

## Prescott House

### Episode 1 by Anne Lange

Clutching the brown paper bag in her right arm, Sarah Prescott settled her purse securely on her shoulder, switched the bag to that arm, and then dug into her coat pocket for her keys. A gust of wind slammed into her from behind, shoving her forward a step and slipping under her coat and, even her sweater, to send a chill up her spine. She hated fall. She hated winter more, but she really hated the fall because that meant winter was just around the corner.

Where the hell were her keys? She pulled out a crumpled tissue and pushed aside some coins. Damn, it was cold. Another reason to hate the fall. That and the leaves. Leaves fucking everywhere in this town. And they seemed to converge on her property.

“Sarah. Saaaaarah.”

She paused, jerked her head up, and spun around. “Who’s there?”

She gazed around the yard, narrowing her eyes to see past the shadows. Must have been the wind. Or an asshole kid playing a trick on her. Yup. Let’s annoy the hell out of the new person in town. It’s not like the little devils didn’t have anything better to do—like homework maybe.

She could just kick the door open. Wouldn’t be the first time she’d been locked out since moving in. Seemed to happen at least a couple of times a week. A trip to the hardware store just moved to the top of her to-do list.

Sarah lowered the bag of groceries to the porch deck so she could begin the arduous task of searching through her purse.

“Saaaaarahhhh.”

“I don’t know who the hell you are,” she said, her voice rising, her tone angry, “but you can stop right now. I’ve had a long day. I’m hungry. And I am so not amused.”

Finally! She wrapped her fingers around her keys, yanking them from her purse. She leaned down to pick up the bag. But just as she reached for it, the damn thing tipped over, spilling some of the contents. Oranges and tomatoes rolled free, her mail scattered and her carton of juice burst open, the liquid flowing neatly around her feet.

She looked to the heavens, actually the roof over her porch, and closed her eyes. Why now? Why me? Could I please just wake up and start this day over?

Three questions she continually asked herself and still no answers magically appeared. But they certainly seemed to apply to every aspect of her life these days.

After Brant died, she'd spent months hiding in her apartment. Then she'd discovered through her lawyer she had access to a house which had been in her family for generations. Confirming nobody lived in it, and in fact it had sat empty for the last five years, she'd left her job, her so-called friends, and the big city far behind. Starting over in a new place, in a small town where nobody knew her or her past, had seemed like just the thing she needed to get her life back on track. Alone.

Her one mistake was making the transition during the worst time of year. Sarah knelt, avoiding the spreading puddle of cranberry juice that looked oddly like blood in the waning light, and gathered the runaway fruit. Another gust of wind picked up two envelopes and carried them away. Probably bills; she should let the breeze have them.

Sighing, she chased them down, snagging them from where they'd been trapped by a dead lilac bush. She ripped them from the branches and turned back to the house.

And stopped cold.

She didn't remember unlocking the door. She frowned.

Because now it stood wide open, a warm glow from inside beckoning her to enter.

"Welcome home, Sarah."

## Episode 2 by Chanta Rand

Sarah stared at the old Victorian as its steep rooflines loomed eerily in the waning daylight. It resembled the type of dollhouse she'd always wanted, but as the only girl raised with a herd of four older brothers, never had the chance to play with. Elaborate, white gingerbread trim stretched across the faded boards. Back in the day, the home probably boasted a vibrant blue shade of siding. But right now, it was in desperate need of a paint job. Scarlet shutters adorned the windows, looking like gigantic eyes peering from a dull gray face. Oddly, that was what it felt like now—as though the house was watching her. And now, apparently, it was calling her name.

A rumble of thunder shook the air, making her jump. Seconds later, a frigid drizzle began. Damn. The only thing she hated worse than cold weather was cold, wet weather. Her first instinct would have been to flee to the safety of the dry house. But there was no fucking way she wanted to go in there now.

She clutched her keys between her forefinger and middle finger, the way she was taught to do in self defense class. She took one deep breath and two steps forward. If a burglar was waiting in there, she'd be ready for his ass. She'd gouge both of his eyes out with these keys if she had to. But if a ghost awaited her, well, that was another story altogether.

When she was twelve years old, she'd heard stories of one of her ancestors being...interesting. During one of the few sleepovers her absentee mother had allowed her to have, her older brother, Mac, had indulged the girls with a chilling story about a poor inventor who loved his wife so much that when she died, he found a way to bring her back to life in his dilapidated laboratory. When the townspeople found out, they accused the man of being a warlock. They dragged him from his home and burned him alive in the town square. His wife waited day after day for him to come home but he never did. Eventually, she died again of a broken heart, and forever roamed the halls of their house searching for her beloved husband.

Of course, it was pure bull. Sarah knew that now. But when she'd been a preteen begging for a horror story, this one had scared her shitless. Add to the fact that over the years, Mac continued to insist the old warlock was really their great-great grandfather, and things really jumped up a few notches on the weirdness meter.

“Sarah, don’t be afraid.”

She gulped, still tasting the garlic chicken she’d had for dinner. She wished she had some of that now. She would scare whatever it was away with just one clove.

