

Eric M Hunter
<http://ericmhunter.net>
hello@ericmhunter.net

about 3,200 words

Overcursed, Inc.

By Eric M Hunter

Based on the video game Overcursed, Inc.

By Pietro Ferrantelli & Florent Juchniewicz

Tonight, skies continue to be cloudy with a slight chance of rain. Tomorrow, we will continue our heat streak hitting temperatures upwards of 98 degrees. Dress light and drink plenty of fluids. This is your weather report at the top of the hour. We will now pause for station ID.

What once would have been a lovely surprise has turned into a deadly encounter when loved ones come to visit. Loved ones that have long past, that is. But you don't have to worry about the

dead haunting you any longer. Introducing Overcursed, Incorporated. We are fully equipped and ready to handle any unwelcome guest that may show up. With our 100% satisfaction guarantee, you can rest easy knowing that when we bust ghosts, it's for good. Overcursed incorporated. Save 10% on your first estimate by mentioning this advertisement.

What a crock of shit; ghosts. Pay for some fake news stories, add some gas to the fire with social media accounts posting "proof" they exist, and then build and market a business around it. Be sure to patent everything so you can squeeze out any competition that may come up. That way you can charge outrageous prices just to sprinkle some wannabe holy water around, burn some sage, and set up some high intensity lights that we charge a flat rate for I'll have you know. Plug in a couple of boxes that aren't wired to do squat or set some traps that wouldn't catch a mouse. 100% guaranteed to take money from morons.

"What a joke."

Rocky barked from the back seat.

That's right, boy.

Saturday night; emergency services. I'm the only guy that volunteers anymore for this shift. Company's full of a bunch of young bucks. They've all got stuff to do on Saturday nights. People to see, bands playing music, dates. All I got is Rocky but even he's a handful sometimes. But what nobody seems to know

is that Saturday nights are slow, boring nights that pay well. Just hang out in the car, talk with Rocky, and listen to a few tunes. What I call a good, quiet Saturday night. And then the phone rings.

"Overcursed."

"Finally, what kept you? There is some electromagnetic disturbance. Probably an evil spirit. Please do something."

"Don't worry. We'll take care of it. Looks like we got another sucker, Rocky."

So much for a quiet Saturday night.

The town's nightlife washes over me. Each neon light says hello and then jumps over the car. Everyone seems so carefree, no one's spooked by the spooks that seemingly came out of nowhere. It's almost like they might be in on it, but they couldn't be.

I turned the car down a nondescript street into an everyday neighborhood. All the houses look the same as the one before it. I counted them as we drove by.

101 Dillon Street. 101 Dillon Street.

Rocky was the first to find it.

"There it is. Good boy, Rocky."

I threw the car into park and killed the engine. The street looked quiet enough. But for some reason, this house seemed to stand out from the others. The homes on either side of it were from the same patchwork: right angles, red brick, black shingles. But this one: 101, looked like something grabbed the top of it and pulled it tight. The sides were sort of meshed in and the windows looked like they were in pain.

"Jesus, look at this place. I don't think I've ever said this before, but this house looks creepy. Something doesn't feel right." Rocky growled low in agreement.

I pulled my eyes away and down to my phone.

"Overcursed. I'm at your house."

"Thank god! Here is the charlatan!"

"Excuse me?"

"Oh, please, I don't believe in your tall stories. But my wife is superstitious. Install your stupid dectors and go away."

"What an asshole." Rocky agreed. "Alright. Let's get in there and get out. I don't like the looks of this place. Or the prick who owns it."

I stepped out of the car and pulled the handle from the back door to give Rocky his exit. Behind him, I grabbed my work bag. There was a slight wind that seemed to die the second it came up on 101. I looked up and down the street. For it being a Saturday night, there sure weren't any people out enjoying it. Or maybe it was one of those neighborhoods that popped up out of the dirt and this ugly thing was the only house they couldn't convince enough to sell. So here it sits all distraught next to this year's new models.

The moon hung high in the sky and gave a little light as Rocky and me made our way up the steps and onto the front porch. Each piece of wood creaked under our feet as a way of warning us not to come around. The crickets seemed a little quieter too. I took a deep breath, pulled the screen door back and went for the handle.

Damned thing was locked.

"Well, where's the key? Did he not leave us the key? How the hell are we supposed to get in?" Rocky shuffled a bit then growled dark towards my direction.

"What is it, boy?"

Now, I know there's things to be said about seeing things in the dark and hell, I'm in the spook busting business, I know all about the dark. But what I'm not used to is things changing in front of my eyes. Because, wouldn't you believe it, but that

door decided all on its own that it was in fact unlocked and even went as far as to open itself for us.

"Hello? Is anyone there? Overcursed, incorporated. We were called on some electromagnetic disturbance?"

Only thing to answer me was a low hum of traffic from the distance and those crickets that refused to do any of their talking near this house.

