nothing moved. Nothing that she could see.

"There's no one there, honey. It's just an empty house waiting for us to come home."

Alice nodded, but she didn't take her hand off the window.

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2

FOUR MONTHS EARLIER

The night they moved in, Bella had discovered that the basement door didn't have a lock.

It had a handle and a hinge and it swung open into darkness that smelled of old dust and something else, something colder — the smell that empty spaces get when no one has breathed in them for years. She had stood at the top of the stairs with a flashlight, sweeping the beam across concrete walls, a low ceiling with a bare bulb, and the shapes of boxes stacked in one corner. Someone had left things behind. The realtor had mentioned it in passing — "a few personal effects from the previous owners, nothing you need to keep, feel free to throw them out" — and Bella had said she would deal with it, and then she had never dealt with it.

Instead, she had bought a hook-and-eye latch at the hardware store and installed it on the outside of the basement door, high enough that Alice couldn't reach it.

"Why are we locking the basement, mom?" Alice had asked, watching her drill the hook into the doorframe.

"Because basements aren't safe for little girls. Spiders. Bad air. Things could fall on you."

"But you go down there."

"I don't, actually. I don't go down there at all."

Alice had frowned at that, in the way she frowned at anything that didn't quite make sense. Alice was nine, which was old enough to notice inconsistencies, and Bella had learned to be careful about them. But Alice had let it go, that night, because she was tired and because there were more interesting things upstairs — her new room, a window that looked out at the field behind the house, a closet big enough to hide in.

That was in April. It was now August. The hook had held.

Until it hadn't.

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3

THE MAN WITH THE DOG

On their third morning in Corinth, Bella took her coffee onto the porch and saw the man across the street watching her.

He wasn't hiding. He was standing on his own porch with a coffee cup of his own, and a large dog — some kind of shepherd mix, black and tan, with intelligent ears — sat calmly at his feet. When Bella noticed him, he lifted his cup in a small, unhurried salute. She lifted hers back.

Later that morning, she walked across the street with a plate of the peach cobbler Rosie at the diner had sold her for six dollars.

"Bella Harrington," she said. "I moved in on Sunday."

"Ethan Cole." He shook her hand. He was tall, gray at the temples, with the kind of long fingers she associated with people who worked with their hands but not roughly. "This is Boone."

The dog studied her, decided she was acceptable, and pushed his head under her free hand.

"He likes you," Ethan said. "He doesn't like most people."

"I have that effect on dogs. It's people I have trouble with."

He laughed. It was a real laugh, not a polite one. He took the cobbler and offered coffee, and she said no, she had to get Alice registered for school, and he said, "Alice is your daughter?" and she said yes, and there was a small pause in which they both, somehow, seemed to acknowledge that this conversation might continue on other mornings.

That evening, when she was making dinner, Alice asked from the kitchen table where she was coloring, "Mom, who was the man?"

"His name is Ethan. He lives across the street."

"Is he your boyfriend?"

"Alice."

"What? I'm just asking."

"He is not my boyfriend. I met him this morning."