Wait a minute.

Garlic was for vampires, wasn’t it?

How did she know a vampire wasn’t hiding in there waiting to drain her blood?

Or a werewolf?

The light drizzle’s tempo increased to a steady rain. This was ridiculous. She couldn’t stand here forever. If she didn’t get out of the elements soon, she would catch a cold. She squared her shoulders.

“I’m not twelve anymore,” she said aloud. “I’m a thirty-three year-old reasonably attractive woman. I have a Master’s Degree in Education. I stick to a gluten-free diet. I’m responsible!” She glowered in the direction of the open door. “Let’s do this.”

### Episode 3 by Aubrey Wynne

Sarah took one step over the threshold and peeked her head inside the darkness. The light from the fading afternoon cast long, eerie shadows across the living room. She scanned the room and identified the hall table, the couch and a chair, and in the corner stood a—“Aaaagh!” She screamed at the man standing just under the staircase. “Aaaaaagh!” Her voice rose in a high fingers-on-the-chalk-board pitch. But he didn’t move, as if he were frozen in time. Time. It was the grandfather clock. I’m an idiot. I need to remember to leave a light on.

She raised her fist with the key still firmly between her two fingers and moved inside the house. The stairs, hidden in a murky gloom, reminded of her that old movie “The Ghost and Mr. Chicken.” She figured her eyes looked about as big as the poor guy trapped in the haunted house for the night. Flicking on the small table lamp next to the door, she took a deep breath.

It must have been the wind. Or the foundation. Didn’t that creak on an old house? She walked into the kitchen and set down the groceries. Catching her reflection in the microwave, a chuckle escaped. Her dark hair hung wet and limp down the sides of her face, and she wiped at the mascara now smudged beneath her eyes. “Shit, I’ll be the one scaring the ghost.” The panic eased and Sarah laughed at herself. “At least Mr. Tall, Dark and Handsome isn’t here to see me in my finest hour.”

A long, hot bath would turn this day around. She headed toward the stairs and the only bathroom in the house. Visions of the huge clawfoot tub, bubbles spilling out the top, filled her head. Wine. Doing a double-take, she corked a bottle of red and poured a glass to enjoy during her soak.

Her foot hit the first stair, and the old oak plank moaned under the weight. A shiver went through her and she took a sip of courage. The next step made an odd c-r-eee-ak. Another swallow of bravery. A gust of wind blew at her back. The front door! She hadn’t shut the front door. God knows, the old steel bolts needed oiling.

“Please, Sarah.”

Her heart stopped. Definitely not rusty hinges.

A puff of air hit her face, as if someone had just blown softly on her cheek. Terror clutched her throat and only a strangled cry escaped. Battling the fear that now turned her legs to stone, she concentrated on moving one foot behind the other—away from the stairs and back to the door.

Her hands felt for the doorframe and the cold drizzle licked at her backside. “Now just turn around and run,” she whispered, then peered down to see what looked like a pool of blood, seeping between the planks. “Aaaaaaghhh.” Movement came back to her limbs, and she spun toward the street. But a solid dark mass stopped her in midflight. Another scream tore from her raw throat.

“Hey, what’s going on? I heard you screaming...”

Chest heaving, an icy October mist covering her face, Sarah looked up to see a pair of sexy chocolate-brown eyes looking into hers. Strong arms held her up on legs that threatened to buckle beneath her.

“I live next door, and heard the screams. I figured you must have met the Prescott ghost.”

## Episode 4 by Caroline Lee

Prescott ghost?

She knew her eyes must be as wide as saucers, and she couldn't seem to make herself inhale. The terror of being spoken to—whispered to, in her own house—was still wrapped vise-like around her chest. She couldn't breathe, couldn't speak. Could only stare up at him. Whoever he was.

“Hey.” The stranger gave her a little shake, and Sarah suddenly noticed how warm his hands were on her upper arms. “Are you okay?”

She forced herself to close her eyes on his concerned gaze, and inhale. Once, sharply, and then again slower. She willed her heart to slow its beating. It almost worked.

“Miss Prescott?” How'd he know her name? “Do you need help?”

“No.” Her voice was barely a whisper, so she swallowed and tried again. “No, I'm fine.”

“Sorry for saying it, ma'am, but you don't look fine. You look like you've seen...” The way his lips quirked up made her very aware of the fact that he was still holding her on her own front porch. “...A ghost.”

Well, shit. The Prescott ghost. Something the lawyer had laughingly mentioned when she'd signed all the papers accepting the house and the property. Only, this wasn't some preteen slumber party spooky tale. She was a grown-ass woman, and she most definitely did not believe in ghosts, goblins, vampires, or any of that other horror-story shit.

Did she?

And then his smile grew, revealing an intriguingly crooked front tooth, and Sarah felt an icy breath against the back of her neck, and the wineglass stem broke off in her hand with a snap.

She sucked in her breath sharply, and his gaze—and hands—immediately went to her injury. She ignored the burn from the cut across her palm. “Did you feel that?”

“Feel what?” He was cradling her hand, and Sarah refused to let herself notice how nice it felt. “We need to get this wrapped up.”