"Anyone home?"

I put my hand on the knob and slowly took a step in. The room was pitch black and the stale air hit me like a ton of bricks. It hung thick like no one had been in since Eisenhower was in office.

"Hello?"

Rocky barked in protest.

"I know you did. I just thought I'd ask again. Can't be too sure. All right, where's the light switch?"

I moved to where I thought was the closest wall and reached out my hand. Having found it, I slowly searched up and down, rubbing the wall like I was checking it for contraband. Unfortunately I didn't find anything.

"Where are you, you little bast--"

The tip of my finger grazed the corner of something metal. A few inches over and we were in business.

"There we go."

Flipping the switch gave way to some awful looking furniture and a terrible color of paint on the walls. The air overhead had a sense of haze about it. Looked like a hundred years of dead skin was just waiting for someone to walk by so they could find their new home.

There's no way this was the right place. I double checked my handheld: 101 Dillon. This was the place. Well, a job is a job. Time to get paid.

I dropped my bag to the floor and bent down to one knee. Rocky did some sniffing around. Looks like he wasn't too sure either. I pulled out a wave specter-meter, tuned to a frequency, and flipped it on.

"All right, Rocky. Time to get to work."

I paced a bit around the first room, a living room if I had to guess. Had a few overstuffed chairs, stands, and some lamps. To the right, a set of stairs led up to a second floor and in the back was another door maybe to a kitchen.

"Well, Rocky, it doesn't look like there's any act--"

Suddenly a high pitched beep rang out from the specter-meter and I dropped the damn thing to the ground.

Paranormal detected. Paranormal detected.

"Jesus." I picked it up and turned the volume down. Rocky wasn't having it.

"OK, OK, sorry. Calm down. It's off. It's off." Rocky made sure I heard his distaste for the volume level.

"I know. I said I was sorry. Good news is, we know it works. Must have been some interference with some radio waves or something. But we can at least show our work right, boy? Gotta keep up the charade and all."

Rocky growled lowly. I dropped down again and fished out some more tools.

"What are you thinking, Rocky? 3 spook boxes, a couple of traps, and some lavender."

Rocky barked in protest.

"What? No lavender? OK, then, how about some sage?"

Rocky agreed.

"Hey, you got a better nose than I do. Alright, let's do it."

I searched along the walls looking for some electrical outlets. I quickly found one and it looked alright for the most part.

I dropped to one knee and plugged the spook box in. It glowed a strange blue and whirled up to life.

"Alright, Rocky, you know the drill: stand guard here and I'll finish up. OK?"

Something about Rocky wasn't right, he seemed uneasy.

"I'll be fine. You stand guard. That's your job in this, remember?"

For a moment he didn't seem to want the part, but barked all the same. I nodded my head and walked through the door along the back wall.

The light switch was easier to see in this room from the light shining in from the other. The kitchen was done up seventies style: lots of yellow, brown flowers, and white curtains on the windows. In the center was a wooden table surrounded by four chairs. In the corner sat a tiny tube TV on a stand with wheels. Beside it was another outlet. Bingo.

I made my way over. Just as I got to the outlet, the TV turned on and the specter-ometer shouted again.

"Shit!"

Paranormal detected. Paranormal detected.

I only jumped a bit this time since I turned the volume down on the squawk box, but the static coming from the TV seemed to grow and grow. I searched the front of the panel and pushed in the power button killing the screen to black.

"This thing is going to give me a heart attack."

I leaned over the counter and plugged in the second spook box. The blue glow started slowly and did its whirling up. I stepped back out into the living room. Rocky gave me a sad look.

"It's OK. TV just gave me a jump. One more oughta do it, then we'll go, OK?" I looked past Rocky and to the wooden staircase behind him.

I strode past him and made it to the stairs. Looking up, I couldn't see anything but blackness. No time but the present. I took it one step at a time, who's to know if I just go falling through due to termites or something. You'd laugh, but in this job, you hear horror stories. And never involving ghosts.

I was almost about halfway up the steps and then I heard something. Something I couldn't quite...

"Is someone there?"

Of course, silence. There was no one there. Just my ears playing tricks on me. I always had a thing about the dark. Your mind starts to wander, making up stuff that isn't there just so my senses have something to do. It's an awful design, but it took a millennia to make so I guess it's good for something.

At the top of the steps, I could vaguely make out a few doors and what looked like a small table at the back of the landing. I went for the first door on my left and jiggle the handle: locked.

"Well, shit."

With each step, the floorboards creaked beneath my feet. For a moment, I held my hands out in front of me just in case I came closer to the wall than I was expecting.

My knee banged the side of the table that I thought was further back. I took my hand and searched the top of it. Something heavy and metal grazed my palm and I picked it up bringing it close to my face to see if I could make it out in the dark.

Taking a few moments, I realized it was a key.

"Ah, here we go."

