

# Minnesota Hauntings

Ghost Stories from the Land of 10,000 Lakes

by  
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# The Man Upstairs

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*Editor's Note: Following is the author's personal account; it is told from his point of view.*

THE HOUSE WAS OLD and abandoned. So, of course, my best friend Ryan Melby and I grew up day-dreaming about the mysteries and adventures that lay beyond its rotting, decrepit doors. After all, we were boys; we believed that any building which appeared so frightening from the outside must contain countless hidden terrors within.

The spooky-looking home rested at the edge of the Melby family's property, eight miles outside Pipestone in southwestern Minnesota. Ryan and I logged hundreds of hours buzzing by the old house on his motorbike, and we fantasized about sneaking inside, seeing a ghost and thereby discovering proof that such specters existed.

But by 1990, our motives had changed. We were both fifteen years old and hurrying to bridge the gap between youth and adulthood. Quashing our foolish beliefs in spirits and haunted places would bring us one step closer to the "grown-up" world.

So it was on a hot and humid August afternoon, with summer winding down and with another school year soon to begin, that Ryan and I decided to act. Finally, after all these years, we were going inside.

I waited for him to finish his chores, and then we started toward the old farmhouse together. But almost before we began, we crossed paths with Chris Rothen, the Melby family's nineteen-year-old farmhand. We must have been wearing guilty expressions because Chris asked suspiciously, "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," Ryan replied too quickly.

Chris looked at us, looked toward the old house and shook his head. He said nothing else as he continued on his way. We did the same, walking a little more quickly than before. By the time we reached our destination, we were more worried that Chris was going to tell on us than we were about ghouls and ghosts.

"Do you think the door will open?" I asked.

“I don’t know,” Ryan answered, sounding almost as nervous as I felt. “Why don’t you check?”

I took hold of the screen door and pulled the handle. It resisted, as if warning us to stay out. But we wouldn’t be denied. I gave the door three hard tugs, and it swung outward with a loud squeal. The door behind it opened without a fight, and we stepped inside.

We were greeted by the sight of an empty, gutted house, its skeletal frame exposed. It wasn’t like all of those abandoned places in the movies. There weren’t many cobwebs—but there was a lot of dust. There were also plenty of odds and ends scattered about the place: knickknacks, dishes and clothes.

Ryan and I weaved in and out of the many rooms, feeling braver with each step. Our need to stick together soon subsided. Ryan wandered further into the house, while I discovered stairs leading upward. By now, I was feeling invincible again—as only a teenager can—so I decided to take the stairs. I moved forward, one step, two steps, three steps.

As I reached the fourth step, I rounded a corner. I could suddenly see the openness of the second floor. I scanned the visible area above me, and the blood in my veins froze.

Just around the bend, at the top of the stairs, stood the figure of a heavyset man. The upper half of his body was obstructed from my view, but his thick legs and navy blue coveralls were unmistakable.

Two words flashed through my mind: *ghost* followed by *run*.

And that's what I did.

I stormed toward the exit, and I screamed, "Melby!"

I didn't bother looking behind me. I didn't bother opening that rickety screen door. I braced myself, and I launched into it. The door exploded—breaking into hundreds of scraps and splinters. I kept running.

Outside, Chris had been strolling over to check on us. When he saw me crash through the entrance, he sprinted the forty yards or so that separated us.

He reached me at nearly the same time as Ryan. But while Ryan yelled about getting in trouble, Chris looked me in the eyes and smiled. "You saw him, didn't you?"

Ryan stopped shouting. He stared at me, bemused.

I took a moment to catch my breath, nodded my head and muttered, "Yeah, I think so."

"Let's go see if he's still there," said Chris.

Curiosity got the better of me. I was already beginning to wonder if I had imagined the entire encounter. I led Chris and Ryan back inside and to the stairwell, but I wasn't about to go up.

The two of them pushed past me and strode up the steps. They stopped in almost exactly the same spot where I had spied the mysterious figure.

"What did you see?" Chris shouted.

I peeked up at him—only so I could answer his question. "It was a man. He was wearing blue coveralls."

Chris bent down, reached forward and pulled something off the floor. “You mean these?” He held in his hands the navy blue coveralls that, moments earlier, I had seen someone—or something—wearing.

My belief in ghosts was certainly not quashed on that day, and neither Ryan nor I ever ventured inside that house again. The dilapidated old structure is no longer there, but my memory of that paranormal encounter will stay with me for as long as I live.