“That...breeze.”

He glanced over her shoulder into the house. “You left a window open in the library. It faces my living room. I figured you liked the cold.”

“I hate the cold. I didn’t leave—” But he didn’t hear her, because he was pulling her into her own house, and into her kitchen, and pushing her down to sit at the small table while he rifled through her pantry. Sarah sat stiffly, her fingers locked into a fist around her aching palm, and tried not to think about the steady drip-drip-drip of her blood on the pine boards.

“Here, lemme see that.” The stranger—he really had remarkable eyes, didn’t he?—laid out an old first aid kit on the table beside her, removed some bandages, and then knelt in front of her.

As he began his ministrations, Sarah frowned down at his dark curls. “You certainly know your way around my house, Mr. Next-Door-Neighbor.”

He looked up at that, and flashed a smile, bright against his dark skin. “Eric Singleton. I’m an E.M.T.” Then he focused on her hand again. This whole experience was definitely weirding her out.

“Well yeah, Mr. Singleton, but that doesn’t answer my question.”

A slight chuckle. “I’ve been looking after Prescott House for five years now, since the Dewey, Cheetum & Howe firm contracted me to be the caretaker. You’ve been here, what? A few weeks? I figure I know my way around this place a lot better than you do.”

She took a deep breath, ignoring the subtle scent of cloves that clung to him, and swallowed her other questions. In much less time than it would’ve taken her, Eric Singleton placed her well-bandaged hand on her lap—there went her plans for a nice hot bath—and sat back on his haunches.

It was an odd feeling, to have such a handsome man kneeling at her feet. And Sarah didn’t think she could take any more odd feelings today. “So... in your five years here, have you noticed... anything...?”

“Ghostly?” He smiled again, and Sarah bit her bottom lip. “Only four other times. Once a year. Every year. Same day.”

She swallowed past a suddenly dry throat. “What day?”

“Today. October thirty-first. All Hallows’ Eve.”



## Episode 5 by Kris Calvert

“You mean, Halloween?” Sarah asked. She’d already planned on turning off her porch light to deter the candy grabbers. In her experience, no matter how hard she tried to please the painted-faced ninjas and glitter-covered princesses tripping over their tulle, her choice of chocolates and bubble-gum enclosed suckers never seemed to be enough. “I don’t do Halloween.”

In her old neighbourhood, candy giving was a competitive sport—one she gave up when a sparkly Tinker Bell mocked her bowl of fun-sized Snickers, letting her know the other neighbours were giving away full sized chocolate.

Eric stood, walking away from his medical handiwork. “Days, like people, come and go whether you’re truly aware of them or not.”

“I’m aware,” Sarah replied wondering why she was no longer unnerved. A strange man was standing in her kitchen explaining her own house to her. He had played the hero to her damsel in distress moment. Maybe that was it. She’d not been taken care of in a long time. Or, maybe it was the way his dark eyes sparkled in the light. Maybe it was because she’d not had sex in a really long time. She pulled herself together and adjusted the front of her shirt, reminding herself she was in control. She was always in control.

“Why don’t you tell me what you know about this place? I mean, if there’s a poltergeist in my house maybe I need to be more careful of leaving the television on. I would hate to end up on another earthly plane with that little blonde girl—whatshername,” she said snapping her fingers and searching the eighties movie references swirling in her head. “Carol Anne.”

“You’re funny,” he said with a smile. “Your sense of humour is going to serve you well.”

Sarah’s humour only masked the hole in her heart—the one left behind when Brant took his last breath. “Well, thank you...I guess.”

She suddenly needed the wine more than ever and took two more glasses down from the cupboard. “Care to join me?”

“Sure. I’d love to get to know my beautiful neighbour. I’ve already rescued her from herself,” he said nodding to Sarah’s hand. “Now maybe you’ll repay me by joining me for dinner in the future.”

“What?”

“I just thought I’d ask.”

“I’m...” she began and recoiled, searching for what needed to be said. “I’m not ready to have...you know...dinner.”

“Why not? I just want to get to know you better.”

“It’s a long story.” Sarah waited for the words to escape her lips before letting out the sigh she’d been holding in.

He nodded his head and narrowed his gaze. She knew the look. It was the one her mother gave her when she offered up half-truths instead of the full-blown story—Sarah was selling, but Eric wasn’t buying it.

“You know, you’re not hiding anything. Not here,” he said.

“What?” Turning on her heels, she stayed calm on the outside while her stomach did cartwheels. “What makes you think I’m hiding anything?”

Eric took the wine glass from her hand, staring into her eyes. “No one moves to this Godforsaken cow town. You might be born here, attached to the quiet desperation because you know nothing else, but no one intentionally moves to Samhain—at least not when the leaves start to fall.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” she joked. “And I’ve never heard anyone pronounce it that way—Saa-ween.”

“Then you’ve only heard it pronounced the wrong way,” he said holding his glass in the air, silently asking for wine.

Nodding to her when she’d poured enough into his glass, she watched him turn and walk away, using the time to take a huge gulp of wine from her own glass to calm her nerves.