I made my way back over to the locked door and felt in the darkness where I thought the door knob was. After a few agonizing moments, the key finally said hello to the keyhole it was made for. I twisted the knob and pushed the door open slowly. I felt around the wall for the light switch and gave it a flip. And there she was, on a corner next to the dusty bed frame: the last outlet.

I walked over, bent down, and prepared myself for the squawk box to scare the shit out of me again, but this time... there was nothing. I stood up, looked about the room, then something out of the corner of my eye moved in the hallway. I spun on my heel, but whatever it was was gone. Damn darkness again.

I took a step towards the door and the damn box went off again.

Paranormal detected. Paranormal detected.

Rocky started barking downstairs and then the damn lights went out.

"It's alright. Everything's alright. I think I blew a fuse."

The odor of burnt plastic and metal filled the air. Probably took the whole house out.

"How's it look down there?" Rocky's bark was not reassuring.

Me too, buddy. This place is really giving me the creeps. Now where did I see that fuse box? Rocky barked again as if he was reading my mind.

"What? Is it down there?" He repeated himself.

"Alright, I'm coming down."

So much for that I guess. I found my bag and went hunting for that flashlight you always hope you have with you in times like these. I was lucky today. Well almost.

"Damn thing, come on. Yes. Alright, I'm coming down."

I reached the staircase and took it one step at a time. Each footfall was met with a creak of the floorboards. Rocky was waiting for me at the end of steps.

"You alright, boy? Getting spooked? Yeah, me too. Where's the fuse box so we can get out of here?" Rocky motioned his head to the far wall.

"Over here? Ok, you stay here. I'll be right back."

The fuse box was at the back of the house where that damn haunted TV was. I showed the flashlight along the walls and floor as I took my time making my way to the kitchen. I shined it on the TV screen. My light reflected back at me. No picture.

The large metal box hung to the left of the refrigerator. Whoever designed this house must have had their head up their ass. I walked over in front of the box and flipped the latched back which let the door drop open. I shined the flashlight on it. Most of the switches weren't labeled and the ones that were, are so worn down that I couldn't make out what they said. Just black smudges.

Well, here goes nothing.

I all but closed my eyes and grabbed a hold of one of the switches and pushed it into the opposite direction.

The lights flipped on a few times, fading on and off. Then one of the lightbulbs in a different room burst. The spook box shouted in the pressing darkness.

Paranormal detected. Paranormal detected.

Rocky barked from the other room.

"I don't know! It's not coming back on."

I tried the rest of the switches but the lights continued to flick on and off. Sweat started to bead on my forehead and the back of my neck started to heat up. Then I heard something growl deep from... somewhere. I looked around the kitchen. The walls of the kitchen seemed to breathe in and out. The lights

continued to flicker on and off, giving my brain all the time in the world to imagine all sorts of horror that wasn't in front of me. Rocky came running into the room after me.

"OK, OK. I got it."

I flicked a few more switches and the lights decided to stay on that time.

"Everything is fine. Come here, boy."

Rocky had just about had it. His heart was racing and I could feel it. But something else was wrong.

"What is that?" The walls stopped breathing.

Is that blood?"

The wall just beyond the kitchen table covered in a tacky wallpaper dripped red in a thick, chunky, goo. I stood up slowly and made a few steps around the table. Rocky growled low.

"It's all right. Maybe it was here before and we just didn't see it."

Even if I didn't believe that. But there was something else to the blood. The closer I got, I could see that it was moving. Not just down like you'd think but in other directions too.

"What? It says ... it says 'good boy'? Who's 'good boy'?" Rocky barked.

"I know you're a good boy, Rocky." Apparently I was being distracted.

"No, we're done we're getting out of here."

I grabbed my bag and we headed towards the living room to the front door. As we went past the staircase, that deep growl grew louder with each step. I put my hand on the doorknob and stopped.

There was something... something else upstairs. Something that I...

"You're going to have to call us back," I shouted into the darkness on the second floor. "We aren't getting paid enough for this job."

I opened the door, felt the hot breeze hit my face, and stepped through. The door slammed behind me. I walked down the porch and out onto the driveway. I stopped and looked back at the house.

Something about it had changed. It looked... newer. Like the others on the street. My eyes caught something moving in the upstairs bedroom. The curtain moved slightly. Not today, I thought. Not today.

We walked back to the car. I opened the back seat first giving Rocky a chance to get in and I threw my bag right after him. I stepped into the driver's seat, gave the house a last goodbye, turned the key, and left that cul-de-sac community forever.

I made it back on the highway, windows down, radio up, and let the night heat wash over me. Took a look at the clock. My shift was almost over.

And then...

"Overcursed, incorporated."

"A... a beast lives in my house. Please kill this awful thing and find a way to remove the bad smells!"

I exhaled.

"Consider it done."

Eh, what's the chance of running into two in the same night? Rocky was skeptical.