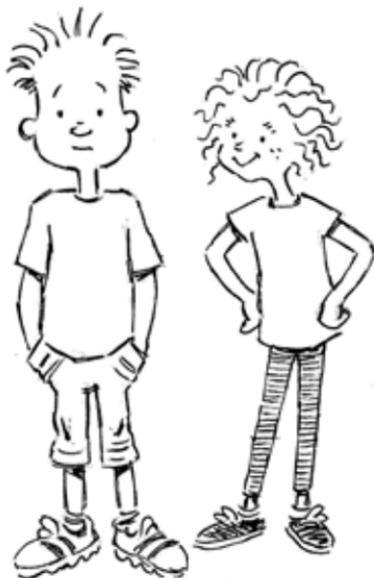


The Very Annoying
Ghost

Kyle Mewburn

illustrations by
Errol McLeary



Chapter One

We didn't know the house was haunted when we bought it. But we found out soon enough.

Mum and Dad were a bit suspicious when they saw the advertisement in the newspaper –

ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!!!

Spacious five bedroom house situated in two hectares of landscaped gardens and manicured lawns in trendy Millers Point.

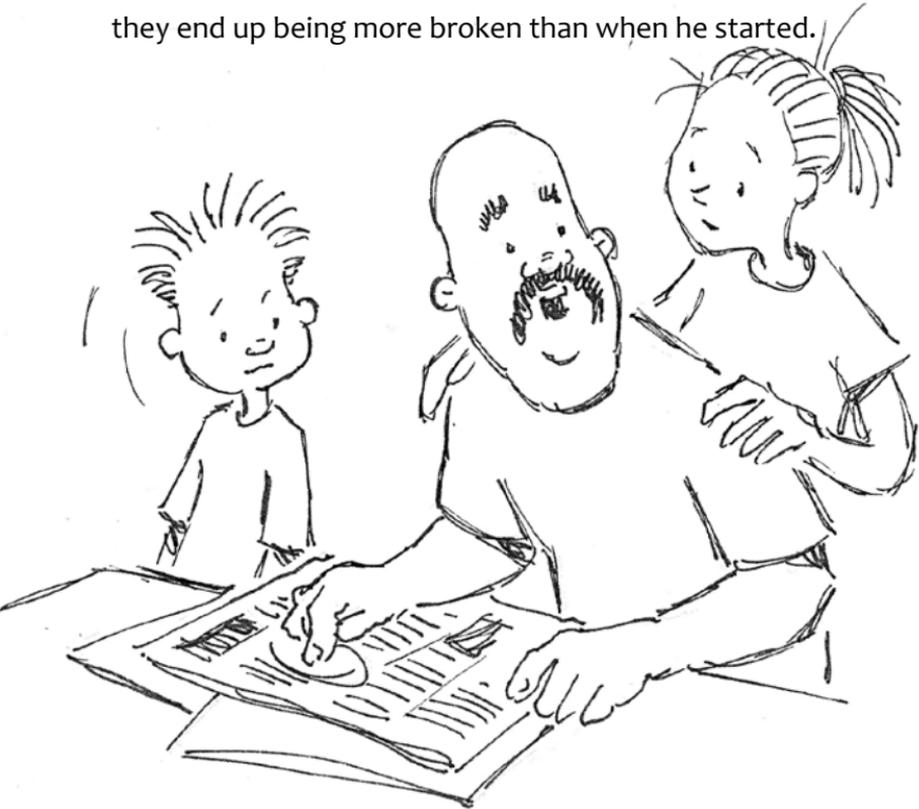
Fully furnished with state-of-the-art kitchen. Plus spa, tennis court and heated swimming pool. Close to schools and Millers Point's famous beachside cafés and gallery promenade.

Sunny location on top of hill affords 360 degree panoramic views of city and sea.

Owners superkeen to sell.

Make us an offer. Any offer.

“It’s probably a Handyman Special,” Dad said. The way he said it made it sound as if a Handyman Special wasn’t as special as it sounded. Maybe because Dad’s not much of a handyman. He loves trying to fix things. But most of the time they end up being more broken than when he started.



“Hopefully it hasn’t got ‘Leaky Building Syndrome’,” Mum said. If there was one thing Mum was scared of, it was having a leaky house. “Millers Point is pretty posh, too.” She glanced down at her scruffy jeans, teeshirt and trainers. “I’m not sure they even allow people like us to live there. Maybe we shouldn’t bother.”

“No harm in having a peek,” Dad said. I could tell he was already dreaming about that manicured lawn. Dad loves mowing lawns. Mum always jokes that Dad’s moustache could do with a good mow, too. It looked like a friendly furry caterpillar crawling across his lip. But Dad says he’s growing it, and when it’s big enough he’s going to transplant it onto his bald head. “If anyone tries to bowl us a googly, we’ll just play with the spin, luv.”

(It’s probably a good time to mention Dad’s a total cricket fanatic. And I mean TOTAL. It can be a bit embarrassing sometimes. Most of my friends think he’s kind of weird. But they all agree it’s better having a weird Dad than a boring one. And Dad does a great impression of Shane Warne that always cracks them up.)

“It says it’s really close to school, too,” I added, trying hard to stop my voice sounding whiny. “So I could walk even. Then you wouldn’t have to drive me all the time.”

Mum gave me a doubtful look over the top of the newspaper. “It says it’s on top of a hill.”

“So?” I shrugged.

“You’ll happily walk home from school up a steep hill?” she said in her special ‘I’ll believe that when I see it’ voice.

“Course,” I said, jutting out my chin. I wasn’t that lazy ... was I? Okay, I admit I wouldn’t necessarily like slogging up a hill every day. But it was a small price to pay to live in Millers Point. Not because it was trendy or anything. But because

it had some of the best rock climbing cliffs in the city. And at the moment I was totally obsessed with rock climbing.

“And you realise it’s not your school we’ll be close to, but Millers Point,” Mum continued with a crooked smile. She always enjoyed making me squirm. She was very good at it, too. “You wouldn’t mind changing schools halfway through term?”

All I could do was shake my head. My face was flushing so hotly, I was afraid my voice would squeak if I tried to speak. It was quickly dawning on me that I hadn’t really thought things through. It hadn’t occurred to me moving house might mean changing schools. The only thing I’d thought about was being close to the rock climbing cliffs.

“It’s a pretty posh school,” said Mum. “You won’t be able to roll up looking like you just got out of bed, you know? You’ll have to wear a uniform and all.”

“It’ll be a lot harder breaking into their first eleven, too, I’d think,” Dad added, scratching his chin. “From what I hear, their cricket programme’s the best in the country.”

“And that’s all okay with you?” asked Mum, studying me closely.

I wasn’t going to back down now. Besides, I’d heard a few things about Millers Point School, too. Like it was the only school with a rock climbing programme. They had their own indoor climbing wall and everything. Some of the best climbers in the country came to use it.

“I don’t mind,” I finally managed, clenching my jaw. “It’s just a school.”

“All right, let’s go check it out,” Mum finally agreed. She already guessed me and Dad didn’t really care what the house was like. “But if the house looks the slightest bit leaky, we’re not buying it. Okay? I don’t care if the lawn’s as perfect as Lords and it’s right beside a rock climbing club.”

So we all piled into the car and went to inspect it.