“You seem to know a lot, Eric Singleton.”

Turning he sipped his wine and smiled at her over the rim of the glass. She knew the look. Sarah was master of the coy, I know something you don't know eye sparkle and smirk. She invented it.

Taking another healthy gulp of wine, she played along. "Fine. Let's play a little game, my newly found, overly knowledgeable neighbour. You tell me something I don't know about this house and I'll tell you something about me."

"Deal."

Sarah motioned for him to sit at the kitchen table and joined him, gulping her wine and pouring a little more. Staring into his face, she waited for him to begin as the wind howled, causing the ancient windowpanes to rattle. A chill ran down her spine and she involuntarily knitted her shoulders, shaking off the feeling both physically and mentally. Silence.

"Well?" Sarah asked.

"Why don't you start us off?"

"Fine. I'm a teacher, but I don't teach anymore."

"I'm an EMT. But I don't save lives anymore."

"I beg to differ," she said holding up her bandaged hand. "No matter what you think about this old house, I don't believe in ghosts," she said shaking off her true feelings, allowing the wine to fill her with courage.

"No matter what you think, things exist whether you're aware of them or not."

"Are you saying something's in this house?" she asked. "Really? The Prescott Ghost?"

Sarah scoffed and took another drink. She was starting to feel a little woozy, but brave nonetheless. "Whatcha got to say to me, Prescott Ghost?" she asked looking to the ceiling of the kitchen.

"I admire your courage, however misguided it may be," he said.

Shuddering from a cold draft that wafted past them, she searched his face for clues to what he knew, but wasn't saying. "What's so special about tonight anyway?" she asked.

"All Hallows' Eve?"

"That depends."

“On what?”

“On whether a spirit from the other side needs to contact you one more time.”

## Episode 6 by J.A. Coffey

She tried to tell herself that the chill in the pit of her stomach was from the breeze of a half-opened window and not the memory of Brant's lifeless eyes. That the accident hadn't been her fault. That there was no reason for his spirit to contact her from beyond the grave.

But she was a damn liar.

"Me?" Sarah scoffed at the handsome neighbor watching her with wolfish intensity over the rim of his wineglass. "I'm an open book. Just a widow looking to make a fresh start in a familiar place. Nothing to hide, here." Her voice only shook a little.

"Indeed." Eric's tone and the way his gaze pierced her spoke volumes. He smiled again. There was a pregnant pause. Thunder rattled the rafters overhead. Her ears popped and the moment passed, fading like his smile in the dusk.

"I should go."

"Should you?" She bit off the end of her question. Any more wine on her empty stomach and she'd be inviting him to stay the night. And not just because the house that she now called home was giving her the creeps. Because she liked the way his broad shoulders made her feel protected. The heat blossoming between her thighs made her hotter than any bonfire.

His gaze up and down the length of her like warm caramel. "Might be best. Besides, you have some unpacking to do."

Had he seen the scads of boxes still lining the upstairs hall? For a nosy neighbor, Eric Singleton sure seemed to keep tabs on the interior of what should've been her last bastion of privacy. She quirked a brow and he pointed to the pale drop cloth covering the mirror in the front hall like a shroud.

"Oh, right." So much for him being interested in her. "Thanks for your help, but I'm all set." She swallowed the bitter tang of resolve and walked towards the front door swinging gently to and fro on the rusted brass hinges. The scent of rain and dead leaves drifted into the parlor.

“Any time,” he rumbled, setting her thighs to quivering. “I mean it.” He put out a hand to stop the door from swinging into her face.

The open door.

“Wait a minute. Didn’t I...? Did you...?” Hadn’t she closed the door earlier? She shook her head. She must’ve had more wine than she thought.

“I’ll be around if you need me.” He frowned at the shadows at the top of the stairs, then gave her a final brief smile. “My number’s on the cork board by the phone in the kitchen.”

If she needed him?

Ha, that was a riot. She was an independent and educated woman. A woman who’d had a shitty ending to the shitty day at the end of a monumentally shitty week. She most certainly did not need her hunky neighbor staring at her as if trying to decide whether to trick-or-treat her, because if the cadence of her heartbeat was any indication, she definitely was up for the latter.

She closed the door firmly behind him, squared her shoulders and marched to the thermostat to crank up the heat against the chill in the old house. The basement furnace rattled and clanged like a witch’s cauldron beneath her feet, but eventually the hot air began to eke out of the floor vents accompanied by a warm, cozy smell that reminded her of visiting her grandparents. She’d always loved autumn, until last year. Now that she was ready to rebuild her life, there was no reason she shouldn’t love it again.

As long as there were no more surprises. She glared at the front door, still resolutely shut tight.

“Exactly.” She nodded and brushed her hands together. Time to get things in order. Step one, unpack the groceries. Step two, make dinner. Step three, make this house her own.

On her way back to the kitchen, she paused in front of the antique mirror. Stains on the faded wallpaper indicated the thing was probably original to Prescott House. It seemed a shame to hide it, so she snatched the cloth off. A cloud of dust enveloped her head.

“Ack! Ugh!”

She doubled over coughing and gasping for air. The drop cloth slithered from her fingertips to the hardwood. Her lungs seized up and she hacked up a few decades of filth,

straightening just in time to see a black shadow moving stealthily behind her near the foot of the stairs.

## Episode 7 by Kishan Paul

Sarah jumped back, screaming at the darkened silhouette standing a few feet from her.

Either Eric was right about the Prescott ghost, or she was losing her mind. As the shadow drew closer, she decided she didn't care what the correct answer was.

"Sarah, please don't go," the whispered voice pleaded as she ran to the door. "Angel, I need you."

She froze at the threshold, her hand glued to the handle and she stared at the dark fog in front of her.

"Brant?"

The shadow moved closer, and this time she didn't run. When it surrounded her, she closed her eyes as a blanket of warmth cocooned her. Tears slipped down her cheeks as a moan escaped her lips. "I missed you."

"I know."

A small voice inside her head questioned her sanity. Did she really think she was talking to her dead husband? Another part of her, the part that had ached for him every night since his death, ignored the voice. It didn't matter. Brant was home. Everything was going to be all right.

Memories of the night over a year ago flashed in her mind. Sarah had offered to drive that night because Brant drank a little too much at the party they attended. As they drove down California's Highway 1, a man jumped in the middle of the road. When she swerved to avoid hitting him, she drove off the pavement. The car fell off the edge of the cliff, flipping and sliding the entire way. Brant died on impact and although she had wished she died too, she wasn't so lucky. The man on the highway was gone and no one believed he had ever been there.

Sarah slammed her eyes shut and fell to her knees. "I'm sorry."

"It wasn't your fault, angel. None of this was your fault. I am just glad you survived."

She shook her head. "I wish I hadn't." Sob after painful sob shuddered through her until the image of the night he proposed to her flooded her brain. On a romantic vacation in



Cinque Terra Italy, Brant had gotten down on one knee. A mix of nervous fear and excitement flashed across his face. “If you say yes, I promise to always love you. To protect you.”

The scene was so vivid and full of joy, it calmed Sarah.

“Do you remember?” the voice brought her back to the present.

She smiled. “You’re putting this memory in my head aren’t you?”

The sound of his laugh warmed her chest. “I am.”

“Why?”

“I can’t leave this world. Not until I keep my promise.”

Sarah leaned against the wall, savoring their contact. “I don’t want you to leave.”

“I don’t have very many options, angel. I can’t come back to you and I don’t want to stay like this forever. Only you can help me get to the other side.”

The sadness in his voice, tugged at her. “What do I need to do?”

“The man on the road the night of the accident was real, Sarah. You didn’t make him up. He tried to kill us both and is going to kill you tonight. You need to stop him.”

Her dead husband’s ghost was asking her to stop a killer. What police department in the world would believe her? And the sad reality was she didn’t mind dying—especially if it meant being with Brant. She shook her head.

“I promised to protect you and if you die, that means I failed. Please if not for yourself, you have to live for me.”

## Episode 8 by C.A. Szarek

The feeling of warmth dissipated, leaving Sarah standing in the foyer of the old house—her house now. Alone. “Brant?” she whispered.

What just happened?

She looked around, seeing nothing out of the ordinary. To the left, the living room was open and sprawling—a mixture of her furniture and the old traditional pieces that were in the house when she’d moved in. In front of her, the door was still closed—thank God.

“Did I hallucinate?”

Of course I did.

There was no such thing as ghosts. Despite what the stupid lawyer had joked about, and what Mr. Sexy had...inferred? No, he’d come right out and said it.

Besides, how could Brant be the Prescott Ghost? He wasn’t a Prescott, and he’d never set foot in this house.

“Is everyone in this town crazy, or have I gone fucking nuts?” Either was a possibility.

Brant had said a killer was after her. He’d died in an accident. She hadn’t even told the police about the man she’d swerved to avoid, because he hadn’t really been there.

And her husband had said he needed her to help him move on? She wasn’t the ghost whisperer.

She scoffed and shook her head. How had she come up with that shit? Because if she’d imagined him—and surely she had—she’d put the ideas in her own head. She didn’t watch horror movies, and she’d never really been a Halloween person, so why was she trying to play let’s-star-in-a-horror-flick?

Don’t go outside. Don’t answer the phone. Don’t have sex. All the clichés ran through her head, though she had to smirk at the last one. She didn’t have anyone to have sex with, and nosy neighbor’s aside, no man had piqued her interest since...

No, don’t think of him anymore.

No more tears. She’d cried enough tears to fill a lake since she’d lost him.

Sarah shivered. No, it was worse than that. Tremors chased each other down her spine and a cool air caressed her face. It was...like a presence, but not warm and loving like when Brant had been with her moments before.

Wait. No. Brant hadn't been with her.

Her husband was in a cemetery in California, and she'd moved to podunk Samhain, Texas. A one-horse town, like her hot neighbor had said.

Hot? Sexy? Handsome? Words that should be so foreign to her grieving mind.

And Saa-ween? Really? Like he was some Halloween guru. Or at least a grammar one. Weird for an E.M.T.

The air hit Sarah's cheeks again and she jumped. She darted into the living room and turned on every light and could find.

She returned to the foyer again and did the same, then hollered at herself as she continued her every-light-on quest into the library, then back into the huge kitchen.

"You really have lost it. Talking to yourself proves that much."

Sarah spared a glance to her still-needed-put-away groceries, then her eye roved the wine bottle and the two empty glasses. Her palm throbbed, as if she needed a reminder of the glass she'd broken. Damn, now she wouldn't have a complete set.

She sighed for the hundredth time that evening and her eyes landed on the corkboard Eric had mentioned. It hung by the fridge. A smattering of papers were tacked to it, but there was an order to it all she hadn't noticed before.

Her feet closed the distance to it, and she studied the index card on the top left. Eric Singleton—Caretaker and two phone numbers, one labeled home, and the other, cell were written in neat block letters and uniform numbers.

Sarah's heart skipped. Brant's smiling face popped into her head. Guilt assailed her from her gut, rising in a slow burn that made her dizzy.

She braced herself on the counter. Maybe she'd consumed the wine too fast. So her imagined conversation with Brant had to be due to that.

Her dinner had been early—more of a late lunch, so there really wasn't anything in her stomach.

She swallowed.

“You totally need to get it together.”

“Sarah...”

She crushed her eyes shut and refused to acknowledge hearing the voice again—the one she’d imagined when she’d been trying to find her keys.

It wasn’t Brant. But it couldn’t be something—someone—else, either. Right?

Why on earth was her first instinct to call the neighbor?

## Episode 9 by Luanna Stewart

Sarah reached for the phone.

No, this was silly. The Hallowe'en atmosphere was subconsciously messing with her brain. The wine might have something to do with her imagining ghosts around every corner, too.

She put the groceries away and plugged in the kettle. A nice cup of hot tea would fix everything. She rummaged in her cupboard for the Assam loose tea leaves and prepared a cup. Then cut a slice of pumpkin bread, the perfect accompaniment to tea.

She should change out of her work clothes while waiting for the kettle to boil. Which necessitated going upstairs. Well, come on, be a big girl and suck it up.

The lights were on through the entire main floor. The front door remained closed. She had nothing to fear. Besides, ghosts didn't exist. Taking a deep breath, she squared her shoulders and marched toward the stairs.

The blast of frigid air stopped her with one foot on the first step. She swallowed her scream, not wanting Mr. Sexy Eric to think she was a complete wuss. There must be a logical, scientifically based explanation for this phenomenon. Something to do with cold inversion, old houses, and un-insulated attics.

She tried again and climbed to the third step before cold wind pushed her off balance. She stumbled to the floor, wrenching her ankle.

Fuckety fuck. No one pushed her around, especially someone or something she couldn't see. She pulled herself to her feet and rolled up her sleeves. Brant or no Brant, she wanted her sweatpants and her blue bunny slippers.

"Listen up, dick ghost. I'm going to my room and you're not stopping me. Got it?"

She listened for a response, but the only noise was the kettle clicking off, and the wind blowing a branch against kitchen window. All normal, explainable noises. She retreated a few paces then ran up the stairs.

Nothing happened. Ha! Plasma critters better not mess with her.

She changed her clothes in record time and rode the banister down to the main floor. No sense overstaying her welcome. Maybe the couch wasn't so uncomfortable. She reheated the kettle and made her tea. Now that she'd survived a terrifying incident, she was ready to take on the world. Or at least the last of her unpacking.

She wandered into the dining room and stared at the boxes piled in the corner. Every box labelled with Brant's name. They weren't filled with his clothes or anything gruesome like his used toothbrush. Merely his baseball card collection, his bobble-head collection, and his team pennant collection.

Hell, no wonder she'd been reluctant to unpack. As much as she loved her late husband, and hadn't minded him filling every nook and cranny of their old house with this stuff, she honestly had no desire to display commemorative footballs from the previous nineteen Super Bowls. No, it was twenty, the last one still in its packaging, since it arrived after the accident.

She reached to switch off the light when a gentle puff of warm air touched her cheek.

"Okay, I'll unpack your stuff, but don't expect me to line the mantel with your bobble-heads."

Having a friendly ghost around was kind of cool and gave her someone to talk to. Now she didn't need to adopt a cat. She hummed under her breath while she unwrapped each shot glass, one for every basketball team, professional and college.

Then the lights went out.

"Brant, turn the fucking lights back on!"

The lights remained off. Maybe the power outage was nothing to do with her paranormal houseguest. She looked out the window and saw lights on in the other houses. Including Eric Sexy Bun's.

Where were the candles? Moving slowly to avoid bashing a body part into a house part, she made her way to the kitchen junk drawer, located a candle, and, thank god, the matches. Once she had that bit of feeble light she pulled her cell phone from her pants pocket and punched in the number for the gorgeous neighbour. He claimed to know everything about her house – let him fix the lights.

After describing the situation, and being assured he'd be right over to check the fuse box in the basement, she disconnected.

She stared at the basement door, daring it to magically open. Or for a strange green light to glow around the edges. When neither of those things happened, she twisted the knob and opened the door. Nothing came at her but the smell of an old, damp cellar. Eric suggested the problem was a fuse, and would be an easy fix. Why wait for him?

She was halfway down the stairs when the candle blew out and the door slammed shut.

Episode 10, by Valerie Twombly

"Fucking really? I'm getting sick of this shit," she yelled only to make herself feel better. There was no Prescott ghost. Period.

With a sigh, she placed her free hand on the wall and carefully turned, feeling for the doorknob. Once she had the clunky piece of metal in her grasp she gave it a twist.

Nothing.

Again she tried but the cold metal refused to budge. She pulled, hoping maybe the door would pop open, but that failed as well.

"Sarrrrrah."

"Brant?" Even though she knew that eerie call wasn't him.

Something cold whooshed by her and caused her to shiver. Once more she tried the door and again it remained stubborn, refusing to open.

"Sarah?"

She jumped and placed her palm on her chest as if it would help slow her racing heart. "I really need to pull my shit together." She let out a sigh of relief. "Eric. The basement door is stuck." The sound of heavy footsteps grew closer and seconds later the jiggle of the handle.

"Shit, Sarah it's stuck. I'll have to kick it in."

Pressure built on her back then suddenly she was falling.

“Aaaaghh!” Sarah reached out to try and grab something, anything that might keep her from tumbling down the stairs and killing herself. Somehow she managed to catch hold of the handrail and slow her descent. Finally, she landed with a hard crack on her right arm. Blinding pain shot through her.

“I finally have you at my mercy,” a sinister voice whispered in her ear.

She startled and tried to ignore the urge to vomit. “W-who are you?”

“Well, granddaughter, I’m the one who’s going to take your life.”

She did a mental search and came back to the story her brother always told. Not possible.

“Oh it is possible and yes I’m the warlock your family burned alive. I vowed every Hallows Eve I would make the Prescott descendants suffer.”

Nothing made sense and she tried to clear her fuzzy mind and remain conscience. “But why would you kill your own family?”

“Not blood,” he scoffed.

“Not blood? I don’t understand.” She winced as she tried to move.

“I married your great grandmother later in life. Your blood grandfather died in an unfortunate accident.”

She had this sick feeling he had somehow been behind it when suddenly she was lifted to her feet and shoved against something hard and cold. Pain, anger and fear shot through her. “I didn’t kill you and this shit is beginning to piss me off.” Way to tick off a ghost, dipshit. Except he was real, there was nothing ghostly about him and in the darkness she could make out the whites of his eyes.

Realization hit. “It was you in the road, wasn’t it?” His laughter sent her blood to simmer. He was responsible for Brant’s death. She quickly remembered her earlier discussion with her deceased husband. Oh Brant, how am I supposed to stop a ghost?

“It was, but unfortunately I wasn’t corporeal. That can only happen on Hallows Eve. Now, I intend to finish what I failed to do that night.”

A sudden crash came from upstairs. “Sarah? Damn it!” A light shined and relief swept over her. Eric, she’d momentarily forgotten about him.

“Eric, the ghost is real!” she screamed with an urge to make sure he was safe.



“Well no shit!” he shouted back as his light grew closer. The Prescott ghost hissed and disappeared.

## Episode 11, by Lena Hart

“Sarah, stand back! I’m going to kick the door in.”

Sarah didn’t want to go back. Somewhere in that dark, cold basement was a damn ghost. And not any ghost. One that wanted to kill her!

“Eric, please hurry,” Sarah shrieked.

The door shuddered and shook from Eric’s frantic kicking, but it refused to open.

“Come on, come on!” Her agitated plea went unanswered. Instead, a cold draft brushed against her back and she knew without a doubt he was behind her. Still, she refused to turn around.

“Wh-why are you doing this?” Her words were directed at no one but from the gust of cold air that brushed across her neck, she knew he was still with her.

“Your great-great grandfather’s family killed me and took me from my one true love.”

The words were spoken so clearly, Sarah knew for certain that it hadn’t come from her imagination. Her heart raced and her breath came out in short, sharp pants—in rhythm with the pounding on the door. She recalled the frightening tale her older brother had terrorized her with years ago.

It clearly wasn’t just a scary story.

Yet, if it were true, and her great-great grandmother now roamed the house in search of her beloved husband, why hadn’t they reunited?

“Because your brother and all those who believed that lie are fools! The love of my life didn’t die of a broken heart. Those bastards killed her!”

The sudden bellow paralyzed Sarah until she became numb all over. Suddenly, there was no loud banging on the door... There was no more Eric.

She was surrounded by silence.

“I was murdered by people who were out for revenge, and the love of my life was buried alive! Forced to die alone...in darkness!”

“Dear God...” Sarah breathed.

The vengeful spirit dissolved into hysterical laughter. “It’s too late for that, Sarahhh. You will die the way your Prescott men intended—just as they allowed my wife to die—in darkness.”

Sarah inhaled sharply and suddenly the walls of the dark basement seemed to be closing in around her.

“No!”

Sarah raced up the last flight of stairs and began twisting and jerking at the handle. A stark white light seeped from beneath the door and she was desperate to get to the other side. She wouldn’t die like this. Not in this dark, cold basement. Alone. She wouldn’t!

“Hehehehe... You’re not leaving here, Sarahhh.”

Oh, yes, the hell I am!

Sarah gave the door one last tug and to her astonished relief, it came open. Harsh bright light blinded her and she squinted against its brilliance.

“Sarah...”

Brant?

“Sarah, angel... Come back to me...”

She was once again surrounded by warmth and immense relief almost made her knees buckle. She made it out. She was free.

“I can’t live without you, Sarah...”

Sarah followed the bright light but couldn’t make out anything, so she just followed the sound of her husband’s loving voice.

“Please come back to me...”

Suddenly the light grew impossibly bright. “Brant, where are you? I can’t see you.”

“SARAH!”

Her eyes flew open. She lay on a stiff bed, staring up at a plain, white ceiling. There was beeping...

“Sarah?”

She turned her head to the voice she thought she would never hear again. “Brant?” she croaked, her mouth dry.

“Yes, honey. It’s me.”

Sarah found her husband sitting beside her, looking as if he’d aged a decade. It was the most beautiful face she’d ever seen.

“Where?”

“Shhh. Don’t try to talk. You’re in the hospital. Let me go get the doctor.”

“No, wait.” She tried to reach out for his hand but found she couldn’t move her arms. She looked down at them and found her left arm, wrapped from wrist to shoulder in a heavy cast. But hadn’t she landed and hurt her right arm? Or had that only been in the dream?

“What happened?”

“You don’t remember? We were in an accident on Highway 1. There was an off-duty EMT worker on the road that night and thank God he found us. We wouldn’t have made it otherwise.”

Sarah remembered a pair of sexy chocolate-brown eyes and smiled. “Eric...”

“Yeah. How’d you know?”

Despite her stiff lips, Sarah’s smile widened. “Lucky guess. Are we still in California?”

“Yes, angel. We’re still here.”

Sarah released a small sigh of relief. “So no Samhain. No small, podunk town in Texas. Thank you, God.”

Brant’s brows pulled together and he ran his warm palm over her bare arm. “Just get some rest, honey. You took quite a hit and have been in a coma for the last ten days. I don’t want you to overexert yourself.”

Sarah stilled. 10 days? She’d been trapped in that twisted dream since October 21st? That could only mean...

“Brant, what’s today?”

His lips curved in a mirthless grin. “October 31st. I know it’s not your favorite holiday, but happy Halloween.”

Sarah shook her head. In that moment, the disjointed words of the Prescott Ghost echoed in her head.

“...every Hallows Eve... make the Prescott descendants suffer.”

“No,” she cried out. “It can’t be...”

Brant’s frown deepened and he continued rubbing the chill from her left arm. “I know it’s all confusing right now, honey, but everything will start making sense again soon. I promise. You’re back now and that’s all that matters.”

“No, Brant, you don’t understand. He’s going to kill me! I have to get out of here!” Sarah shoved the hospital sheets aside and began tugging at the tubes in her arms, her desperation making her numb to the pain throbbing through her body.

“Sweetie, calm down. Dr. Samhain! Someone! I need help!” Her husband tried to grab her arm, but Sarah shoved him away. “Sarah, damn it! Stop before you hurt yourself!”

“Brant, please!” She had to get the hell out of there!

A crowd of nurses and doctors rushed into her hospital room, but only one face was distinct.

Brant.

Her husband stood to the side, concern and anguish etched on his handsome face. She reached out to her husband, but several strong hands held her down and she felt the sharp sting of a needle pierce through her upper arm. Panic caused her to fight in earnest.

But it was too late.

Whatever they had shot her with began to take effect and the edges of her vision began to grow dark. Her muscles began to relax and keeping her eyes open was proving to be impossible.

“Please...” she called out, but the words were barely a murmur.

Sarahhh...

Oh, God. No! Sarah forced her eyes open and turned toward the voice. It can’t be him. It can’t be...

Saaarrrraahhhh...

The ominous voice chanted her name and she couldn't tell from who or where it came from. Suddenly, that familiar maniacal laugh surrounded her. It started low until it vibrated against the walls like a bolt of thunder. An icy chill coursed up her arm and down her spine. Above her, a large dark figure loomed, and the rumbling laughter grew louder.

A dark, large figure swept over her, bringing with it a cold draft. A raw scream curdled in her throat and she slammed her eyelids shut. The cold grew stronger, along with the rapid beating of her heart.

Sarahhh... It's Hallow's Eve...

The pounding of her heart thumped in her ears.

Saaarr-rraaahhh...

This time, the whispered voice was like a cold breath licking along the lobes of her ear. She squeezed her closed eyes tighter. The abrupt silence was deafening.

Sarahhh... IT'S TIME!

Her body jerked at the sudden roar, and she began to spiral into nothingness.

...hehehehehe...

She continued to delve further into the unknown, the chilling laugh following her—taunting her—deeper into the darkness of her mind.

Happy Halloween!